PEOPLE AND POLITICS IN ELEVENTH-CENTURY CONSTANTINOPLE, 1025–1081

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

People and Politics in Eleventh-Century Constantinople, 1025–1081

This thesis examines the political repertoire of the people in eleventh-century Constantinople through rereading three main historical sources of eleventh-century Byzantine history–Michael Psellos' *Chronographia*, Michael Attaleiates' *History*, John Skylitzes' *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*–from the perspective of the ordinary people. It aims to shed light on the ways in which the authors regarded the people's political participation in Constantinople during the years between 1025 and 1081 and intends to classify and analyze these practices. It seems that the people of Constantinople exerted some level of political power in the given period and engaged in both supportive and subversive political practices. Divided into three main sections, this study examines the political participation of the people in its direct and indirect manifestations. Looking at both violent and non-violent political practices, the present study claims that the non-violent aspects of urban politics are predominant compared to the violent ones and that the former are also crucial to understanding the dynamics of the latter.

ÖZET

On Birinci Yüzyıl Konstantinopolis'inde Halk ve Politika, 1025–1081

Bu tez, dönemin başlıca üç birincil kaynağını–Mikhail Psellos'un *Khronographia*'sı, Mikhail Attaleiates'in *Historia*'sı ve İoannis Skylitzes'in *Synopsis historion*'u–sıradan insanların açısından yeniden okuyarak on birinci yüzyıl Konstantinopolis'inde eylem repertuarını incelemekte, 1025–1081 yılları arasında halkın politik katılım biçimlerinin adı geçen yazarların gözünden nasıl ele alındığına ışık tutmakta ve bu pratikleri tasnif ve tahlil etmeyi hedeflemektedir. Bahsi geçen dönemde Konstantinopolis halkının belli bir politik güç elde ettiği ve otoriteyi hem destekleyici hem de tehdit edici bir takım toplumsal pratiklerde bulunduğu gözlemlenmektedir. Bu çalışma Konstantinopolis halkının politik katılımının dolaylı ve doğrudan tezahürlerini üç ana kategoride inceleyip, şiddet içeren ve şiddet içermeyen eylemlerini bir arada ele alarak, ikincinin birinciye kıyasla daha yaygın olduğuna ve şiddet içeren ayaklanmaların dinamiklerini anlamada önemli bir rol oynayabileceğine de dikkat çekmektedir.

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Hatte das vielbesungene Byzanz

Nur Paläste für seine Bewohner?

Bertolt Brecht, “Fragen eines lesenden Arbeiters”

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The political history of Byzantium has been overwhelmingly dominated by studies on the Byzantine state, emperors, urban and military elites, while the vast majority of the Byzantine society has received relatively scant attention. Especially the lower strata of society remained poorly studied in modern scholarship until the last several decades, during which Byzantine studies has seen a great impetus for change towards a more comprehensive perspective that has allowed the once-neglected 'voices' of underrepresented groups to be heard.[1]

The purpose of the present study is to offer an evaluation of the political history of eleventh-century Byzantium by rereading three main contemporary historical accounts from the perspective of the populace of Constantinople. As Alexander Kazhdan and Giles Constable proposed in 1982, a new interpretation of hitherto well-studied historical narratives with a special focus on the Byzantine people is crucially required. According to Kazhdan,

> The subject of modern Byzantine studies must therefore be the *homo byzantinus* in the sense of Byzantine people and their place in society, and all traditional topics—politics, diplomacy, and the like—must be reconsidered in the light of the interests, intentions, and hopes of these people.[2]

[1] Constable, in the preface of the book, states that the field of Byzantine history, through Kazhdan, has been influenced by the *Annales* school, according to which "history is concerned not so much with sources, monuments, events, or institutions as with the real lives, attitudes, and beliefs of people in the past, including not only the rich, wise, and powerful but also the poor, humble, and ignorant." Kazhdan and Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium*, vii. For the critique of Kaldellis towards the search for genuine voices of the past, see Kaldellis, "The Study of Women and Children: Methodological Challenges and New Directions," 66.

[2] Kazhdan and Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium*, 16.

This thesis thus aims to provide new insights regarding the socio-political tendencies of the populace in the given period by tracing the political pursuits of the popular elements in society which have not been considered in sufficient detail so far. A systematic survey of the evidence retrieved from the sources can produce a better-balanced perspective and contribute to a more comprehensive socio-political portrayal of Byzantium for the sake of "muted social groups," who, as Angeliki Laiou has argued, seldom left historical accounts of themselves and thus require different methodological approaches.[3]

This thesis is limited to the particular interpretation of three eleventh-century Byzantine sources—namely, Michael Psellos' *Chronographia*, John Skylitzes' *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* and Michael Attaleiates' *History*—which provide a detailed portrayal of the political, economic and military history of the empire. The accounts in question are scrutinized particularly to trace the different forms of popular political participation, in other words, the political repertoire, in eleventh-century Constantinople. Yet this study aims neither to provide a complete analysis of these sources nor to encompass the entire subject of Byzantine political history in the eleventh century. Therefore, state-centered political events, unless somehow related to the Constantinopolitan populace, lie beyond the scope of this study.[4]

Concerning the relationship between the populace and politics, Michael Psellos provides substantive information in his account, the *Chronographia*. Born in 1018, Psellos was one of the most important intellectual figures of his time along

[3] The term is Laiou's. She uses this term for those who are not recorded in (surviving) historical sources, because either they did not write their own accounts or the others excluded them from theirs: see Laiou, "On Individuals, Aggregates and Mute Social Groups," 369-370.

[4] That means centrally important political developments that took place in eleventh-century Byzantium and its relations with other political entities including the wars against the Balkans and Caucasia, territorial losses in Sicily, Asia Minor and many others are excluded. However, those foreign affairs which affected the populace of Constantinople in a direct or indirect way, such as migration to the City due to the invasion of south-eastern Anatolia by the Seljuqs, will be treated.

with John Xiphilinos and Constantine Leichoudes as he received an extensive education under John Mauropous.[5] A philosopher and political advisor in the imperial court, Psellos also wrote the *Chronographia,* the most significant and well-known work of Byzantine literature, combining history and philosophy in a highly eloquent fashion. His account is the principal source for eleventh-century Byzantium and covers the reigns of Byzantine emperors from the year 976 up until 1078.[6] The account offers a good amount of information on the imperial court and gives a vivid description of the personal traits of emperors.[7] Having focused mainly on Constantinople, it provides insights on the people's perceptions of emperors. Furthermore, book V of his *Chronographia* is entirely devoted to the reign of Michael V (r. 1041-1042), thus it elaborates the 1042 revolt and the dethronement of the emperor. Psellos was one of the eye-witnesses of the rebellion which makes his narrative unparalleled in its details.

Another author whose work is examined in this study is John Skylitzes.[8] His *Synopsis Historiarum*, as a continuation of the Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor, was written at the end of the eleventh century during the reign of Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081-1118) and covers the period beginning with the reign of Michael I in the early ninth century and ends with the deposition of Michael VI in the year 1057. Though little is known about his life, he was born around the year 1040, no later than 1050, and held several high positions in civil service in Constantinople. As Jean-Claude Cheynet has argued, it was not entirely unusual for

[5] Kazhdan, "Psellos, Michael," 1754-1755.
[6] For further information, see Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters: The Byzantine Family of Michael Psellos*, 3-10; Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, 271-296; Neville, *Guide to Byzantine Historical Writing*, 137-146.
[7] McCartney, "The Use of Metaphor in Michael Psellos's *Chronographia*," 84-91.
[8] For further information, see Kazhdan, "Skylitzes, John," 1914; Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, 329-339; Neville, *Guide to Byzantine Historical Writing*, 155-161.

people, in eleventh-century Byzantium, to ascend to high positions, in case they obtained a good level of education, even if they were lacking in a good familial background as in the case of Skylitzes.[9] As a legal professional and member of the court, during the reign of Alexios I, he occupied important positions and was appointed as the eparch of the city. His account, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, largely focuses on the military events but still indirectly provides many important details on the populace of Constantinople and their political participation.

The last historical narrative, which is considered in this study, is the *History* of Michael Attaleiates.[10] Born in the early 1020s in Attaleia, the author rose up to high levels in the civil administration in Constantinople, due to the higher education he received, as in the case of Skylitzes.[11] In his *Diataxis*, the foundation document for a monastery he established in Constantinople, he enumerated titles he holds as *patrikios*, *anthypatios, judge of the hippodrome* and *the velum*.[12] His account, which the *History*, is dedicated to the emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates (r. 1078-1081), covers the political and military history of Byzantium from the year 1034 to 1079 and traces the reasons behind the military collapse of the empire in the last quarter of the eleventh-century.[13] Above all, the significance of the *History* for this study stems from its rich details on the 1042 revolt and unique perspective which emphasizes the role of the Constantinopolitan populace in politics.

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[9] Cheynet, "Introduction: John Skylitzes, the Author and his Family," x.
[10] For further information, see Kazhdan, "Attaleiates, Michael," 229; Kaldellis and Krallis, *The History*, vii-xi.
[11] For "social mobility" in Byzantium before the Komnenoi, see Ragia, "Social Group Profiles in Byzantium: Some Considerations on Byzantine Perceptions about Social Class Distinctions," 315-316.
[12] Attaleiates, *Diataxis*, 354, quoted in Krallis, *Serving Byzantium's Emperors: The Courtly Life and Career of Michael Attaleiates,* 44.
[13] Krallis, ""Democratic" Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium: Michael Attaleiates' "Republicanism" in Context," 52.

It is important to note that these accounts in question reflect their authors' own perspectives and biases. They offer some insights about the social stratification in the minds of their authors and should not be taken as face value. Even though there are certain passages suggesting and even promoting the political power exerted by the people of Constantinople, especially in the case of Attaleiates, one can, in fact, notice a pro-aristocratic bias toward the common people and their accumulation of political power. This passage below, taken from the *Chronographia* of Psellos, may be an illustrative example:

> In well governed cities there are inscribed on the citizen-rolls the names not only of the best persons and men of noble birth, but also of people whose origin is obscure, and military authorities observe this custom no less than civil magistrates. That, anyway, was the system followed by the Athenians and in all those cities which emulated their form of democracy. In our polity, however, this excellent practice has been contemptuously abandoned, and nobility counts for nothing. The process of corruption has been going on in the Senate for a long time; it is, in fact, a heritage of the past, for Romulus was the first to encourage the kind of confusion we see now. Today the citizenship is open to all. No doubt you would find not a few wearing civilized clothes, who formerly covered themselves in a goat's-hair cloak. Many of our governors are, I am sure, ex-slaves whom we bought from barbarians, and our great offices of state are entrusted not to men of the stamp of Pericles, or Themistocles, but to worthless scamps like Spartacus.[14]

The eleventh century is a distinctive period for Byzantium. The empire saw a revival from the middle of the ninth century roughly to the middle of the eleventh century, as it, especially during the reign of Basil II (r. 976-1025), expanded its borders and regained territories lost in south Italy to Islamic powers of the Near East. Yet, this military success was rather ephemeral. From the middle of the eleventh century, the empire began to shrink, threatened by the Normans in Italy and Seljuqs in Asia

[14] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 225-226.

Minor.[15] George Ostrogorsky in his book, *History of the Byzantine State*, which represents of the first half of the twentieth-century scholarship, has considered eleventh-century Byzantium with a special emphasis put on two main concepts: economic decline and tendency towards feudalization as a result of the prevailing of the military aristocracy over the urban elite.[16] Yet the contemporary scholarship has predominantly criticized this perspective.[17] As an example of recent critiques, Anthony Kaldellis, for example, has argued, on the basis of contemporary Byzantine authors, that the vast lands required for provincial households to accumulate power were already lost at that period.[18] In other respects, John Haldon and Michael Angold, following Alexander Kazhdan, have underlined that the sharp division between the military aristocracy and the urban elite seems to be deceptive since these groups were rather intermingled with each other.[19] The idea of economic decline has also been seriously questioned by a number of scholars such as Alexander Kazhdan, Michael F. Hendy and Alan Harvey, who have highlighted the economic growth seen in eleventh-century Byzantium.[20] Contrary to this prosperity, the empire was confronted with turbulence in the political sphere.[21] Paul Stephenson has explained

[15] For a brief account the 1025-1081 period, see Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, 583-611.
[16] Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State,* 320-350.
[17] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204*, 15-20.
[18] Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood: The Rise and Fall of Byzantium, 955 A. D. to the First Crusade*, 277. "Finally, the civil wars of the eleventh century also had nothing to do with a putative process of feudalization. Quite the contrary, the Komnenoi came to power at a time when all lands, whether belonging to peasants or "magnates," were being lost to the Turks. The Komnenoi rose on the basis not of their socioeconomic power but of their military-political careers. Anna says of her father at the time of his usurpation that he was "not by any means seriously rich." Let us not forget the image of a young Alexios visiting his ancestral lands in Kastamone— abandoned because of Turkish raids. Psellos talks in the 1070s about how the rich had lost their lands and revenues— at the very moment when modern historians claim that they were "taking over" the state."
[19] Haldon, "Social Elites, Wealth, and Power," 185-193; Angold, "Belle Epoque or Crisis? (1025-1118)," 589.
[20] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, 25-46; Kazhdan and Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium,* 57; Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy: c. 300-1450*, 31-52; Harvey, *Economic Expansion in the Byzantine Empire 900-1200*, 244. See also Whittow, "The Second Fall: The Place of the Eleventh Century in Roman History," 114-126.
[21] Angold, "Belle Epoque or Crisis? (1025-1118)"; Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204*, 15-22.

this contrast with the state's inability to benefit from economic growth.[22] Especially during the reign of Basil II through land registrations the power of military magnates decreased. Furthermore, during the following decades, political instability pertaining to the weakened central authority seems to give a noticeable opportunity for flourishing the urban political life.

Concerning the long reign of Basil II, Michael Angold has asserted that "They forget that his iron rule represents an aberration in the exercise of imperial authority at Byzantium."[23] His almost a half-century-long reign was followed by political instability in the history of Byzantium. From the end of the reign of Basil II in the year 1025 to the ascendance of Alexios I Komnenos in the year 1081, thirteen emperors reached the throne and more than a hundred rebellions took place throughout the Byzantine Empire.[24] In these six decades, many of the emperors suffered from legitimacy problems and eight of them were overthrown.[25] After the death of emperor Constantine VIII (r. 1025-1028), the brother and successor of Basil II, his daughters, the empresses Zoe and Theodora, became political tools for the legitimacy of the imperial rule in Byzantium.[26] Zoe married Romanos III Argyros (r. 1028-1034) and Michael IV the Paphlagonian (r. 1034-1041) respectively. Before her third marriage to Constantine IX Monomachos (r. 1042-1055), she adopted Michael V (r. 1041-1042) to become the emperor. His short-lived reign, which ended

[22] Stephenson, "Byzantium Transformed, c. 950-1200," 185-210.
[23] Angold, "Belle Epoque or Crisis? (1025-1118)," 585.
[24] Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)*, 27-90. For the role of the people, see 202-205.
[25] Holmes, "Political-Historical Survey 800-1204," 571-573.
[26] Yet both were definitely more than being only rightful heiresses. They were known as the most important political personalities of their age. Byzantium was co-ruled by these two sisters in 1042, while Theodora succeeded Constantine IX Monomachos and became the sole empress in 1055-1056. For their life and reign, see Garland, *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium, AD 527-1204*, 137-167; Connor, *Women of Byzantium*, 215-237.

with a popular revolt that toppled him, will be thoroughly examined in Chapter Three.

Chosen by the empress Theodora, Michael VI Bringas (r. 1056-1057) took the imperial scepter, however, he lost it to the first emperor of the Komnenian family, Isaac I (r. 1057-1059), after a civil war. The latter abdicated the imperial power in favor of Constantine X Doukas (r. 1059-1067). After Constantine X died, his short rule was followed by that of Romanos IV Diogenes (r. 1068-1071) who married his wife Eudokia. Nevertheless, Romanos IV was overthrown and Michael VII Doukas (r. 1071-1078), the son of Constantine X and Eudokia, succeeded him. Subsequently, Nikephoros III Botaneiates (r. 1078-1081) revolted against Michael VII and compelled him to abdicate. Later, he too, was compelled to abdicate by Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081- 1118), whose reign would be the inauguration of a new era for the Byzantine Empire colored by the Komnenoi for a century until the year 1185.

The power of Byzantine emperors in the eleventh century was rather fragile. From the end of the Macedonian dynasty to the beginning of the rule of the Komnenoi, the empire saw many attempts of military usurpation; among them, three generals succeeded: Isaac I Komnenos in the year 1057, Nikephoros III Botaneiates in 1077, and Alexios I Komnenos in 1081 took the imperial throne. They were all accepted and supported by the large part of the population as they turned from usurpers to the legitimate emperors. The political volatility of this period has mainly been considered as a power struggle among the elites; yet other dynamics in Byzantine politics, such as the populace, have been either ignored or underestimated up until the last decades. Anthony Kaldellis has provided a fruitful criticism

regarding the negligence of the people's role in the modern consideration of Byzantine politics:

> While we have many studies of plots and rebellions in Byzantium, little attention has been paid to the role in them of public opinion. By this I mean not only the opinion of the social and political elite regarding the state of the empire and the merits or flaws of the current emperor but the opinions of the majority of the population about such things. In the first instance, this would be the people of Constantinople, though a case will be made later in this chapter for the importance of the provincials as well. This omission is partly a result of the fact that historians consider politics as a business taking place among the elite, or between the elite and the emperor, with the people as passive bystanders. J.- C. Cheynet's classic study of contests for power between 963 and 1210 casts them entirely as a function of elite competition. He devotes only three pages to the people, which summarize the elite's condescending attitudes toward them, and he seems to suggest that the people lacked a collective identity.[27]

As Kaldellis has aptly pointed out, there has been little discussion on the popular aspects of Byzantine politics while the role of the urban elites as political actors has been predominantly treated. One of the preliminary scholars who focused on the populace of Byzantium was Hans-Georg Beck.[28] In his book, *Das byzantinische Jahrtausend*, he emphasized the Roman heritage of Byzantium and questioned the image of the 'all-powerful emperor,' arguing that "the Byzantine ruler was by no means an absolute monarch," since his power was according to him "circumscribed by the senate, the 'people', and the army."[29] Along with this criticism, Beck introduced the "republican" thesis, which has also been recently elaborated by Anthony Kaldellis within the framework of Byzantine *politeia* in his book *The*

[27] Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome*, 126-127.
[28] For further information on Hans-Georg Beck in the literature in English, see Vera von Falkenhausen, "Hans-Georg Beck." 337-344; Angelov*, Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium (1204-1330)*, 10-13; Angelov, "In Search of God's only Emperor: Basileus in Byzantine and Modern Historiography," 127-128.
[29] Beck, *Das byzantinische Jahrtausend*, 40-43, 52-59, quoted in Kazhdan, *Studies on Byzantine Literature*, 16-17.

Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome.[30] Kaldellis has proposed a new interpretation of Byzantine history by suggesting that the Byzantine *politeia* was the continuity of the Roman *res publica*. His perspective provides a valuable historical context for interpreting the political involvement of people in Byzantium.

The contemporary sources, in fact, offer a great amount of information, even though scattered and brief, about the ways in which the people engaged in politics in Byzantium. For example, the following excerpt from the *Chronographia* of Psellos gives some clues about eleventh-century Byzantine politics in which the support of people is described as essential in the perpetuation of imperial authority:

> Apparently the last few emperors were convinced that they were firmly established once the civil element acclaimed them. Indeed their close relations with these persons were such that the emperors believed the throne was safely ensured beyond all dispute if the civilians were well-disposed. Naturally, therefore, as soon as they took up the sceptre it was to the civil party that they granted the right to speak in their presence before all others. If they evinced pleasure, if they uttered flattering speeches and gave vent to a little nonsensical clap-trap, then the emperors needed no further assistance. It was as if they had the sanction of God. Really, of course, their power rests on three factors: the people, the Senate, and the army. Yet while they minimized the influence of the military, imperial favours were granted to the other two as soon as a new sovereign acceded.[31]

While the primary aim of the author is to criticize the weakening of the military by the contemporary emperors, nonetheless, this passage strongly suggests that the political realm of Byzantium was neither merely controlled by the emperor, nor was political influence only exerted by the elite. The author states that the populace of Constantinople was one of the three important actors in the eyes of the emperors.

There is a growing body of literature which focuses on the eleventh-century populace of Constantinople, their socio-political tendencies, participation in politics,

[30] Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome*, 126-127.
[31] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 275.

and relationship with the imperial authority.[32] However, still little is known about the ways in which the latter exerted political pressure in spite of the frequency of references to the popular political agency in Constantinople. The modern literature has long discussed the Byzantine revolts rather individually. The early Byzantine rebellions as the sixth-century Nika riot within the context of circus factions, the 1042 revolt in the framework of guild activities, and the fourteenth-century Zealot movement in Thessaloniki has been widely investigated. Most studies, on the other hand, have tended to focus on violent rebellions and mainly failed to contextualize these revolts through addressing indirect and non-violent political participation which are, in fact, even more prevalent in the sources. The common people and their political pursuits thus remain rather unclear. This study aims to contribute to filling this gap.

Terminology has a crucial role in this study. There are a variety of terms used in the written sources to describe the people and their subversive actions. In this thesis, the terms "people" or "populace" are used to refer to a heterogeneous populace of Constantinople. So, who are these people? This group is rather difficult to define precisely, thus it might be more convenient to ask who they are not in order to better describe them. It was composed of different groups, except for the urban elite, e.g. the Senate and aristocracy.[33] Furthermore, it seems safe to assume that

[32] The list of selected works below is not exhaustive but exemplary: Manojlović, "Le Peuple de Constantinople." 617-716; Vryonis, "Byzantine Δημοκρατία and the Guilds in the Eleventh Century" 287-314; Charanis, "The role of the People in the Political Life of the Byzantine Empire: The Period of the Comneni and the Palaeologi," 69-79; Garland, "Political Power and the Populace in Byzantium Prior to the Fourth Crusade," 17-52; Cheynet, "La colère du peuple à Byzance (Xe -XIIe siècle)," 25-38; Krallis, ""Democratic" Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium," 35-53; Kontogiannopoulou "The Notion of δῆμος and its Role in Byzantium during the Last Centuries (13th-15th c.)," 101-124; Kaldellis, "How to Usurp the Throne in Byzantium," 43-56.

[33] For a descriptive explanation on the social elite in Byzantium, see Haldon, "The Fate of the Late Roman Senatorial Elite: Extinction or Transformation?," 181: "I will use the word "elite" to mean the leading element of this ruling or dominant social-economic class, those who shared a situation in respect of access to political/ideological power and influence, in particular at Constantinople and in the various branches of the imperial administration. The elite may or may not be made up from members born into the dominant class, although by virtue of their position they can generally be

merchants who already accumulated some level of economic power in the given period might be among those who ask for more political participation. In Byzantine Greek, there were several different words to describe this group. These are "τό πλῆθος" (the multitude, populace), "οἱ πολῖται" (the citizens), "οἱ ἄνθρωποι" (the people), "ὁ λαός" (the people), "ὁ δῆμος" (the people), "τὸ κοινὸν" (the people), and "ὁ ὄχλος" (the crowd) and some variations of these words such as "ὁ δῆμος ἅπας" (all the people). A set of terms which stem from the word "πόλις" (the city) are also frequently used throughout the sources to describe the populace such as "ἡ ξύμπασα πόλις" and "ἁπάσης τῆς πόλεως" which mean the whole city. Even though these words have similar meanings they were not entirely used in an interchangeable way. Slight differences seem to occur in the meaning of the word depending on the context. Regarding this matter, Dimitris Krallis has provided a systematic examination of the usage of these terms in Attaleiates' *History*. Krallis has identified that Attaleiates employs four different words, which are *demos*, *Byzantioi*, *ochlos*, and *plethos*, to describe different aspects of the populace of Constantinople on different occasions.[34] For example, he has asserted that the author uses the term

assimilated to it. But from the point of view of their political position, their immediate field of vested interests, and the ways in which those interests could be protected and preserved, they acted in concert (and in competition) with those in a similar position, whether explicitly or not. Such groups can be referred to by the term "power elites", first coined by C. Wright Mills, and I will use the phrase in this paper in that way." See also Charanis, "The Role of the People in the Political Life of the Byzantine Empire: The Period of the Comneni and the Palaeologi," 69-79; Kontogiannopoulou, "The Notion of Δημοσ and Its Role in Byzantium During the Last Centuries (13th-15th C.)" 105-106; Lounghis, "The Byzantine Historians on Politics and People from 1042 to 1081," 387-388. In the narrative sources, as well, these groups are described separately, with different terms such as "τὸν δ'ἀπόλεκτον δῆμον τῆς πόλεως" (the pick of the city). This division can also be clearly seen in the following passage of Skylitzes which narrates gifts distributed by the chief court eunuch John Orphanotrophos on behalf of his brother, emperor Michael IV. In these lines, the author classifies the senators and the commoners as two distinct groups. Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 371: "Off he went to Dalassenos while John manipulated the Senate [τήν σύγκλητον] and the people [τὸ κοινὸν]. He gained approval by advancing the senators to higher ranks and he also mollified commoners with gifts and favours conciliating the subjects once and for all."

[34] For further information, see Krallis, "Democratic" Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium," 47-48.

demos with a neutral connotation, whereas, he utilizes the term *ochlos* when the people acted in a rather volatile manner in rebellions.[35]

As the populace was described with several words, the authors employed different words for the populace's collective actions. For example, contemporaries of the 1042 rebellion, particularly Psellos as a first-hand witness, called this action as "ἀποστασία" (rebellion). Similarly, there is a consensus in the modern scholarship to address the 1042 rebellion either as a "revolt" or a "rebellion." These two words are used interchangeably since both require subversive violent action to take place against the authority. However, it is important to note that "revolution," as a close yet distinct term, radically demanding structural changes, has not been employed for this event. Dumolyn and Haemers' passage below on the nature of medieval revolts in Flanders can also be applied to our case, as it shows characteristics of a revolt but not a revolution, since eleventh-century Constantinopolitans, as their pairs in Flanders, did not target institutions but individuals.

> Medieval rebels almost never demanded structural changes of society; they just wanted concrete improvements in everyday life. Rebellions and revolts are not revolutions, and this distinction remains the most widely used classification in studies of political violence. Rebellions or revolts, in contrast to revolutions, do not result in a basic structural change of society. They are attempts to obtain concessions from the rulers, not to overthrow existing social, political or economic systems. Whatever social tensions Flemish rebellions reflected, rebels almost never attacked an entire social class or institution. Instead, they only wanted to improve institutions or gain the right to participate in them. Moreover, late medieval rebels primarily focused on the defense and restoration of ancient liberties or privileges, striving for an idealized 'golden age in the past', with an ideology of renovation, not of innovation. Fundamentally changing society was never at stake in medieval Flanders.[36]

[35] Krallis, "Democratic" Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium," 47.
[36] Dumolyn and Haemers, "Patterns of Urban Rebellion in Medieval Flanders," 372.

Even though a clarification on the terminology employed in this study is needed, a further discussion on the comparison between the rebellions and revolutions falls outside the scope of this study.[37]

In the modern scholarship, Charles Tilly provides a number of terms for popular political action, such as "contentious gatherings," instead of "disturbance," in order not to perpetuate the biased language of those who were in authority.[38] Tilly has coined another useful term, "collective action," to describe popular political action.[39] He has described that it "consists of people's acting together in pursuit of common interests." Furthermore, the author has utilized the terms "repertoire" (also known as the repertoire of contention or collective action) for defining a set of political practices available for a certain group in a particular period.[40] Throughout

[37] Ruff has remarked on the shortcomings of looking at the past protests with modern-day glasses and peculiar characteristics of early-modern protests. Ruff, *Violence in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800*, 184. "Historians of popular protests in our period recognized early on that most of the acts they studied, strictly speaking, were not "revolutionary" movements in our sense of that term. We generally envision protest movements in our own time as aiming at the destruction, or radical modification, of the existing political, social, or economic order. We therefore view such movements as "revolutionary" in nature. Early modern protest movements, on the other hand, reflected the values of an essentially conservative society that accorded great respect to tradition and justified established practices by their antiquity." See also Cohn, "The 'Modernity' of Medieval Popular Revolt," 731-741.

[38] Tilly, "Models and Realities of Popular Collective Action," 719. "My account will emphasize conflict and discontinuous collective action—contention rather than collaboration. The evidence comes from catalogs of strikes, violent events, and "contentious gatherings": Occasions on which a number of people gather in a publicly accessible place and, by word or deed, make claims on others, claims that would, if realized, affect the interests of those others. Contentious gatherings include almost all events that authorities, ruling classes, and unwary investigators call "riots," "disturbances," "disorders," and similar stigmatizing terms, plus a number of meetings, parades, and other gatherings that have enough political standing to escape stigma." Tilly has also argued that the terminology for popular politics was formed through the words of powerholders. Tilly, *The Contentious French*, 2. "In the century before the Revolution, "sedition," "emotion," and "mutiny" were common terms for events that later observers would have called "riots" or "disturbances." Unsympathetic observers, that is. "Sedition," "emotion," "mutiny," "riot," and "disturbances" are terms of disapproval, powerholders' words."

[39] Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, 7.

[40] Tilly, *Contentious French*, 4. "With regard to any particular group, we can think of the whole set of means it has for making claims of different kinds on different individuals or groups as its repertoire of contention. Because similar groups generally have similar repertoires, we can speak more loosely of a general repertoire that is available for contention to the population of a time and place." He also describes collective action as "alternative means of acting together on shared interests." Tilly, *Contentious French*, 390; For further information, see Della Porta, "Repertoires of Contention," in *Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*, 1-3.

this study, these terms will occasionally be employed for the purpose of using a rather neutral language when describing political actions the populace engaged in.

The present thesis aims to consider the populace of Constantinople as a political entity. The people in eleventh-century Constantinople were involved in politics in various ways were able to manipulate politics to a certain extent. Evidence retrieved from the contemporary sources suggests that the political repertoire of the populace was manifold. The 1042 revolt, which led to the deposition of Michael V is a paragon of the political power exerted by the populace, yet their participation in political life was by no means limited to that example. In fact, the violent political participation of the people is rather infrequent compared to their non-violent political participation. Thus, the examination of the popular politics in Byzantium entails looking at both aspects of people's political participation, violent and non-violent. The latter has been hitherto underappreciated by the modern scholarship which tends to emphasize the violent aspects of popular political participation. However, as these two aspects complement each other, one might perhaps fail to investigate Byzantine popular politics thoroughly without looking at non-violent political actions.

In order to examine the divergent political practices that the people engaged; the present thesis is divided into five main chapters. The second chapter focuses on the relationship of the emperors, empresses, and military rebels with the populace of Constantinople. It intends to demonstrate that the Byzantine emperors and empresses who aimed to keep the imperial authority and rebels who intended to usurp the throne tended to ingratiate themselves with the people of the city and sought their support in a number of ways. This chapter looks at the ways in which they approached and treated the people and aims to demonstrate that they frequently attempted to sound out, please and persuade the people. They showed themselves in

public, addressed the people and even asked their opinions. In the second part of the chapter, the ‘competition for the public opinion’ among the emperors and military rebels will be considered. Chapter Two questions the image of the “all-powerful emperor” and attempts to underline that the support of the populace of Constantinople was one of the sources of political legitimacy, while, on the other hand, its lack, especially in the given period, left the Byzantine rulers and their contestants politically more vulnerable. Overall, this chapter seeks to unravel the indirect traces of the Constantinopolitan populace’ political role.

Chapter Three is devoted to violent popular political action in Constantinople and, as a case study, the 1042 rebellion is presented. This chapter aims to examine the typology of violent popular politics and focuses on the blinding and deposition of the emperor Michael V, people’s fighting with imperial soldiers, plundering wealthy houses in the city along with churches and the imperial palace. It discusses punitive mutilation and its legal background in Byzantium and looks at the instruments used during the revolt. This chapter examines the participants of the revolt and those who exert violence and highlights that the rebels were not only composed of male participants but also female ones; not only adults but children and adolescents of both sexes. The last part of this chapter compares the contemporary authors’ perspectives of the rebellion and deals with the ways in which they associated it with the concept of legitimacy.

Chapter Four discusses the non-violent actions of the populace in detail. It aims to illustrate that urban political life in eleventh-century Constantinople was based rather on non-violent political action. The first part of this chapter examines the ways in which the people demonstrated their support to an emperor or a rebel. This part deals with acclamations, proclamations, and political celebrations. The

second part of this chapter focuses on the non-violent political activities of the people in opposition to the existing ruler. It examines news, gossip, and political debates as subversive practices. Furthermore, it investigates the ways in which the people demonstrated their political discontent verbally or symbolically; among these practices are derision, ridicule and antagonistic slogans. The third part of Chapter Four looks at the emotions said to be expressed by the people as a part of their political participation. This set of emotions, both positive and negative, seem to constitute a considerable part of the motivation behind their political support and opposition, thus provide insight about their mentality. The last part of this section elaborates on the people as a political entity by focusing on the fact that they were interested in and part of the political world in Constantinople. It focuses on the notion of common consent and its decisive role in the revolts. Last but not least, it attempts to explore the incentives for participating in collective action and whether or not the people were driven by political awareness.

CHAPTER 2

THE 'ALL-POWERFUL EMPEROR'

On 19 April 1042, the populace of Constantinople congregated in the forum of Constantine to listen to the city eparch Anastasios, who read the proclamation which had been prepared by the emperor Michael V to persuade the people for his 'scheming,' stating that they would have a peaceful life if they support him.[41] Psellos notes,

> After inventing such lies—sheer nonsense it was—and after winning their approval (they passed remarks suited to the occasion), he considered his defense before the Senate was adequate, and next put his case to the people. Some of the latter were already quite prepared to dance to his tune, and to them he told his story. They gave him their verdict. There was obviously support for his policy in that quarter as well, so this second meeting was dismissed, and he, like a man who has accomplished some mighty exploit, took a rest from his great labours and gave himself up to childish delight, all but dancing and leaping from the ground in his pleasure.[42]

This passage from the *Chronographia* depicts the contentment of the emperor when he assumed that he succeeded in winning the people's support. But why did he feel an incredible sense of relief after that? This chapter will examine the nature of the relationship between the Byzantine emperors and the populace. The central questions to be explored are how the populace was approached by both emperors and rebels, why they frequently sought their support, and how the public opinion was competed for. As already touched upon in the introduction very briefly, the role of the populace

[41] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 393: "At dawn he wrote a proclamation and gave it to the eparch of the city with instructions to read it out to the citizens in the forum of Constantine the Great. The proclamation stated: 'Because Zoe has shown herself ill-disposed to my rule, she has been banished by me and Alexios her like-minded accomplice has been expelled from the church, as for you, my people, if you maintain your favorable disposition towards me, you will acquire great honors and benefits, living an untroubled and quiet life."
[42] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 136.

was not inconsequential in the political sphere of Byzantium. They, directly or indirectly, engaged in a variety of political activities. Nevertheless, the direct manifestation of their power is only one side of the picture and how they were perceived and treated could provide us the other side of the coin to complete our view on them. Even though how the rulers see the populace was not the main concern of the Byzantine authors, the examination of the occasional and brief references in the sources provides a valuable opportunity to uncover their role as seen in the eyes of emperors.

There are various examples in the sources under analysis demonstrating that the public opinion was one of the critical political elements in eleventh-century Constantinople. Political actors, both emperors, empresses, and rebels, aimed to influence the people in order to gain their collective support in a number of ways. Kaldellis has used the term "the battle for public opinion" for this effort of obtaining popular acceptance.[43] As the author argues, neither Michael V's attempt to communicate with people nor his giving account to them about his deeds was unusual in the context of urban political life in Byzantium.[44] In the given period, both his predecessors and successors approached the populace in a similar fashion, in many aspects, as a power group whose consent ought to be gained.[45]

Byzantine emperors were traditionally assumed to be 'all-powerful.'[46] It was widely believed that they were the ones chosen by God and thus given the legitimate

[43] Kaldellis, "How to Usurp the Throne in Byzantium," 47.
[44] Krallis, "Democratic" Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium," 39.
[45] Vryonis. "Byzantine Δημοκρατία and the Guilds in the Eleventh Century," 293. "The citizenry of the capital played important roles in the deposition of four emperors (Michael V, Michael VI, Michael VII, Nicephorus Botaniates), and it becomes evident that the emperors attempted, increasingly, to win the support by extensive grants and favors."
[46] Savvides, "Internal Strife and Unrest in Later Byzantium, XIth-XIIIth Centuries (A.D. 1025-1261). The Case of Urban and Provincial Insurrections (Causes and Effects)," 250.

power.[47] The origins of this view have its roots back in Greek philosophy.[48] As Gilbert Dagron has argued, at the time of Constantine the Great, this Hellenistic view was absorbed into Byzantium, Christianized through Eusebios of Caesarea and accepted at the theoretical level.[49] However, unlike Basil II's prolonged rule, the succession to the throne never guaranteed a long and secure reign to emperors after the end of the Macedonian dynasty.[50] There were pretenders claiming the throne and potentially subversive public dissatisfaction. In both cases, popular elements had a say, to a certain extent, either in the role of supporter of usurpers as in the case of the accession of Nikephoros III Botaneiates or in the role of a rebel as in the case of Michael V.

2.1 For the support of the people: Distribution of gifts and honors

The Byzantine emperors, as soon as they rose to power, set about to please the people and keep the public opinion on their side.[51] The frequency of this practice

[47] Attaleiates, *The History*, 129. The passage of Attaleiates on Constantine X below also demonstrates that this claim was also made by emperors, as part of their public speeches. The author states that "At any rate, that which my narrative was about to say was that when Konstantinos Doukas took hold of the imperial scepters he gathered the associations of the City and spoke to them in fair and fitting term: 'It was I,' he said, 'who was appointed over the affairs of this earth by the King in Heaven, allowing me to share in the greatest honor that exist." For further information on this subject in the modern scholarship, see Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Background*, 611-613; Kazhdan and Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium*, 34; Anastos, "Byzantine Political Theory: Its Classical Precedents and Legal Embodiment," 13–53; Magdalino, "*Basileia*: The Idea of Monarchy in Byzantium, 600-1200," 575–98.

[48] Nicol, "Byzantine Political Thought," 51. "Here was common ground where pagan and Christian could meet on the subject of monarchy. Themistius regarded earthly monarchy as a copy of the kingship of Zeus, the supreme emperor (basileus). The kingdom of this world would be a reflection, a replica of that higher model. The king must possess and display a whole catalogue of virtues. Such notions can be traced back to the political theorists of Greek antiquity."

[49] Dagron*, Emperor and Priest. The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, 131-132; Sklavos, "Skylitzes: Moralising History," 111.

[50] Magdalino, "Aspects of Twelfth-Century Byzantine *Kaiserkritik*," 330.

[51] Vryonis. "Byzantine Δημοκρατία and the Guilds in the Eleventh Century," 309. "In fact, the turbulence of the people was such that the newly crowned sovereigns in most cases attempted to secure their good will by the bestowal of favors."; Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*, 50. "There is little doubt that Byzantine townspeople had some power. The crowd's exercise of influence was common enough in the empire's history: crowds could affect judicial proceedings, and officials apparently sought popular support."

suggests that the driving force behind the distribution of gifts, and later titles, in an extravagant manner, could have stemmed from the attempt to legitimate thus strengthen their newly-established rule instead of the arbitrary generosity of emperors. To quote Psellos,

> Now it was the custom among the Romans, at the decision of new emperors, that honours should be distributed both to civilians and to the soldiers, but this empress, while ignoring precedent, persuaded the people that she had not really broken with tradition. It was, in fact, generally admitted that this was not her first introduction to the government of the Empire. She was not succeeding to the throne now, but had inherited it long ago from her father, only to see it snatched away by outside powers; now she was again assuming her natural and rightful heritage. This explanation seemed plausible enough, and, although the people were ready to complain before, they were satisfied now.[52]

Though this excerpt contrarily focuses more on the empress Theodora distributing no gifts after her second accession to the throne, it proves that granting gift and honors, both to 'civilians and soldiers,' was a custom that was expected to be followed out the accession of a new ruler. Likewise, it demonstrates that the rulers felt obliged to explain the absence of this practice to the people and justified it on reasonable grounds. Above all, the passage also reveals that the people were ready to complain (τεθηγμένοι τὴν γλῶτταν) in case they were not allocated gifts. Theodora's not giving bounties was an exception to the rule as the accession to the throne was, in general, accompanied by the distribution of a generous number of gifts.[53] For

[52] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 262.

[53] What kind of gifts were bestowed to the people or how they were distributed is not explicitly stated in sources. Thus, the practice is not entirely known to us even though frequently mentioned. However, there are some information available. For example, Kaldellis notes that at the beginning of the empresses' joint rule in the year 1042, they used at least 381,600 coins taken by Michael IV's brother Constantine to cover the expenditure. Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood*, 179; Moreover, Attaleiates narrates Botaneiates' accession to the throne in 1078 and praises his gifts, saying that "For the most meager of his gifts was a fifteen-pound bag of gold." He also informs us that along with this 'offices, fields, gold bullion, and exemptions from duties, basically everything desirable and advantageous' was distributed. Attaleiates, *The History*, 499.

example, Psellos has argued, in a rather critical tone, that it was, in fact, Constantine VIII who began to "corrupt and swell out the body politic" by distributing gifts and titles.[54] And the empress Zoe was, at least, as generous as her father in spending money in favor of the people even though she herself was a *porphyrogenita*.[55] This indicates that even legitimate heirs attempted to curry favor with the people. Yet, in this case, one must also consider that she was a woman, thus she might have needed to put more effort to legitimize her rule comparing to her male counterparts.[56] As for other rulers, those who were in lack of ancestral inheritance, they counted more on the support of the people and felt compelled to please people with initial bounties as soon as taking power.

Both emperors and empresses were concerned with what the public opinion (κοινή γλῶσσᾳ) and aimed to gain their support and the practice of gift-giving was not the sole way to get the public opinion on their side. Several different methods were used to sound out, please and persuade the people.[57] Zoe is known, at least two times, to directly encounter with the people of Constantinople. The empress made an appearance to the agitated crowd who was about to revolt against the emperor Constantine IX Monomachos due to his mistress Skleraina. She prevented that to happen and appeased the people. Concerning this incident, Skylitzes has recorded:

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[54] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 308.
[55] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 100. "being so generous in her distribution of money, she has won the hearts of the people completely."
[56] How the Byzantine empresses, including Zoe and Theodora, and their rule were perceived by Skylitzes as a Byzantine male author, see Strugnell, "The Representation of Augustae in Skylitzes," 120-136.
[57] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 392. For example, Michael V first sounds out the public opinion and then puts his plan in practice: "He decided to sound out the people of the city first, to find out what their opinion of him might be. If there was evidence that they esteemed him and held him in affection, then he would put his plan into action; if not, he would keep quiet. So, he proclaimed a public procession to the church of the Holy Apostles for the Sunday after Easter, judging that in this way he could test the climate of public opinion."

> …When a voice broke out in the crowd: 'We don't want Skleraina for empress and we don't want our mothers, the porphyrogennetoi Zoe and Theodora, put to death on her account.' Suddenly everything was confusion; the crowd was in tumult, trying to get its hands on the emperor, and if the empresses had not promptly shown themselves from a place high up and calmed the crowd many would have perished, possibly including the emperor himself. When the disturbance had quieted down, he returned to the palace, abandoning the visit to the [forthy] Martyrs.[58]

On the second occasion, when Michael V was deposed by the people, she thanked them and asked their opinion on what has to be done to Michael V.[59]

Romanos III (1028-1034) was the first emperor who succeeded to the throne through his marriage to the empress Zoe. He was the former eparch of Constantinople and needed the full support of the people in order to keep his place safe against many other claimants, of military and civil roles, who were popular during the reign of Basil II. So, as soon as he took the imperial power, he began to distribute honors and gifts.[60] He supposedly spent a great amount of money for the purpose of flattering people in order to reinforce his position.[61] Similarly, his successor, Michael IV, was generous to people of all ranks; he bestowed many gifts to the people as soon as he ascended to the throne. On behalf of the emperor, his

[58] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 408-409.
[59] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 395. "When the Senate had been convened Zoe made a speech to that assembly, then she spoke to the crowd from a high and clearly visible position. Naturally she thanked them in appreciation of their support for her, inviting their opinion concerning the emperor and what should become of him."; Kedranos writes that the people cried out and said her: "kill the abominable one, remove the sinner. Let him be impaled, crucified, blinded." Cedrenus II, 540 quoted in Vryonis, "Byzantine Δημοκρατία and the Guilds in the Eleventh Century," 308.
[60] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 354. "No sooner was he seated on the throne than he honored his subjects with preliminary bounties and inaugural gifts."; Psellos, *Chronographia*, 65. "He had been most jealous of his reputation in distributing the honours of his Empire, and his generosity in the use of the imperial treasures, by way of favours and donations, had won him more regard than most sovereigns.".
[61] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 309. "At his death, his kinsman Romanus became emperor, with the intention of being a real autocrat. The family of the Porphyrogeniti was now extinct, and Romanus's ambition was to lay firm foundations of a rival dynasty. In order, therefore, that the civil population, as well as the military class, might be ready and willing to accept the principle of hereditary succession in his own family, he proceeded to anticipate their approval with the distribution of largess on a generous scale, thus adding to a body which was already gross, and aggravating the disease, and filling the corrupted part with superfluous fat."

brother John Orphanotrophos, who is one of the most prominent political personalities from the reign of Basil II to the mid-eleventh century and the chief court eunuch (παρακοιμώμενος), won over (ὑποποιέω) the Senate and persuaded (ἐπισπάω) people in order secure the throne as he also had a great role in his brother's coronation.[62] To quote Skylitzes, "He gained approval by advancing the senators to higher ranks and he also mollified commoners with gifts and favours (δωρεῶν δὲ διανομαῖς), conciliating the subjects once and for all."[63] According to Psellos, it was unavoidable for the emperor to perpetuate the tradition by distributing gifts as he has illustrated in the *Chronographia*: "he would have perished on the spot if he had not followed, in some small measure, the policy of his predecessors."[64] The relationship between the emperor and the people can be symbolized with the sense of unease because he was depicted as being afraid of the people supporting another person. For instance, the emperor, frightened of the political force of the city masses, asked *Orphanotrophos*, as Psellos has noted, "And how are we to check the people's gossip? Tell me more about these desires for revolution."[65] Moreover, Michael IV was afraid of the charisma of Constantine IX Monomachos and thus imprisoned him before he raised to the throne. The author narrates this passage in his account of Constantine IX and recorded:

[62] The critics of the patrician Constantine Dalassenos on his succession to throne among many other 'men of distinguished families and noble birth' gives us a glimpse that there were always potential challengers and dissidence in the city.
[63] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 371.
[64] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 309. "At his death, Michael ascended the throne. He stopped most of the evil practices, but he was not strong enough to deny some small additions of fat to this body, so accustomed to its nourishment of bad juices and unwholesome, fat-making, foods. Even Michael contributed somewhat to its grossness, however niggardly. Doubtless he would have perished on the spot if he had not followed, in some small measure, the policy of his predecessors**.** On the other hand, had Michael continued a few years longer in power, his subjects would one day have learnt to live wisely. In any case, a bursting-point was inevitable one day, for they were gorged to the limit of well-being."[64]
[65] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 99.

> In fact, Michael the Paphlagonian even committed him to prison, not so much through fear of him personally as for dread of the people acting on his behalf, for there was a great excitement in the city when he was seen, and the people were so agitated that a revolution seemed imminent.[66]

He touches upon a significant point that the subject of the emperor's fear, in fact, was not Constantine IX himself but the people's affection for him. Similarly, his successor, Michael V, had a similar experience, when he exiled *Orphanotrophos*. As the passage illustrates,

> John's defection was, no doubt, extremely gratifying to Michael, but it could not compensate the painful suspicions roused in him when the greater part of the city populace was flocking out to join the Orphanotrophus in his retreat. He feared a possible revolution, so, with extreme craftiness and no little malevolence, he wrote him a letter."[67]

The emperor seems to be afraid of his brother not only for his personal power but also his apparent potential to mobilize the people of Constantinople. In all three cases, the roots of fear the emperors experienced seem to be similar and related to either a collective action of the people or one's capacity to mobilize it against the emperor.

As soon as he acceded to the throne, Michael V adopted the same strategy as of Michael IV and he "conciliated the Senate with honors and promotions, the people with distributions of bounties."[68] He even surpassed his predecessors in distribution of money as Attaleiates has noted, "when he was elevated to the imperial position he was praised greatly and solemnly exalted, since he now began to grant more honour to the Senate and his other subjects than any previous emperor, rewarding a vast

[66] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 160.
[67] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 129.
[68] Skylitzes *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 392.

number of them with illustrious ranks and honours."[69] Psellos' remark also shed some light on his policy on ingratiating himself with the people: "…he would then have the support of the people, who were many, rather than of the nobility, who were few."[70] However, the case of Michael V is a great example showing that, as will examined in chapter three, urban collectivity was potentially rebellious and possibly destructive as well even though the emperor made a concerted effort to keep it on his side.

2.2 The mirror of the emperor: Rebels and usurpers

For the following period of four decades, from the year 1042 to 1081, a comparative perspective towards the approach of emperors and rebels to the populace of Constantinople might be beneficial because there seems to be strong parallelism in their actions concerning the populace. It can be claimed that when the emperors paid regard to the populace for securing the throne with their support, rebels also addressed their remarks to them in order to gain legitimacy through being accepted by the citizens. Thus, how the emperors treated people will be considered in comparison with the deeds of the rebels who challenged the imperial authority. In this turbulent period in question, Leon Tornikios and Nikephoros Bryennios were not successful in ascending to the throne, while former rebels Isaac Komnenos, Nikephoros III Botaneiates, and Alexios I Komnenos usurped the imperial power, even though the first two enjoyed the seat only for a short time. So, what was the role of the people in power changing hands?

[69] Attaleiates, *The History*, 17.
[70] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 135.

After the short joint-rule of the empresses, it was decided that Byzantium needs an emperor so that Zoe chose Constantine IX Monomachos to get married with for the third time in the year 1042. The new emperor, from senatorial classes of the city, not surprisingly, continued to practice the tradition of gift-giving both to the senate and the populace.[71] Related to this matter, Attaleiates has written that "Monomachos proved himself to be more generous than the previous emperors and honored virtually everyone with imperial ranks and grandiose gifts, thereby benefitting his subjects."[72] Warren Treadgold has claimed that the gifts Constantine Monomachos give to the people meant to be high salary.[73] On the distribution of gifts and ranks, Psellos, not known for his sympathy for the emperor, has noted in a metaphorical language,

> To put it more plainly, and at the same time revert to my former comparison, he first added a host of new limbs and new parts to a body already long-corrupted, injected into its entrails liquids even more unwholesome, and then, having done this, took it out of its natural state and deprived it of peaceful and civilized existence. He practically drove it mad and brought it to the verge of savagery, by making many-headed, hundred-handed, monsters of the majority of his subjects.[74]

[71] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 309. "He took over the state as though it were a merchantman loaded to the safety-line, so that it barely topped the wash of the waves, and having crammed it up to the very decks, he sank it. To put it more plainly, and at the same time revert to my former comparison, he first added a host of new limbs and new parts to a body already long-corrupted, injected into its entrails liquids even more unwholesome, and then, having done this, took it out of its natural state and deprived it of peaceful and civilized existence. He practically drove it mad and brought it to the verge of savagery, by making many-headed, hundred-handed, monsters of the majority of his subjects."
[72] Attaleiates, *The History*, 31.
[73] Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, 313. "He says that when Constantine IX became emperor, in 1042, he too "benefited his subjects by honoring almost everyone with imperial offices and lavish gifts," where "gifts" probably means high salaries. From this hyperbole we should conclude not that the emperor promoted almost the whole Byzantine population but that he promoted almost all his officials, including Attaliates."
[74] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 309.

The author criticizes him not only for the excessive expenditure but also his distribution of honors liberally.[75] The passage is worth quoting in full because it demonstrates how the generosity overjoyed the people and perhaps caused him to be supported by the people as seen in the case of the revolt of Tornikios. He writes,

> The doors of the Senate were thrown open to nearly all the rascally vagabonds of the market, and the honour was bestowed not on two or three, nor on a mere handful, but the whole gang was elevated to the highest offices of state by a single decree, immediately after he became emperor. Inevitably this provided occasion for rites and solemn ceremonies, with all the city overjoyed at the thought that their new sovereign was a person of such generosity. The new state of affairs seemed incomparably better than that to which they had been accustomed, for the truth is, folk who live in the luxury of a city have little conception of government, and those who do understand such matters neglect their duties, so long as their desires are satisfied.[76]

Psellos' criticism on Constantine IX's policies has been construed by Ostrogorsky as an attempt to "diversify the social basis of the elite," yet Paul Stephenson argues that social mobility was not primarily intended, it was only the consequence of the emperor's wish "to receive large payments in gold from those with social aspirations."[77]

The revolt of Leon Tornikios posed one of the military threats Constantine IX struggled. In the year 1047, plotting against the emperor, he sieged Constantinople and all but usurped the throne. His rebellion was recorded by the authors in detail and provides us some insights about how the Byzantine military rebels treated the populace. How the relationship was constructed between the military rebel and the people can be traced in the narrative of Skylitzes, as he has remarked that "He set up a palisade opposite to Blachernae, close to the monastery of the Anargyroi, then tried

[75] Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood*, 181. He argues that Psellos' perception towards the emperor was biased thus he distorts his reign.
[76] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 170-171; Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood,* 189.
[77] Stephenson, "The Rise of the Middle Aristocracy and the Decline of the Imperial State," 25.

to suborn the citizens with words and promises."[78] So why did a military rebel who already gathered excessive military support initially addressed the people? Why did he aim to persuade them with words not by force, especially in such a situation that the capital city was already suffering the lack of armed force? On Tornikios' point of view concerning the public opinion, Psellos has recorded,

> Besides, they were under the impression that the inhabitants of Constantinople would not remain loyal; they expected no opposition there, because the emperor had made himself unpopular by introducing reforms which curbed the liberty of the citizens. The people loathed him as a ruler and wanted to see a soldier emperor, a man who would endanger his own life on their behalf and put an end to barbarian incursions.[79]

This passage sheds light on the mindset of a Byzantine military rebel. The author suggests that while Tornikios anticipated no resistance coming from the city people and believed that the people would be pleased by his coming and his reasoning has stemmed from the fact that the emperor was no longer seen legitimate. Why the emperor lost his popularity among the people is also quite a crucial remark as Psellos explained this with the erosion of liberties. It invites us, in this way, to think about the Byzantine mentality in which the notion of legitimacy of power seems to carry great importance. There was a clear dissatisfaction towards the emperor in the city, on the other hand, Tornikios' pledges were not entirely appreciated by the whole populace as he had planned, though many people in the city were seriously thinking to join his side. These anecdotes give us the opportunity to re-read a Byzantine military siege as a competition between the emperor and the rebel for the common consent of the people.[80] Tornikios was trying to get the consent in the same manner

[78] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 414.
[79] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 209-210.
[80] The view of Tornikios seems not peculiar at all. Kaldellis writes that in the reign of Michael II, Thomas the Slav, having similar conceptions in his mind, thought that people's discontent with the

that the emperor who "showed his appreciation of their loyalty in the past, and promised them rewards, as if at the Games, if they continued to be faithful in the future."[81] His lavishness towards the people criticized by Psellos could be one of the reasons why he was still supported by the majority of the people. When the city was in such a trouble, even though Constantine IX was terribly sick and unable to move, he felt obliged to show himself to the people of Constantinople, who were planning to join the rebellion against the emperor, and let them see himself in order to prove that he was alive.[82] Psellos also indicates that this was not only reserved for chaotic situations, the emperor, though reluctantly, participated in public processions later as well to show himself to the people as it was "his unavoidable duty."[83]

Tornikios wished to be considered by the people of Constantinople as a savior and legitimate emperor instead of a military rebel who aims to take the city forcefully. As the passage below illustrates,

> But Tornicius shirked the final entry. Perhaps it would be truer to say that he was confidently awaiting our invitation to make him emperor; he expected to be led up to the palace preceded by torches, in a procession worthy of a sovereign. So he put off his entry to the morrow. For the moment he was content to ride on horseback to the several divisions of his army, shouting his orders. There was to be an end to the murder of their kinsmen: the massacre of the enemy must stop. He even set free intended victims and prevented any show of force.[84]

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current emperor would perhaps be an opportunity for him to seize power through the support of the people. "He must have been counting on general acceptance by the entire populace" Kaldellis notes, nonetheless, the rebel, just as Tornikios, was rejected by the people. Kaldellis, "How to Usurp the Throne in Byzantium," 46.

[81] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 216.

[82] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 210-211. "It was natural, therefore, that the city populace should think he was dead, and mass meetings were held in different part of the city where they debated whether they ought to run away and join the pretender. To counter this, although it was against his inclination, Constantine was compelled from time to time to mix with the people or allow himself to be seen from a distance and prove by his gestures that he still lived."[82]

[83] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 223. "For the sake of the city populace he considered it his unavoidable duty to attend the imperial processions, and it was on these occasions that he most bitterly complained."

[84] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 215.

Tornikios aimed to win the respect of the people. In fact, he also forced the captured people to address to their fellow citizens in the city and not to the emperor.[85] It seems safe to assume that his main target was capturing the city through persuading the populace.[86] However, upon having received a negative reply from the people, mocked by them, the rebel army of Tornikios "definitely gave up all hope of support from the people of the city. Thereupon they began hurling insults at the emperor."[87] Attaleiates has also noted that "He found the walls even better prepared to resist an attack, the men atop them ready for war, and, when he bid them open the gates, they mocked and insulted him."[88] Even though the rebel attempted to win over the populace, he could not succeed to do this.

In the year 1056, Michael VI was raised to the throne just after the empress Theodora, the last member of the Macedonian dynasty, died. He was supported by the members of the imperial court to take power and his giving gifts and honours seem to be limited to the senate members and the city people, while the military leaders have not been received particularly well.[89] Although Skylitzes has informed us that Michael VI had tried very hard first to negotiate with the rebel, Isaac I

[85] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 216. "With him he brought his prisoners, loaded with chains, and set them before the walls. They had been instructed what to say at the appointed moment. So, they stood there, some distance apart from one another, stirring pity by their cries as well as by their gestures. To the emperor they said nothing but addressed their remarks to the people. They begged them not to treat with contempt men of their own race and their own families, nor bear to watch themselves, a pitiable sight, being hacked into pieces before their very eyes, like victims at a sacrifice. They warned us not to tempt Providence by making light of a sovereign such as the world had never seen before, one whom they themselves knew well by experience. He could have destroyed them even then, they said, and he could have treated them as enemies, but no, -- till that moment he had put off the massacre, sparing their lives in order to do us a favour. Thereupon, by way of contrast, they gave a dramatic account of the terrible deeds of our ruler. They described how in the beginning of his reign he had raised very high the hopes of the city, only to bring us down from the clouds to the edge of a precipice. Such were the main points touched on by these prisoners. But the people's loyalty still did not waver."

[86] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 111. "They had risen early, as I have said, and they stayed there right up to mid-day, talking, listening, now flattering us, now uttering threats." Psellos, *Chronographia*, 117. "To the emperor they said nothing but addressed their remarks to the people."

[87] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 212.

[88] Attaleiates, *The History,* 47.

[89] Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood,* 216.

Komnenos, than to conciliate the public opinion, his power had been challenged and in a short time seized by the rebel, who advanced on Constantinople.[90] The author has observed,

> The old man reinforced the citizens' support for himself with gifts, money, excessive honours and whatever else flatters and artfully wins over a people, securing their support and loyalty. Wishing to render the bond of their support yet less breakable, he issued a written statement affirmed with awesome oaths and bloody curses that they would never name Komnenos emperor or sovereign or do him the honour due to an emperor; then he obliged each of the senators to subscribe to this and put his seal to the document.[91]

One of the differences between two military leaders, Leon Tornikios and Isaac I Komnenos, seems to be the massive support of the people the latter received despite Michael VI' attempt of persuasion of the people, especially the senators. Unlike Tornikios, Isaac I Komnenos was "exalted by acclamations, cheering crowds, and the din of trumpets and other musical instruments," and gained the support of the majority of the City.[92] So he became the first military general who successfully usurped the throne almost a century after the proclamation of Nikephoros Phokas in the year 963.[93] Isaac I Komnenos seems to be concerned about the people and public opinion, as the previous emperors, since what he did was to please the citizens by taking the soldiers off the city immediately after he became emperor. Psellos has said, "So the city was freed of the troublesome presence of the soldiers and the inhabitants marveled at the way in which Isaac had handled them."[94] Though he cut

[90] The role of the patriarch was also decisive in Isaac I's usurpation of the imperial power. Charanis, "Coronation and Its Constitutional Significance in the Later Roman Empire," 59. On the influence of the patriarch in the coronation of Michael IV and Byzantine politics in general, see Anastos, "The Coronation of Emperor Michael IV in 1034 by Empress Zoe and Its Significance," 23–43; Angold, "The Byzantine Political Process at Crisis Point," 6.
[91] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 462.
[92] Attaleiates, *The History*, 107-109.
[93] Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood*, 219.
[94] Psellos *Chronographia,* 303.

the grants bestowed by the previous emperors, Attaleiates draws attention to the fact that "he likewise distributed fitting donors to the civilian class," along with his allies.[95] One of them was Constantine X Doukas. In his narrative, Psellos has also claimed that the people's choice was actually Constantine X not Isaac I by noting that "The people were unanimous in their support of Constantine and wished him to become emperor. They urged him to seize power himself, but he refused, nobly withdrawing his own claims and making way for Isaac Comnenus."[96] In the year 1059, elevating Constantine X to the throne the emperor Isaac I abdicated.

Attaleiates, dramatically, begins his narrative on the reign of the emperor Constantine X Doukas by directly quoting the speech he made to the associations of the City (σωματεῖα τῆς πόλεως) as below:

> I who was appointed over the affairs of this earth by the King in Heaven, allowing me to share in the greatest honor that exist. I will not prove false in my contract with him but will be kind and compassionate, a father to the young, a brother to those my age, a cane to the elderly and like a son to them in disposition and imitation of nature. You will flourish under me and the words of the prophet will be fulfilled, for *truth will dawn over the earth and justice will look down from the heavens*, and not one person will there be in our times who will be troubled by sorrow, laments, and unjust deprivation.[97]

And adds, "He had raised his subjects' hopes for a better fortune to the highest level of expectation."[98] The passage is remarkable for two reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates that by gathering and directly addressing the associations of the city, the emperor recognized them as 'political beings.'[99] Secondly, it represents the need the emperor felt to convince people to prevent their apprehension. He also distributed gifts and

[95] Attaleiates, *The History*, 109.
[96] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 335.
[97] Attaleiates, *The History*, 129.
[98] Attaleiates, *The History*, 129.
[99] The term is from Krallis. Krallis, "Democratic" Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium," 28.

titles, as expected, and pleased the populace along with the Senate.[100] According to Psellos, the Senate and the people, two distinct social classes frequently mentioned in the historical accounts, have been intermixed with each other by Constantine Doukas:

> The government officials, their deputies the minor dignitaries, even the manual workers, all received something. In the case of the last-named, he actually raised social status. Until his time there had been a sharp distinction between the class of ordinary citizens and the Senate, but Constantine did away with it. Henceforth, no discrimination was made between workers and Senator, and they were merged in one body.[101]

Accordingly, there were still some groups in the city who were against the emperor's authority and they "believed that the emperor was displaying ignoble characters traits, was not keeping his promises, and was slacking in his imperial munificence; moreover, they longed for regime change, hoping to gain new profits from it."[102] The emperor suffered from the plot aiming to topple him but survived. His not-well-documented reign which was mainly characterized by the unsuccessful military strategies lasted eight years and ended with his natural death in 1067.[103] It is known that Romanos IV Diogenes was chosen by his wife, the empress Eudokia, as husband and emperor but we are not well-informed about how the emperor was acclaimed by the people or how his relationship was with the urban populace, because none of the historical accounts examined in this study makes any particular mention of his perception or behavior toward them.[104] The lack in the account of Psellos seems to

[100] Attaleiates, *The History,* 129-131. "He also granted honorific titles and the honorands were many and belonged to both the Senate and the common people."
[101] Psellos *Chronographia,* 338.
[102] Attaleiates, *The History,* 131.
[103] Kaldellis, "The Corpus of Byzantine Historiography: An Interpretive Essay," 215.
[104] Lounghis argues that people supported him. See Lounghis, "The Byzantine Historians on Politics and People from 1042 to 1081," 396. "…the Cappadocian noble Romanus Diogenes, who, according to subsequent narratives of sources, seems to enjoy considerable popular support throughout his short rign."

be reasonable for two reasons. First, he did not spend so much time at Constantinople during his short reign, battling against the Seljuqs in Anatolia and was taken prisoner consequently.[105] Second, Psellos seems to have a role in his blinding after he was released.[106] Michael VII, the son of Constantine X and the student of Psellos, ascended to the throne after the civil war.

It is widely accepted by his contemporaries that the rule of Michael VII was insufficient, and he was thought to be rather appropriate for the position of a bishop.[107] His reign saw Roussel de Bailleul's revolt and simultaneous military rebellions, of Nikephoros Botaneiates in the east and of Nikephoros Bryennios in the west. Attaleiates has informed us that Michael VII, when de Bailleul was advancing towards the capital, felt obliged to address the citizens directly. The author quotes the speech,

> When the news of the misfortune reached the ruler and the entirety of the people, everyone was concerned, as the emperor suspected that the Frank's attack was part of an inside plot. For this reason, he sat on the imperial throne and with a somber demeanor addressed those about him: 'Men of the city and members of the Senate, I have heard dispiriting news such as no one has yet had to endure and am on the brink of death. I am that Jonah of old, so take me and cast me into the sea, for it is because of my actions that such horrid and dark misfortunes are befalling the Romans.'"[108]

Even though historical sources do not mention so many direct speeches given by emperors to the people, this example, as of the speech of Constantine X, proves that they in fact did. One of the other significant features of his speech is that he

[105] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 243.
[106] Attaleiates, *The History,* 323-325. Carrying in a mule as a way of humiliation can also be seen in the deposition of Michael V. See Attaleiates, *The History*, 27.
[107] Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood,* 252.
[108] Attaleiates, *The History*, 339.

addresses not only the members of Senate but also the people (ἄνδρες πολῖται) as a distinct group.

Attaleiates writes that the military rebel Nikephoros Bryennios trusted in the dissatisfaction of the populace just as what Tornikios did in the year 1047 and hoped that he could usurp the imperial seat from the unpopular emperor, Michael VII, with the support of the people.[109] The author has noted that "Honoring his own brother Ioannes with the conspicuous dignity of *kouropalates*, he entrusted him with ample forces and sent him to the said Byzantion, trusting that the citizens were angry at and even deeply hated the emperor and the logothetes and would go over to their side…"[110] However, the army of Ioannes was not successful in convincing the people of the city, especially after his troops damaged the city by setting fire.[111] They frightened the people and subsequently gained their hostility. It must have been one of the reasons why he lost the opportunity to benefit from the general dissatisfaction the people have towards the emperor, though they were better equipped than the army of Botaneiates.[112] The author also mentions Bryennios sent many official letters to the Constantinople to persuade them unlike Botaneiates but that did not work at all.[113] The rebel was convinced that he was not welcomed in the capital only after he was directly opposed and mocked by the people of the city. He failed to take their

[109] As Lounghis argues he was widely unpopular among the citizens though Psellos praises him. See Lounghis, "The Byzantine Historians on Politics and People from 1042," 397.
[110] Attaleiates, *The History,* 455
[111] Attaleiates, *The History,* 457-459. "He was like a man who wishes to extinguish fire by pouring oil on it, thereby dramatically increasing its strength. The citizens already detested him and his brother, but now he earned an even greater hatred with this thoughtless act."
[112] Rogers, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology*, 262.
[113] Attaleiates, *The History*, 467-469. "Byrennios also had sent many of these missives, but no one paid any attention, even though he was in close proximity to the city with his forces and could have swiftly assisted those within, had they inclined toward him."; Neville, *Heroes and Romans in Twelfth-Century Byzantium: The Material for History of Nikephoros Bryennios,* 136. She argues the reverse that Botaneiates sent letters as well. "Bryennios' letters are written to persuade rather than incite rebellion," while Botaneiates even had a more conspiracy tone in his vocabulary.

consent and being rejected harshly by them. The people were on the side of the other rebel, Botaneiates as the passage points out:

> When a few of them were injured, they retreated and approached other sections of the walls, but they heard the citizens issue insulting cries and violent taunts, and they were driven away with javelins and stones, and were made a laughingstock, as in a mime performance. After camping before the city for many days, they understood how thoroughly they had been rejected. For everyone was gripped with a mad longing for Botaneiates, and they all awaited his imperial advent as if it were the advent of God himself.[114]

Attaleiates dedicated his *History* to the emperor Botaneiates so that the author's account on him requires the reader to be particularly mindful of praise. However, even though it would have been exaggerated and even misleading, the way he praised Botaneiates explains to us what virtues can be attributed to the ideal emperor in the mid-eleventh century Byzantium. Some of these virtues are related to decent behavior towards the people. For example, he observes why the city loved him as "for his extreme mercy and gentleness as well as for his manly hands, which were invincible in wars and in weapons and incomparable in handing out gift."[115]

Botaneiates has been crowned as emperor while Michael VII was forced to abdicate the throne through the proclamation of the rebel before Michael VII. Botaneiates, also, even though the state budget was shrinking, distributed great number of gifts and titles to the people in order to strengthen their support and to secure the throne.[116]

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[114] Attaleiates, *The History*, 459.
[115] Attaleiates, *The History,* 467.
[116] Attaleiates, *The History* 503. He notes that even the unemployed beggars in Constantinople became rich after the proclamation of Botaneiates: "Well, even they became rich where before they were paupers and well-off where before they had nothing, all because of the constant stream and sheer number of honorees, receiving on each occasion an ample quantity of gold from them. For all those who enjoy good fortune give to charity, which in jest they call 'Jesus's tip.'" Vryonis, "Byzantine Δημοκρατία and the Guilds in the Eleventh Century," 312. The author cites a passage from the chronicle of Constantine Manasses. The text offers a similar picture as he enumerates different social

As a conclusion, there seems to be strong parallelism between the notion of imperial legitimacy and the consent of the people. The ruling elite was aware of the fact that winning the public opinion on their side could spare them from the political threats to a certain degree, in other words, unless they were supported by the majority of the people, their rule was, perhaps, more vulnerable to attack coming either from the people themselves or from the rebels challenging their power. This seems to affect how the relationship was built between the ruler and the populace in eleventh-century Constantinople. Anyone aimed to obtain and keep the imperial power bid for the support of the people in various ways. Thus, this also questions the image of 'all-powerful' emperor in the light of the translucent pattern of behavior and perception not to mention the very participation of people into politics.[117] This image has first been questioned with the tradition of gift-giving which more likely to become a compulsion when a new emperor came to into power in the given period. Second, the role of the visibility of the ruler in public is examined as the emperors in some cases felt obliged to mix with the people or to expose themselves for the purpose of preventing people to acclaim another person. Third, the direct communication of the people and the ruler is investigated through by means of gatherings in which the emperor or the empress addressed the people directly. Fourth, evidence on the sense of fear is explored and claimed that it is the possibility of a collective movement against the emperor that gave them a sense of unease. Similarly, military rebels aiming to usurp the imperial power tried to keep the city populace on their side, tried to convince and please them. Taken together, one might

groups benefitting from the proclamation of Botaneiates, among them are blacksmiths, woodcutters, diggers, merchants, and farmers.

[117] For a full discussion on the "all-powerful" Byzantine emperor, see Angelov, "In Search of God's Only Emperor: Basileus in Byzantine and Modern Historiography," 123-141.

assume that, the Constantinopolitan populace had an important role in how the imperial power changed hands in eleventh-century Byzantium.

CHAPTER 3

THE POPULACE INVOLVED IN POLITICS: VIOLENT POPULAR ACTION (A CASE STUDY OF THE REVOLT OF 1042)

The year 1042 witnessed a great political upheaval in Constantinople. Upon hearing that the empress Zoe, legitimate heiress of the throne, was exiled by Michael V, the people of the city revolted, subsequently blinded and deposed the recently proclaimed emperor. In the course of the rebellion, the people engaged in several violent activities. They all but murdered the emperor, fought against imperial soldiers, ravaged shops and market stalls, and attacked many civil and religious properties including the imperial palace itself. The emperor's attempt to quell the initial phases of the rebellion by bringing the empress Zoe back from exile could not, however, assuage this eruption of popular anger, which was accompanied by physical violence, and the people continued to riot until they made sure that the emperor could not seize power again. Michael V fled to the Stoudios Monastery with his uncle Constantine the *nobelissimos*. Once they both got punished there by the officials sent by the empress Theodora, the sister of Zoe, the anger of the people is reported to have decreased dramatically.[118] Subsequently, the imperial throne was given back to empress Zoe along with her sister.

The revolt was elaborated in the three main Byzantine historical sources of the eleventh century. These contemporary sources, which are Psellos' *Chronographia*, Attaleiates' *The History*, and Skylitzes' *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, suggest that the aim of the people was to punish the emperor, Michael V, who abused his power by violating rights of the empress Zoe. As his adoptive

[118] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 150. "After his eyes, too, had been blinded, the insolence of the mob, so marked before, died away, and with it their fury against these men."

mother, she was the one who ascended him to the imperial throne but was exiled by him to the Prinkipo island.[119] The reaction of the people was devastating for the emperor. They did not stop revolting even after the empress was returned by Michael V, instead their anger much increased.[120] Even though the emperor trusted the people of Constantinople who initially supported him, they severely 'de-acclaimed' him when he became to be seen by them as a 'tyrant.'[121]

The rebellion which ended the short reign of Michael V in the year 1042 was the apogee of the people's violent political participation in the period between the years 1025 and 1081.[122] In this chapter, this incident, as a paragon of popular violence in Byzantium, will be set in the context of a struggle against tyranny and

[119] The role John Orphanotrophos played in Michael V's adoption by the empress and proclamation as emperor is indisputable. Beginning from the reign of Basil II, he was one of the important political figures in the imperial court, though he came from a modest family whose profession was money-changing. He elevated his brother Michael IV and then his nephew Michael V to the throne. Until the latter exiled him, he enjoyed excessive influence in the court. See also, Tougher, *The Eunuch in Byzantine History and Society*, 56; Kazhdan, "John the Orphanotrophos," 1070; Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant: Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in Byzantium*, 74-75, 191-193.

[120] Strugnell, "The Representation of Augustae in Skylitzes,"132.

[121] Kaldellis argues that an unpopular emperor is seen illegitimate and called as 'tyrant' in Byzantine terms. See Kaldellis, "Political Freedom in Byzantium: The Rhetoric of Liberty and the Periodization of Roman History," 808. Psellos, especially, uses this term (τύραννος) quite frequently. Psellos, 143. For example, he writes: "Ὁ τοίνυν δῆμος, ὥς μοι λέλεκται, κατὰ τοῦ τυραννεύσαντος στασιάσας…" ("As I have said, the people revolted against the tyrant…) by referring to Michael V. Attaleiates, in his narrative on Michael VII, focuses on this term and explains that "On the other hand, the people knew the rulers to be tyrant, who reigned in an unjust and irresponsible manner," denoting that the people associate injustice and irresponsibility with tyranny. Attaleiates, 437; It is also seen in the context of Medieval Europe that the noble classes rebelled against the kings they called them tyrant. See Vollrath, "Rebels and Rituals: From Demonstrations of Enmity to Criminal Justice," 89.

[122] For the revolts which took place in Constantinople or the city populace participated as a main actor, supporter, or opponent, see Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance*, 38-91. It must be emphasized that the 1042 rebellion was certainly not a peculiar incident. Popular collective action was quite prevalent in Byzantium. Popular insurrections of any sort can be frequently seen in Byzantine history, and the best-known examples are the sixth-century Nika revolt in Constantinople and the fourteenth-century Zealot movement in Thessaloniki. Even though the former eventually failed, both of these uprisings demonstrate the subversive characteristics of violent urban collectivity in Byzantium. Also, one should not focus only on cities, ignoring the countryside to trace the subversive political culture in Byzantium. The Byzantine countryside was not dissimilar to, cities in this regard; however considerable attention has not been paid yet to this subject. For some new studies on this subject, see Krallis, "Popular Political Agency in Byzantium's Villages and Towns," 11-48; Frankopan, "Challenges to Imperial Authority in Byzantium: Revolts on Crete and Cyprus at the End of the 11th C," 382-402. Besides, in the medieval West, too, popular collective actions similar to the 1042 revolt were not uncommon. For more information, see Cohn, *Lust for Liberty: The Politics of Social Revolt in Medieval Europe, 1200-1425: Italy, France, and Flanders*, 76-92.

abuse of power.[123] There are strong reasons for assuming that the objectives of the rebel people were subversive. Among several intermingled objectives of the rebellion are rescuing the empress Zoe, restoring her appropriated hereditary rights, punishing the emperor and eventually deposing him. Yet, there were many different opinions among the people during the revolt. Some people tended to have a more moderate aims as they calmed down after the emperor had brought Zoe back, on the other hand, other people, who have a more radical objectives, was not satisfied with his fleeing, followed him to the Stoudios Monastery, watching his blinding, and expressed their intention to kill him.[124]

Violence was not a rare phenomenon in Byzantium, and it was politically motivated in several cases.[125] The consequences of the 1042 rebellion suggest that violent political participation was the most direct and intense way of manifesting popular power in Byzantium, even though it was by no means the only one. The revolt giving rise to violence represents only one of the aspects of the Byzantine

[123] In his analysis of the people's role in politics in Byzantium, Kaldellis affirms that the Byzantines thought that it is legitimate to engage in opposition in cases of abuse of power. Kaldellis, "Political Freedom in Byzantium: The Rhetoric of Liberty and the Periodization of Roman History," 796: "The Byzantines, as genuine Romans, placed respect for liberty at the heart of their political culture and took action against authorities who violated this norm. Their religion did not make them any less free politically than had that of the ancient Romans; in fact, it provided them with additional grounds on which to resist tyranny of a particular sort."

[124] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 144-145. "As soon as this information became known in the City, the hearts of all men, hitherto filled with fear and grim foreboding, were now relieved of anxiety. Some made thank-offerings to God for their deliverance, others acclaimed the new empress, while the common folk and the loungers in the market joined in dancing. The revolution was dramatized and they composed choral songs inspired by the events that had taken place before their eyes. More numerous still was the crowd that rushed in one wild swoop upon the tyrant himself, intent on cutting him down, on slitting his throat."

[125] Yet, political violence was by no means limited to popular violence. It was exerted by different individuals and groups for various reasons. For example, Michael V castrated all male family members to prevent them from sharing imperial power, see Psellos, *Chronographia*, 147. Another example is that imperial soldiers reported to kill 3000 rebel people to suppress the revolt. Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 394. On the other hand, one should not fail to see that neither violence was a merely political phenomenon, nor was politics primarily violent in Byzantium. We can see, in the next chapter, how relevant Fouracre's criticism is to our case regarding the misreading of politics as 'typically violent.' Fouracre, "Attitudes towards Violence in Seventh- and Eighth-century Francia," 61. "Violence is thus often presented to us in the form of political behaviour, above all in the context of struggles for power.(…) Furthermore, the author's predilection for spectacular stories may have led them to accentuate the violence of Merovingian politics, leaving us with the false impression that Frankish political life was typically violent."

political culture. The present chapter is devoted to this particular aspect of political participation in Byzantium and aims to investigate the typology of violent popular politics. It seeks to demonstrate the different ways in which the people of Constantinople engaged in physical violence and how the contemporaries regarded the populace engaged in violence as a subversive activity.

3.1 Blinding as punitive mutilation

Blinding was an important component of the repertoire of violent popular political action in Byzantium. During the rebellion, one of the points, when the political violence reached a peak, was the blinding of Michael V. Accounts of Psellos and Attaleiates have highlighted that the blinding was commanded by the empress Theodora and exerted by his officials in front of the masses gathered in the Studious Monastery.[126] All three narratives under consideration have provided a detailed account of their blinding. Skylitzes, without emphasizing that the action was made by servicemen of Theodora, have depicted that "They took them up above the illustrious Stoudios' monastery to the place called Sigma and blinded them both (...) Blinded, they were banished…"[127] Attaleiates has provided a more detail picture of the event. He has described how the punitive mutilation happened as follows: "With everyone looking on, the pupils of their eyes were punctured with needles."[128] In a slightly different way, Psellos has stated that "his eyes were then gouged, one after

[126] Attaleiates also emphasizes that this punishment was ordered by the empress Theodora. Attaleiates, *The History*, 27. "When he reached the Sigma, an order arrived from the Augusta that he be blinded immediately, as well as his father's brother, the nobellisimos." Psellos also gives a similar information that they were blinded by the officers sent by the empress. Psellos, *Chronographia*, 149. "…they had not gone far on the journey when they were encountered by the man who had been commanded to blind the two criminals." Ibid., 139. "His party showed their instructions to the mob and they began preparing for the execution; the iron was sharpened for the branding."
[127] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 395.
[128] Attaleiates, *The History*, 27: "πάντων ὁρώντων τὰς κόρας τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἐκεντήθησαν."; For different methods of blinding, see Lascaratos and Marketos "The Penalty of Blinding during Byzantine Times: Medical Remarks," 134-141.

the other."[129] Furthermore, he has underlined that he was blinded through burning: "Bold, resolute men were dispatched with all speed. Their instructions were to burn out the fugitives' eyes, as soon as they saw them outside the sacred building."[130]

Punitive mutilation was a common practice in Byzantium. Having retained many elements of Roman law, Byzantine law contained several different ways of corporal punishment.[131] Thus, disfiguration of a culprit took various forms ranging from castration, rhinotomy, hand-cut, to blinding, depending on the crime.[132] For the middle Byzantine period, the Ekloga (Ἐκλογὴ τῶν νόμων), the eighth-century compilation of laws issued by Leo III and Constantine V, and later the Epanagoge (Ἐπαναγωγή), issued by Basil I and Leo VI in the night century, were the main sources, yet both were based on the sixth-century Codex Justinianus. In Ekloga, blinding (τυφλοῦν) is described to be the penalty for "vol d'objects sacrés, de jour ou de nuit, dans la partie de l'église interdite aux fidèles."[133] However, it was also utilized frequently as punishment in the political context.[134] Alexander Kazhdan has suggested that neither the Ekloga nor the Farmers law mentions blinding as a political punishment, however, then, he has asserted that "Blinding became the major means of punishing political rivals," and states many Byzantine emperors were blinded, including Constantine VI, Romanos IV, John IV along with Michael V.[135] Violating bodily integrity of one through blinding was considered as a practice to

[129] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 150.
[130] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 148.
[131] Dagron, "Lawful Society and Legitimate Power," 43.
[132] Kazhdan, "Mutilation," 1428; For castration as a way of punishment, see Tougher, *The Eunuch in Byzantine History and Society*, 28.
[133] Patlagean, "Byzance et le blason penal du corps," 406; Also see Patlagean, 409: Blinding as a penalty can be seen in different law books. For example, in the Farmer's Law (Νόμος γεωργικός) it is reserved for "qui voulait voler un bœuf / qui a laisse dévorer par les bêtes le troupeau dont il avait la charge."
[134] According to Bührer-Thierry, even though it was rather rare, blinding as a punishment was present in the Western Medieval world as well. She argues that "in the writings of Gregory of Tours, it is always described as the result of the abuse of power by the 'bad king.'" See Bührer-Thierry "Just Anger" or "Vengeful" Anger?" 77.
[135] Kazhdan, "Blinding," 297.

prevent the re-enthronement of an emperor, as Attaleiates emphasizes in his account of the public blinding of Michael V, "In this way they lost their sight along with the imperial power and were delivered over to become monks."[136] Psellos' remarks on Michael V's castration of his male relatives below give us insights about the rationale behind the practice of mutilation. He states,

> All his relatives, most of whom had already reached their full stature and were bearded men, who had become fathers and been entrusted with offices of great dignity in the State, he compelled to undergo castration, making of their life a semi-death. The truth is, he was ashamed to kill them openly: he preferred to compass their destruction by mutilation, a punishment apparently less severe.[137]

As this excerpt suggests, mutilation, in the Byzantine context, aimed at preventing one to be a competitor of power, was some sort of substitute for death. It seems that 'semi-death' coming with mutilation was a socially more acceptable alternative of killing someone for consolidating power.[138]

One of the crucial aspects of this punishment was the very presence of spectators, as in the case of the blinding of Michael V. Written sources have stated the very presence of the crowds in the Stoudios Monastery, at that moment, watching the punishment of the overthrown emperor. That might allow us to consider the practice of blinding as a 'public ceremony' since the punishment became a type of display when it was observed by the public.[139] Thus, it was not only a punishment but also, in a sense, a ceremony. Public blinding of the emperor by executors, when

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[136] Attaleiates, *The History*, 27.
[137] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 147.
[138] See also Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant: Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in Byzantium*, 62.
[139] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 145. He informs us that when the people heard the emperor fled to the monastery, some of them began celebrating while the majority of them following him rushed there. Psellos, *Chronographia*, 146. He as a first-hand witness of the blinding of emperor, states that: "Now the mob that had entered the church gathered in a circle round the two men…"

the crowds were watching, suggests that this action can be considered within the context of ritual violence as well. Guy Halsall has suggested that the public nature of the punishment could, in fact, augment its legitimacy.[140] In her article which looks at bodily punishments in Byzantium, Galina Tirnatic argues that "one of the goals of public punishment was to make the pain of the condemned visible to the observers. That perception was augmented by the audible input of screams and jeers and in some instances smell and taste."[141] As her argument has suggested, the punishment of Michael V provided such a visual and audible exhibition for those who were watching it. The process of blinding and reactions of those who are punished was observed by all. The emperor's uncle was reported to be composed and controlled, while the emperor was in an anxious state of mind. As Psellos has noted, "He moaned and wailed aloud, and whenever anyone approached him, he begged for help. He humbly called on God, raised hands in supplication to Heaven, to the church, to anything he can think of."[142] After the blinding of his uncle, the fear of the emperor augmented as he began "beating his hands together, smiting his face, and bellowing in agony."[143] In her article, Tirnanic has stated that "to be touched by law in Byzantium meant to actually be touched by the Byzantine emperor."[144] However, in the case of Michael V, we can say that the one who is touched is the emperor himself. As the emperor was deprived of his vision, he experienced the touch of violence in a ceremonial arrangement while people were hearing, watching, and participating.

[140] Halsall, "Violence and Society: An Introductory Survey," 32-35.
[141] Tirnanic, "A Touch of Violence: Feeling Pain, Perceiving Pain in Byzantium," 236.
[142] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 149.
[143] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 150.
[144] Tirnanic, "A Touch of Violence: Feeling Pain Receiving Pain in Byzantium," 237.

3.2 Plunder and physical encounters

Another face of popular violence was destruction and plunder. It was part of the repertoire of popular revolts in Byzantium, also in the medieval period in general.[145] During the revolt of 1042, the people demolished and plundered several buildings which are reported to belong to those who are relatives of the emperor. Concerning this, Psellos notes,

> It was decided first to attack the emperor's family and tear down their proud and luxurious mansions. With this object they advanced to the general assault, and all was razed to the ground. Of the buildings some were covered over, others were left open to the sky; roofs falling to the ground were covered with débris, foundations thrust up in ruins from the earth were stripped, as if the soil were throwing off its burden and hurling away the floors(…)Every building fell straightway at the first onslaught and the destroyers carried away what had been smashed or pulled down, with utter indifference. The objects were put up for sale, without a thought for the mansions from which they had come.[146]

Attaleiates narrates the same event as well but one can clearly see a difference between in the perspectives of the two authors. Attaleiates, with a more favorable tone, states that "Others surrounded the houses of the emperor's relatives who held great power at that moment, stormed them, destroyed them, and emptied out the riches stored inside, the fruits of much injustice and the groans of the poor."[147] It can be seen that he, as an author, seems to relate the event of the pillage of houses from the perspective of doers, not of those whose houses were pillaged instead by showing some empathy for them, if not sympathy. Why were these houses sacked? The destruction and sacking of private houses might have stemmed from eagerness for

[145] This kind of action is part of what Tilly calls parochial popular collective action. Tilly, *The Contentious French*, 392. He argues that among many examples as "turnouts," and "collective invasions," "pulling down and sacking of private houses."
[146] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 140.
[147] Attaleiates, *The History*, 25.

loot. Yet, there might have been, more probably, a political symbolism in this event. As Anthony Kaldellis has argued, it is a pattern, traditionally seen in revolts in Byzantium.[148] It also seems relevant to use the term 'ritual sacking,' for this sort of action as a manifestation of people's violent political actions.[149]

Not only the houses of those who were relatives of the emperor but also churches, monasteries and the imperial palace were attacked during the rebellion. In his account, Attaleiates has noted that "Nor did they respect either churches or monasteries that his relatives had built luxuriously and at great expense, but they likewise plundered, defiled, and stripped them bare as if they were polluted."[150] More radically, we see that people also intruded into the Great Palace as it had been targeted and burnt in the Nika revolt as well. Skylitzes has stated that "They forced the palace gates and entered, seizing the gold laid up in the offices and the rest of the things they found. They tore up the tax rolls…"[151] Kaldellis, in his book, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome*, discusses plunder occurred during the 1042 revolt. He argues that as "the *ennomos politeia* was suspended" in the times of mass movements, some people in the city might have supported these occasions "because it gave them the opportunity to plunder the mansions of the wealthy with impunity," on the other hand, he underlines the symbolic aspect of this kind of violence as a reaction to those who "benefited unjustly from the regime of Michael V, including churches and monasteries."[152]

[148] Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood*, 177. "The popular uprising followed traditional patterns. The people broke into the prefect's headquarter and freed the prisoners, plunder the mansions of the emperor's relatives and supporters and gathered in hippodrome."
[149] The term is used by Tilly, *Class Conflict and Collective Action*, 20.
[150] Attaleiates, *The History*, 23.
[151] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 462.
[152] Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome*, 161.

Another example of violent actions taking place during the rebellion was physical encounters with persons and the imperial army. In the first category, we see that people forcefully pulled and dragged Theodora, the sister of the empress Zoe, in order not to hurt her personally but rather to convince her to join the struggle against the unwanted emperor.[153] In his narrative, Attaleiates has stated that "They persuaded her to set aside her feminine modesty and weakness and follow them, for they were prepared and determined to suffer anything readily and risk their lives for her and her sister in order to rid them once and for all from the fear and danger posed by their enemy."[154] Psellos has also provided detailed information about how people persuade her. He has underlined that she was being used force as follows: "The citizen army, however, giving up all hope of persuasion, used force, and some of their numbers, drawing their daggers, rushed in as if to kill her. Boldly they dragged her from the sanctuary, brought her out into the open, and clothed her in a magnificent robe."[155] It seems clear that the people did not intend to harm the empress, yet they used physical force to threaten her in order to convince the empress to join their struggle. The emperor was also dragged by people in a more violent manner. As Attaleiates has noted that "His pursuers entered the sanctuary, all of them bellowing, and dragged him out by force."[156] Moreover, Skylitzes has stated, "…but the crowd, burning with anger on account of those who had lost their lives, forced its way into the sacred church, snatched them out there and dragged them across the forum by the feet."[157] The people also fought against the imperial soldiers

[153] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 144. The author relates why people turn their attention to the empress Theodora since her sister, as they thought, might have been influenced by the emperor and abandon those who revolt. On the other hand, they must have thought that her sister, equally heiress of the throne, though been exiled many years ago, might provide legitimacy to them.
[154] Attaleiates, *The History*, 25.
[155] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 144.
[156] Attaleiates, *The History*, 27.
[157] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 395-396.

during the revolt. Fighting in the streets was traditionally part of the repertoire of popular violence in Constantinople as it is also seen in the sixth-century Nika revolt.[158] Michael V, in the initial phases of the revolt, did not command soldiers to attack the rebel people. Regarding this issue, Psellos has noted that he intended to quell the disturbance 'without bloodshed.'[159] Yet, on the other hand, it might have also been possible that his first impression of the revolt was not threatening as Psellos has also stated that "he sat in the palace, at first by no means alarmed at the course of events."[160] Another possibility is that he had no adequate number of trusted army force since the author wrote "He had no allay in the palace nor could he send out for help, and even the mercenaries maintained by him were, some of them, of doubtful allegiance and not invariably responsive to orders, while others were openly hostile, and when their discipline broke, they broke out with the mob."[161]

During the revolt, the people engaged in a fight with the imperial soldiers as if they had military formation.[162] They used multiple equipment and tools both for attacking and defending purposes. Among the weaponry used by people, the most important ones are recorded to be axes (πέλεκυς), bows (τόξον), broadswords (ῥομφαία), stones (λίθος), stick (ξῦλον), and spears (δόρυ).[163] The people, as Attaleiates has noted, used whatever piece of tools such as leftover pieces they found

[158] Bury, "The Nika Riot," 99; Greatrex, "The Nika Riot: A Reappraisal," 60–86.
[159] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 140.
[160] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 140.
[161] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 140.
[162] Psellos emphasizes their soldier-like behavior several times. Psellos, *Chronographia*, 139. "They were gathered in one body; they must be marching under one common standard, with one single purpose. To most of the others it seemed a senseless revolt, but I, knowing from what I had seen before and from what I had heard, that the spark had flared up into a fire and that it needed many rivers and a fast-flowing current to put it out." Psellos, *Chronographia*, 139. "As there was no longer anything to stop them, for all men had already rebelled against the tyrant, they took up their positions ready for battle, at first in small groups, as if they were divided by companies. Later, with all the citizen army, they marched in one body to the attack."
[163] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 139. "Every man was armed; one clasped in his hands an axe, another brandished a heavy iron broadsword, another handled a bow, and another a spear, but the bulk of the mob, with some of the biggest stones in the folds of their clothing and holding others ready in their hands, ran in general disorder." See also Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 394.

which helps to fight as well.[164] Historical accounts have suggested that these kinds of tools were regularly used by them on other occasions as well. For example, when the army of Leo Tornikios arrived at the city walls in the year 1047, the city-dwellers attack the rebel army in order to defend the city. Concerning to this, Psellos noted that "However, some of the city-men went outside the wall and stopped their cavalry as they were riding up and down, some by hurling stones from their slings, others by shooting arrows."[165] Furthermore, Attaleiates has stated that, in the year 1078, the people attack the army of Nikephoros Bryennios in a similar fashion: "When a few of them were injured, they retreated and approached other sections of the walls, but they heard the citizens issue insulting cries and violent taunts, and they were driven away with javelins and stones…"[166]

As it has been mentioned in the first chapter, the Byzantine revolt was typically heterogeneous both action and participant wise. In Constantinople, popular elements who engaged in political actions, violent and non-violent, were divergent and included women and children as well. Balzaretti criticizes the inadequacy of gendered-perspective in the modern scholarship as follows: "We seem content to agree with our texts: violence was something 'that men do, not women.' Historians have concentrated on violence between men: war, 'feuding' and plundering," and her criticism is very relevant to the Byzantine history as well.[167] As Lynda Garland pointed out, the medieval Constantinopolitan mob was not exclusively composed of men participants.[168] Even though we are not fully knowledgeable about features of

[164] Attaleiates, *The History*, 23. "After smashing up the merchants' stands, they used the pieces as weapons to fight hand-to-hand against the imperial guardsmen and the men of the eparchos." For further information on Byzantine weaponry, see Kazhdan, "Weaponry," 2192.
[165] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 213.
[166] Attaleiates, *The History*, 459.
[167] Balzaretti, "These are things that men do, not women": The Social Regulations of Female Violence in Langobard Italy," 175.
[168] Garland, "Street-Life in Constantinople: Women and the Carnivalesque," 175. She attentively underlines the very presence of the women in the revolts. "We must bear in mind that throughout that,

the urban crowd, still, Psellos, in his account, has provided some insights about the composition of the 1042 revolt. As the following quotation clearly suggests women were vitally part of it: "It was not the hands of strong men in the prime of youth that pulled down the most of it, but young girls and children of either sex lent a hand in the work of destruction."[169] Cohn argues that, similarly, in the medieval Europe "riots made up of any led by youth, adolescent, and even children were more common."[170] In fact, as the author has underlined, these rather invisible groups were very active in the rebellion as well.[171]

3.3 Legitimate violence?: The authors' perspective

What was the authors' perception of the populace rebelling against the emperor? How did the authors perceive the 1042 revolt and violent actions people engaged in during the rebellion? It seems that these are crucial questions to pose in order to understand the place of popular violence in Byzantine society. Contemporary narratives on the excessive violence took place during the revolt have suggested that political violence has not entirely been blamed and treated with negative terms. In contrast, it seems that popular political violence, in eleventh-century Constantinople, was justified, to a certain degree, by contemporary authors.[172] Why did these authors, despite the fact that they belong to the upper echelons of the society, prefer such a

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even when women are not specifically mentioned as part of the 'mob', the Constantinopolitan crowd was not gendered exclusively male…"

[169] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 140.

[170] Cohn, *Lust for Liberty,* 92.

[171] While Attaleiates, in his account on Tornikios, describes the disturbance took place in the city, similarly reminds us that the medieval Constantinople was not a city of men exclusively. He depicts the city. Attaleiates, *The History*, 45. "The population of the city was in flight, rushing to and fro in disorder, some seeking refuge in the churches and sanctuaries, calling upon divine assistance, while others hurried in tears to the house of their relatives. Others were exhorting everyone to return to the fight, reminding them what terrible things would happen if the city were taken. Nor did women stay out of this confusing rush." For further information on children and adolescents in Byzantium, see Hennessy, "Young People in Byzantium," 81-92.

[172] Late Antiquity was also, in general, "notorious for legitimised violence. See also Clark, "Desires of the Hangman: Augustine on Legitimized Violence," 137.

neutral and even partly supportive language for violent actions of the revolting masses?

First of all, it is significant to note that there is no such consensus among these contemporary writers on the subject of rebel people and their deeds. Their narratives represent different point of views and attitudes towards popular politics. For instance, Attaleiates penned his narratives on the 1042 revolt almost entirely from the perspective of rebels. Alexander Kazhdan has argued that he was "keenly attentive to the townspeople, and he regularly notes details of their political and economic pursuits."[173] Compared to Attaleiates, Skylitzes, on the other hand, was less favorable towards people, considered them as a mob, and highlighted 'vengeful nature of the crowd.'"[174] He did not pay attention to details on the deeds of the rebels as much as former do. Based on Arnold's article on religion and popular rebellion, on authors' perception of mass political events, Diggelmann suggests that

> In other words, those most familiar with the events were more likely to explain them in human terms, while others looking on from a much later perspective were those who characterized the uprising as mindless violence or the work of the devil. In a similar way, and at an earlier point in time, the authors I discuss below recognize in all the cases that crowds of citizens were motivated both by rational and by emotional factors; they appear as human actors, not as unthinking slaves of larger spiritual forces.[175]

We might perhaps assume that his rather unfavorable tone stemmed from the fact that Skylitzes has penned his narrative later than Psellos and Attaleiates. Moreover, Krallis' argument might provide another explanation for his rather unsympathetic attitude towards people. He states that "as a loyal courtier of Alexios Komnenos,

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[173] Kazhdan, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, 78.
[174] Krallis, ""Democratic" Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium," 43. See also Flusin, "Re-writing History: John Skylitzes' *Synopsis Historion*," xii-xxxiii.
[175] Diggelmann, "Chronicles and Crowds: Accounts of Urban Unrest in Norman Cities, 1090-1160," 112; Arnold, "Religion and Popular Rebellion, from the Capuciati to Niklashausen," 149-169.

Skylitzes would have had no incentive to replicate Attaleiates's more republican reading of popular rebellions."[176]

Divine providence was one of the concepts Psellos and Attaleiates used in their accounts on the rebellion.[177] Both of them have used the theological term *pronoia* (πρόνοια) in their narratives for the purpose of explaining it. For instance, Psellos has described the people's action through the notion of 'superhuman inspiration.' He states,

> It was as if the whole multitude were sharing in some superhuman inspiration. They seemed changed persons. There was more madness in their running, more strength in their hands, the flash in their eyes was fiery and impassioned, the muscles of their bodies more powerful. As for prevailing on them to behave in a more dignified manner or dissuading them from their intentions, nobody whatever was willing to try such a thing. Anyone who gave advice of that sort was impotent."[178]

The same allusion can be found in the account of Attaleiates, as he explains this phenomenon with similar terminology through the term divine providence:

> Routing them utterly and forcing them to shameful flight, they did not disperse, as usually happens to a mixed crowd that lacks a leader, but as though they were led from on high they became stronger and bolder in their resolution, especially as their numbers were swelling by the hour from those who poured in to join them.[179]

There are other cases in which authors have mentioned the notion of God's providence as an implication of legitimacy. For example, in the narrative on the plot

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[176] Krallis, ""Democratic" Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium," 43. For further information on Skylitzes and his interest in elite families and aristocracy, see Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976-1025)*, 87-91.
[177] For the role of divine providence in Byzantine literature, see Harris, "Distortion, Divine Providence and Genre in Nicetas Choniates's Account of the Collapse of Byzantium 1180-1204," 23-28.
[178] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 140.
[179] Attaleiates, *The History*, 23.

planned to depose Constantine X, Psellos has stated that "through Divine intervention and their evil plans were discovered."[180]

It is noteworthy that in the narrative on the sacking of the wealthy houses, as mentioned above, Attaleiates has highlighted the presence of social injustice in society in eleventh-century Constantinople. He has informed his reader that several private houses were pillaged by people and then names the sacked richness as "the fruits of much injustice and the groans of the poor." As the passage has pointed out he does not entirely blame the action itself, but he criticizes those whose houses were plundered. It might even be probable that the author has criticized the wealth accumulated by those who are around the emperor and the consequences of the social stratification in the eleventh-century Constantinople. Dimitris Krallis has explained Attaleiates' empathetic and even supportive view to the people with his seeing the people as a 'legitimate body politic' as a reaction to the political instability of the time.[181] The rebellious action, as seen through Byzantine eyes, might be legitimized, to a certain degree, in certain circumstances, such as cases in which authority and power of the ruler were no longer respected.

3.4 The notion of regicide as a conclusion

What were the limits of popular violence in Constantinople? How far could the people go? Answers to these questions might only be speculative. Considering that

[180] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 341.

[181] Krallis, ""Democratic" Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium," 41: "I have argued that for a short period in the course of the eleventh century the historian Michael Attaleiates and a number of other politically-engaged intellectuals imagined solutions to problems raised by novel socio-political developments confronting the Byzantine state through a careful adaptation of classical Greek and mainly republican Roman ideas about governance. In traditional Byzantine fashion, they looked to a hallowed, distant past for solutions to contemporary problems. What they came up with, however, was surprisingly forward looking. Like intellectuals in fifteenth-century Florence they used classical antiquity and republican Rome as models for the new political arrangement they were attempting to reach."

several Byzantine emperors were murdered and many of them experienced some sort of violent death, the notion of regicide, might not have been entirely alien to the Byzantines.[182] Yet, as mentioned, the frequency of bodily punishments in Byzantine politics suggests that murder was socially less acceptable and not required especially when punitive mutilation was considered as a way of a giving someone a symbolic death, at least at a political level.[183]

During the 1042 revolt, while some people in the city were celebrating the fleeing of the emperor, others still had the intention to murder him. Psellos has stated that "More numerous still was the crowd that rushed in one wild swoop upon the tyrant himself, intent on cutting him down, on slitting his throat.[184] He also notes in elsewhere that "Now the mob that had entered the church gathered in a circle round the two men, like wild beasts longing to devour them, while I was standing by the latticed gate on the right of the altar, lamenting."[185] As the passage implies that regicide seems not improbable for the case of Michael V. Besides, it seems that these kinds of ideas were circulated not only for him. Only after fifteen years, as Psellos notes, the people had similar intentions for Michael VI, as they were supporting Isaac I Komnenos to usurp the throne. The author notes that "Their voice was calling out to cut the emperor into pieces and give the throne to the one who had won the battle."[186]

[182] Dennis, "Death in Byzantium," 1. "Of the eighty-eight emperors who ruled, from the first Constantine to the twelfth of that name, thirty-seven died natural deaths, three died in accidents, five in battle, thirty by other forms of violence, and thirteen were forced to abdicate and enter a monastery, regarded as another kind of death."
[183] However, it was not always entirely preventing for one to gain or regain imperial power. After being deposed and mutilated, Justinian II became emperor again in the year 705. See Kazhdan, "Justinian II," 1084-1085.
[184] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 145.
[185] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 146.
[186] Psellos *Oration Funebre* 1.50, quoted in Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood*, 218.

Even though regicide was supported by some groups in the revolt, it is important to note that it possibly stemmed from the intention of preventing Zoe to promote Michael V as emperor again, not from pure vengeance.[187] Concerning this, Psellos notes "They drew the natural conclusion that she would in all probability scorn Theodora completely and promote Michael to the throne a second time, by underhand means. Their unanimous decision, therefore, was to do away with the fugitive emperor. The moderate element, however, was not disposed to favour sentence of death."[188] As the passage points out that there was a plurality of opinions, some thought Michael V ought to be murdered while others not.

This chapter gives an account of the 1042 revolt and investigates its subversive characteristics and looks at the violent popular participation as a part of the political repertoire of the people in eleventh-century Constantinople. As this particular case suggests, rebellions were incidents which are able to precipitate on an otherwise unlawful set of actions in Byzantium. These actions generally include violent and subversive elements and threaten the imperial authority directly. The passage of Kaldellis on the function of 'suspension of legal authority' in rebellions is worth quoting in full, he states,

> In sum, the real power of the people was extralegal and outside the operation of institutions. In fact, when the people intervened, that often took the form of a suspension of legal authority, during which some even took the opportunity to commit criminal acts. But the purpose of these noninstitutional interventions was to institute a new legal authority or to restore one that was in jeopardy.[189]

[187] Yet it must be noted that vengeance was, as Smail argues, "something that all could understand, even men of the church," in the Medieval period. Smail, "Common Violence: Vengeance and Inquisition in Fourteenth-Century Marseille," 28.
[188] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 146.
[189] Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome*, 119.

During the revolt, many kinds of physical violence occurred in Constantinople. The emperor was blinded, numerous private houses were sacked along with churches and the imperial palace. The rebel people fought with the imperial soldiers and, as Skylitzes has recorded, at least three thousand people died. The 1042 revolt was a great example of the typology of people's violent intervention in politics in many ways. It was a short period of 'suspension of legal authority' intending to restore authority. It was decisive. The revolt achieved its objectives, the exiled empress was carried back and the emperor was punished and deposed. It also seems its consequences were not ephemeral; one can trace the footprints of the revolt in the years to come, as people seem to believe that they have a right to intervene in politics and exert some level of influence in politics.

Nonetheless, violent revolts were not the only political action the people of Constantinople engaged in. Their political repertoire was diverse and violent collective action represents only one aspect of popular politics and it was rather occasional compared to non-violent actions which are more constant. Julius R. Ruff's argument on early modern protests is pretty applicable to the Byzantine context as he argues that "…violence, however, was only the last stage of popular protest."[190] Furthermore, if the violent popular intervention is considered without other aspects of the political culture, one might perhaps fail to understand the political elements of revolts and undervalue the collective action. Yet, taken together with non-violent actions, which are examined in chapter four, political motivations behind the violent popular action can be seen more clearly. The fourth chapter thus will elaborate on these non-violent aspects of the political repertoire of eleventh-century Constantinople.

[190] Ruff, *Violence in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800*, 185.

CHAPTER 4

THE POPULACE INVOLVED IN POLITICS: NON-VIOLENT POPULAR ACTION

Non-violent aspects of the popular political action are the backbone of this study since the populace of Constantinople has demonstrated its involvement in politics most frequently in such ways that are not characterized by violent actions.[191] Urban violence related to politics in Byzantium, e.g. the Nika Riot, the 1042 rebellion, and the Zealot movement, has been widely examined by Byzantinists and this generous interest might have overshadowed non-violent political actions the inhabitants of the city engaged in. As it will be argued in this chapter, the people's engagement with non-violent political actions is, in fact, more representative of their political involvement due to the fact that such activities are more consistent and recurrent.

"Non-violent political action" is an umbrella term for categorizing various deeds of the populace, and in this chapter, these are divided into four main categories. The first category examines a set of actions the people engaged in for demonstrating their political support for an emperor, empress, or a rebel. This category comprises the ways in which the people show their support. Acclamation and proclamation of new emperors are some of the most common ways of their political participation. Furthermore, it also focuses on the nature and function of the political gatherings, in other words, political celebrations which came about pretty

[191] Even though, the non-violent popular action as a term has been widely used to address a variety of political practices that do not primarily involve physical violence, it is not denied that violence does not necessarily engage in physical brutality. There are a number of activities that can be counted violent but still does not engage in physical violence. Francisca Loetz and Rosemary Selle provide a description of violence which includes its aforementioned aspects. Loetz and Selle, *A New Approach to the History of Violence: Sexual Assaults and Sexual Abuse in Europe 1500-1850*, 10. "Violence is a partly ritualized form of social action by physical, verbal and symbolic means within structured (usually asymmetric) situations…"

often in the course of the eleventh century as a consequence of political volatility. The second category investigates the reverse situation where the urban collectivity was typified and manifested by its opposing and rebellious nature. It examines the role of constant circulation of news among the people through rumor and gossip as a manifestation of political awareness and efficacious socio-political form of information exchange. It also focuses on the concepts of laughter and political derision, both verbal and symbolic, including slogans which deliberately used by the people as a way of opposition. In the third part of this chapter, the Constantinopolitan populace's emotional repertoire which mingled with the political activities will be examined. As emotions were among the main motives for the collective action, they might provide an important background for understanding the Byzantine mentality, social values, and expressions. The fourth part of this chapter addresses the populace as a political entity. Emphasizing that the people were interested in and concerned with the politics, it looks at the notion of common consent, consequences of its existence and absence in Byzantine politics, as it is one of the key concepts to understand the dynamics of popular politics. After that, it discusses if the populace's participation in politics arose from their political thinking and awareness.

4.1 People supporting

Acclamation (εὐφημία) is a common way of expressing approval which has historically been part of political ceremonies though initially rooted in religious rituals.[192] It was also one of the indispensable parts of the "Byzantine process of making an emperor."[193] In Byzantium, especially between the year 1025 and 1081, the imperial scepter changed hands regularly and the throne was constantly

[192] Roueché, "Acclamations in the Later Roman Empire," 182.
[193] Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought: 300–1450*, 67.

challenged. Thus, the imperial successions needed to be accompanied by "publicly performed ritual acts and ceremonies of self-representation" for the purpose of bolstering the powerful image of the emperor and mitigating precariousness and insecurity.[194] The traditional practice of the people's participation in the ceremony of coronation is one of the most acknowledged ways of their involvement in politics particularly in cases in which the throne has not been passed linearly but competed by different actors.[195] This acclamatory role of the populace has been often recorded by contemporary historians and also well-studied by the modern scholarship.[196] Kaldellis uses the term "ritual participation" for the people's acclamation of a new emperor, and he underlines that this practice has been seen as one of the major sources for the legitimacy of the newly elected rulers.[197] This ritual participation of the populace by acclaiming the new emperor, and also "de-acclaiming" him in the reverse situations, have produced definite results. According to Kaldellis, the

[194] Beihammer, "Comnenian Imperial Succession and the Ritual World of Niketas Choniates' Chronike Diegesis," 161-162.
[195] Angold, "The Byzantine Political Process at Crisis Point," 6. Yet it was commonly attributed only to the symbolic role. For example, Angold underlines the crucial role of patriarch in the imperial ceremony of coronation and considers people's role as rather complementary which mainly functions in the period of political oscillation. He states, "It was through its representatives that imperial status, which derived from the Christian God, was mediated. Since, in practice, succession to the Byzantine throne was dynastic, more often than not it was a matter of following a conventional ceremony, which included acclamation and coronation. However, when the succession was in doubt, the imperial office was effectively in the gift of elements representing the city of Constantinople. This allowed those groups which had a ceremonial role in the making of an emperor to act as a conduit for the tensions and rivalries between Byzantine society. These were the senate and people of Constantinople and, to a lesser extent, the army, which in their different ways had a role to play in the acclamation of an emperor, but more important than any of these in the inauguration of an emperor was the patriarch of Constantinople, who acquired responsibility for crowning the emperor, which from the mid-seventh century almost always took place in the church of St Sophia." Charanis, "Coronation and Its Constitutional Significance in the Later Roman Empire," 59. He also underlines the major role of the patriarch and argues that he had a major influence in the accession of Isaac Komnenos since Michael VI's disagreement with the patriarch let the latter support Isaac. See also, Weiler, "Describing Rituals of Succession and the Legitimation of Kingship in the West, ca. 1000-ca. 1150," 115-116.
[196] Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, 56. The major historical source for the ceremony of imperial succession is *the Book of Ceremonies* of Constantine Porphygenitus as it provides a 'model' of the protocol although the participation and role of the people in the ceremony "are deliberately sidelined." See also Brightman, "Byzantine Imperial Coronations," 359-392.
[197] Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome*, 101, 118.

people's active participation was a common pattern in the Byzantine *politeia*, as he argues, it stemmed from Cicero's definition of the Roman *res publica*.[198]

Bearing in mind that the contemporary writers were known to be rather detached observers of the lower echelons of society and were not particularly willing to mention the ordinary people in their narratives, the frequency of references stating the popular acclamations of these people may perhaps indicate that their support which was demonstrated in these events was considered more important.[199] One can argue that by regularly mentioning these groups, the authors have acknowledged the role of the people on these occasions. For example, Charlotte Rouché has attested that popular acclamations began to be seen worthy of record from the fifth century as *De Ceremoniis*, Constantine VII's tenth-century treatise, states that from that period, it began to be part of the imperial ceremony taking place in Constantinople.[200] As the examples from contemporary sources below might illustrate, this practice continued during the course of the eleventh century as well.[201] For example, when the emperor Michael IV's marriage to Zoe elevated him to the imperial throne, he was acclaimed and praised by the people of Constantinople.[202] Psellos describes the accession of the emperor and the support of the people in his narrative as follows: "So, light-hearted

[198] See Kaldellis, "Aristotle's Politics in Byzantium," 124: "…*politeia*, the long-established Greek translation of the Latin concept *res publica*; they also called it *to koinon*, *ta koina*, or even *koinopoliteia* ("the polity that all share in common")." Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome*, 19. "So from where had Byzantium inherited a conception of the polity that referred at once to society-at-large, and the state itself? The answer is: from ancient Rome, whose direct descendent Byzantium was in an unbroken line of political and ideological continuity. The Byzantine *politeia* was but a translation of Latin *res publica*."
[199] Garland, "Political Power and Populace in Byzantium Prior to the Fourth Crusade," 50;
[200] Charlotte Roueché, "Acclamations in the Later Roman Empire," 187-188.
[201] There is a continuity in this participation up until the last period of the empire. There are, in fact, many examples from the twelfth and thirteenth century in which the people collectively participated public events, see Kontogiannopoulou, "The Notion of δῆμος and its Role in Byzantium," 117.
[202] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 370; Dagron explains that marriage was, as in the Roman tradition, the most common way of achieving the imperial power and legitimacy. In the given period five emperors succeeded through an imperial marriage either with Zoe or Theodora as they were the legitimate heirs of the throne. See also Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, 24-35.

and blithe, with pleasure and satisfaction, they acclaimed Michael as emperor."[203] Skylitzes recounts that the succeeding emperor, Michael V, was supported by the people through acclamations as well.[204] Similarly, Attaleiates has stated that the people supported Michael V as "when he was elevated to the imperial position he was praised greatly and solemnly exalted."[205] Then, the author has also recorded some details demonstrating the very participation of the people in the ceremony by embracing the new emperor,

> The procession was truly wondrous and befitting an emperor, and the City resounded everywhere and was exalted with acclamations, thanksgiving, and song of praise with one exception, namely that the procession took place earlier than was customary, which caused concern among more intelligent onlookers.[206]

Yet, for the Byzantine politics, it seems not the case that once acclaimed by the people, emperors enjoyed such popular support throughout their reigns. In fact, the support of the people was not steadfast at all. When the populace became malcontent with policies of an emperor, they immediately began expressing their opposition and generally supported another candidate who was seen more suitable to them for the imperial throne. For example, the empress Theodora was "acclaimed by the entire population," as a reaction to Michael V's misconduct and the very same people who had appraised the emperor, then, "exhorted her [Theodora] to stand firm to topple the usurper [Michael V]."[207]

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[203] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 88.
[204] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 393. "…They cheered vigorously to pour out their souls had it been possible."
[205] Attaleiates, *The History*, 17.
[206] Attaleiates, *The History,* 19.
[207] Attaleiates, *The History* 25-27.

The emperor Constantine IX Monomachos received the support of the majority of people in Constantinople when he was elevated to the throne just after the brief co-reign of the empresses Zoe and Theodora. Psellos has observed that "People of all ages and conditions poured out in a flood to meet him. There were salutations and addresses of congratulation and good wishes."[208] The people's acclamation for Isaac I Komnenos when he usurped the imperial power from the emperor Michael VI was immense as well. After all, it was known that the people were disgruntled with the reign of his predecessor and their support played an important role in his usurpation of the throne. Attaleiates has emphasized that the people exalted and acclaimed the new emperor, stating that "Komnenos then crossed the straits with the entire fleet and entered the City, exalted by acclamations, cheering crowds."[209]

Constantine X Doukas, similarly, received the support of the people when he was given the imperial power. Attaleiates records that "For everyone had now recovered his composure and all were applauding him for his victory and chanting in favor of the dynasty; thus, they escorted this procession with many acclamations and much incense."[210] Another example of popular acclamations is that was made for the emperor Botaneiates as Attaleiates records, "For this reason, the entire fleet departed for Prainetos information, exalting him to the heavens with acclamations."[211] These are but a few examples indicating that the populace reveals their support by acclaiming rulers when they took the imperial power.

The people's acclamations have frequently been mentioned in the contemporary sources. Yet, it was not the only practice in which the city populace

[208] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 164-165.
[209] Attaleiates, *The History,* 107-9
[210] Attaleiates, *The History,* 135-7.
[211] Attaleites, *The History,* 495.

manifested their support to an emperor. In the year 1042, the people proclaimed Theodora empress and roughly three decades later they declared Botaneiates emperor at the time when respectively Michael V and Michael VII were still holding the imperial power. That provides us strong clue about their political abilities which were perhaps more complex and many-sided, and, especially, not confined to the applause for the already chosen emperor. Byzantine history is crammed with emperors whose elevation to the throne was primarily based on their proclamation by the army. The Constantinopolitan populace, on the other hand, seems to be politically involved as much as the army, especially in the given period.[212] For instance, when the revolt erupted against the emperor Michael V in 1042, the people proclaimed Theodora empress even though the emperor was still in power. Concerning this, Psellos has stated that "Homage was paid to her, not now by a mere fraction of the people, but by all the élite as well. Everyone, with utter disregard for the tyrant, and loud applause for her, proclaimed Theodora empress."[213] Skylitzes has also recorded that "All her father's eunuchs now came running together with the patrician Constantine Kabasilas and all the rest of the Senate. By common consent, they dispatched persons to bring Theodora from Petrion to the Great Church where they dressed her in imperial purple and proclaimed her empress [anassa] together with Zoe her sister."[214]

We have even a more detailed picture of the people's proclamation of Nikephoros III Botaneiates. Although Michael VII was occupying the imperial seat, in the year 1078, the people of Constantinople massively supported Botaneiates to be

[212] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 275. At least, Psellos, even with a critical tone, implies that the emperors thought like that. He says, "Apparently the last few emperors were conceived that they were firmly established once the civil element acclaimed them."
[213] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 144.
[214] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 393-394.

emperor. Attaleiates has noted that they "were acting democratically," and proclaimed him.[215] The author penned,

> All elements of the state and society had their eyes set upon him, and they dared something great that surpassed anything that had happened before. While the emperor was at the Blachernai palace on Sunday, presiding and holding court with the entire Senate in attendance, those who were attending services in the temple of God's Wisdom threw off all fear of the emperor and, imagining themselves in a state of democracy -for fervent desire can convince one to attempt the impossible- in a loud voice they declared Botaniates emperor; this was on the day after the candlelit procession of Epiphany, that is, the Feast of Lights, even though he was still in his hometown in the province of the Anatolikoi and they could not expect to be defended by him.[216]

After he describes the deeds of the people, rather in a heroic way, he has underlined that they declared him emperor despite the fact that he was not even in the capital at that moment. The author has also added that neither the emperor nor the other military rebel, Bryennios, could have obtained such popular support even though these two were striving to secure the support of the people of Constantinople in a number of ways as described below,

> One might think that some chrysoboullon of his was read out that made pleasing promises and inflamed the citizens to proclaim him. Yet that was not the case, it simply was not. Instead it was the one in power, Michael, who rushed to do exactly that, but when it was read out in the church not only did it not please anyone, it instead caused everyone to hurl insults at him and shameless slurs. Byrennios also had sent many of these missives, but no one paid any attention, even though he was in close proximity to the city with his forces and could have swiftly assisted those within, had they inclined toward him."[217]

[215] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*, 51.
[216] Attaleiates, *The History*, 467-469.
[217] Attaleiates, *The History*, 467-469.

Attaleiates has emphasized that their striver was futile as their chrysoboullons were not appreciated by the people. In such a situation Botaneiates was proclaimed by the majority of the city, as he states that "and by a common vote, everyone in the City proclaimed Botaneiates emperor and master of the Romans with a great and unrestrained determination and cheering."[218] For the populace, as seen in these two examples, there was a tendency to unseat the emperor, in such cases when they thought the ruler was no longer suitable for the throne. The political force of the populace was capable of exerting a considerable amount of pressure so that these unwanted emperors were dethroned and those who were massively supported by them seized the imperial power.

Applauds, acclamations, and cheering. So, what was like the deposition of the unwanted ruler and the reception of the one who was supported by the people? In other words, how did the people celebrate such political events in Constantinople? Examples are not sparse in historical sources and are of the most direct ways of the people's involvement in politics. Celebrations are political gatherings where the masses, great number of the people from different social strata, came together in the public space and celebrated emperors' entrance into the city, coronation or the imperial procession.[219] For the period in question, the populace of Constantinople celebrated three main political events: successions of the empress Theodora, Isaac I Komnenos, and Nikephoros III Botaneiates. Furthermore, all the three celebrations seem to share certain characteristics: they are to do with political victory won by the

[218] Attaleiates, *The History*, 491.
[219] Attaleiates, *The History*, 497. In order to note that a great number of people came to the celebration for the entry of Komnenos into the city, Attaleiates writes: "The sea was all like a forest planted with ships and took on the appearance of a field densely covered with all manner of trees. And there was no limit to those who came out to greet him and who acclaimed him and celebrated his arrival with joyous and festive songs."

emperor or empress supported by the masses against the present emperor who was criticized and no longer supported.

Scenes of political celebrations narrated in the contemporary accounts give us many important details on the ways in which the public space has been occupied for political purposes and the characteristics of the festive-like political gatherings in eleventh-century Constantinople. These celebrations are also significant to understand how the common folk appeared and acted in public space while receiving the emperor or the empress they supported.

The usage of the musical instruments, such as cymbals and horns, chanting of songs and hymns, and performative plays have a crucial role in the demonstration of the people's contentment in the political celebrations. The first example of the public celebration is for the fleeing of the Michael V and coronation of the empresses Zoe and Theodora. One of the eye-witnesses of this event, Psellos, has described the whole festive event in detail. We see the people offering prayers in thanksgiving (σῶστρα Θεῷ ἀνετίθουν) for the deposition of Michael V, while some other people were "acclaiming the empress" (ἀνευφήμουν τὴν βασιλίδα).[220] Furthermore, the entertainment was another component of these gatherings as the author notes that "dancing" (χορούς) and "dramatized performing" (ἐπετραγῴδουν) were a significant part of the celebration.[221]

Psellos' another excerpt on celebrations in Constantinople is the narrative about the deposition of Michael VI and the elevation of Isaac I Komnenos. The author has focused on the fact that his entry into the city was celebrated by crowds in the streets. Details of this festive celebration are worthy of examination as it has visual, aural, and olfactive features. In this occasion, the people of Constantinople

[220] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 144.
[221] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 145.

poured out into the streets (εκκέχυται), they made use of "illuminated torches" (λαμπάδας ήμμένας προσάγοντες) and "perfumes" (ἀρώμασι κατευωδιάζοντες) to honour and please the former rebel and the new emperor.[222] Attaleiates' passage from the *History* has provided some insights to the question of how a political celebration in Constantinople sounded like. He has stated that "Komnenos then crossed the straits with the entire fleet and entered the City, exalted by acclamations, cheering crowds, and the din of trumpets and other musical instruments."[223] There can be little doubt that the city resounded with clamour and hubbub. The usage of musical instruments, e.g. trumpet (σαλπίγγων), horn (βυκίνων) and cymbals (κυμβάλων), can also be observed in Attaleiates' narration on the victory of Botaneiates over the emperor Michael VII. As he has noted, "his presence wonderfully announced by the sounds of trumpets and horns, the playing of cymbals, voices in acclamation, and by vast spectacles of magnificent nature."[224] These instruments in question have historical references as they were frequently used both in the literature of classical antiquity and the bible with military and religious purposes.[225] We see the usage of these musical instruments at the time when the emperor Michael V was fled to Stoudious Monastery. In his narrative on fleeing of the emperor, Attaleiates has stated that "At dawn courageous military men assaulted

[222] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 300; Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Fragrant Matter: On the Work of Holy Oil," 160. "For the Byzantines, as for other Mediterranean peoples, sensory rhetoric drew on cultural codes that used binaries mark cosmic order. Sweet fragrance indicated health, well-being, saints, miracles, and divine presence; stench marked illness, decay, demons, heretics, Satan, and death."
[223] Attaleiates, *The History,* 107-109.
[224] Attaleiates, *The History,* 497.
[225] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3. 528-571. "Pentheus shouts 'What madness has stupefied your minds, children of the serpent, people of Mars? Can the clash of brazen cymbals, pipes of curved horn, and magical tricks be so powerful that men, who were not terrified by drawn swords or blaring trumpets or ranks of sharp spears, are overcome by the shrieks of women, men mad with wine, crowds of obscenities, and empty drumming?"; Psalm 150: 3-5. "Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with timbrel and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals." For further information, Büchler, "Horns and Trumpets in Byzantium: Images and Texts," 26-29; Rautman, *Daily Life in the Byzantine Empire,* 276-277.

the palace with a rain of arrows, and their shouts were accompanied by the blaring of trumpets and bugles."[226]

Chanting was another sonic component of the celebrations in the city.[227] There are several examples of musical aspects of ceremonies in Byzantium. Egon Wellesz, for example, has cited this poem below chanted by the fractions, in the early period of Byzantium, as an acclamation to the newly-crowned emperor,

> At the sight of you, the Lord Emperor, the world rejoices, and your city gladdened, Gold-crowned N.N. Seeing you as its leader the army is enriched, and with you as their bearer the scepters are happy. For you adorn the throne the Kingdom of your fathers, sending forth, together with the Empress, rays of harmony. Therefore, the State, flourishing through you, celebrates this day of your rule.[228]

It is known that in the course of the eleventh century the acclamations of the people were accompanied by songs and dancing as well. For example, concerning the coronation of Nikephoros III, Attaleiates has stated that "For virtually the entire race of human beings and every age group broke into dancing (Χορείας) and celebration by composing hymns (πανηγύρεις ὑμνοπόλων).[229] When Isaac Komnenos was about to take the scepter, the people in the city celebrated the deposition of Michael VI and his rise to imperial power. Attaleiates has stated, "that he only needs to approach the city and they would expel the old man, receiving him with triumphal songs and hymns."[230] Similarly, survived after a failed plot, the emperor Constantine X Doukas was acclaimed by the people with songs. Attaleiates states, "For everyone had now recovered his composure and all were applauding him for his victory and chanting in

[226] Attaleiates, *The History,* 25-27.
[227] For a study on the auditory repertoire of Byzantium, see Papalexandrou, "Perception of Sound and Sonic Environmens across the Byzantine Acoustic Horizon," 67-86.
[228] Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and* Hymonography, 111.
[229] Attaleiates, *The History,* 499.
[230] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 462.

favor of the dynasty; thus, they escorted this procession with many acclamations and much incense."[231]

What hymn and songs the Byzantines song on these occasions?[232] One of them, at least, was mentioned in Attaleiates' the *History*. On the narrative concerning Botaneiates, he has noted that a celebration in which the whole city participated followed Botaneiates' proclamation by the people. In this occasion, he gives an example of the populace chanting psalms after they had declared Botaneiates emperor and were waiting for his arrival into Constantinople.[233] The author has stated, "and they kept the City in order without a ruler for three days, repeatedly chanting the words that the branch-bearing children had once proclaimed for my Christ: 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of Lord, a most pious emperor.'"[234] As Anthony Kaldellis and Dimitris Krallis have explained that this chanting is an allusion to Psalm 117:26 and Matthew 21:9 as it was reported to be shouted when Christ had entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.[235]

Visuality, as mentioned, was another important feature of celebrations. It has been noted that the main street of the city was decorated with valuable materials for the coronation of Michael V in the year 1041. Skylitzes has given an example of this decoration: "Those whose homes were on the main artery [Mese] hung out gold and silver objects, apparel and other fabrics worked with gold, and they cheered

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[231] Attaleiates, *The History,* 135-7.
[232] Tillyard, *The Acclamation of Emperors in Byzantine Ritual*, 101. He provides examples of acclamations, mainly from *De Officiis*, those chanted by the people particularly during the Christmas time, in the late Byzantine period, such as "May God prolong thy reign, divinely ordered, crowned, and guarded, mighty and holy, for many years!" Wellesz, in *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnolography*, 240. He gives some other examples of acclamations, polychronion, chanted such as "Long many the Lord extend your holy, mighty reign, through many years" or "Long may the Lord extend your heaven-appointed, heaven-crowned, heaven protected, mighty and holy reign, through many years." Hinterberger, "*Phthonos*: A Pagan Relic in Byzantine Imperial Acclamations?" 53-54.
[233] Attaleiates, *The History,* 118-26
[234] Attaleiates, *The History,* 495.
[235] See Attaleiates, *The History,* footnote 321.

vigorously to pour out their souls had it been possible."[236] Similarly, Psellos has noted how the atmosphere of the city was festive-like and everyone came to see the spectacle made for Michael V as follows, "The city wore all the appearance of a popular festival; perhaps it would be nearer the mark to say that there were two cities, for beside the Queen of Cities there had been hastily erected a second city, and the townsfolk had poured out right up to the walls, with markets and fairs."[237]

Celebrations were occasions where the people from different strata of society have gathered in public space for the purpose of manifesting their support, admittedly, many other forms congregations can be found in the historical sources. We can trace, for example, how religious festivals had a potentially subversive nature. The Constantinopolitan crowd made use of the holy feast of the Forty Martyrs for the expression of their profane complaints targeted the emperor Constantine IX Monomachos and his affair with Skleraina. In this feast, an unexpected political uproar erupted against the emperor, only two years after the people successfully deposed Michael V. The emperor was among the multitude outside of the palace for the public procession at the time of when the people suddenly rampaged. A severe disturbance erupted, and the people began shouting angrily in opposition to him due to the fact that he had a mistress.[238] Kaldellis has interpreted this event as "this was a reminder that, just as he was the beneficiary of a popular uprising, Constantine Monomachos could become its next victim."[239] According to Skylitzes, the anger of the people mollified only after the empresses Zoe and Theodora quieted them down as he underlines the potential threat of the people by stating that "If the empresses had not promptly shown themselves from a

[236] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History* 392-393.
[237] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 164-165.
[238] Attaleiates, *The History,* 408.
[239] Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood*, 187.

place high up and calmed the crowd many would have perished, possibly including the emperor himself."[240] These aforementioned examples might manifest that celebrations were occasions where the populace of Constantinople, as a political entity, appeared in public place for several reasons including for supporting emperors and even for criticizing them.

4.2 People opposing

As the Byzantine populace has been seen in the sources when they support the ruler in various ways, they also manifested their dissatisfaction to unwanted emperors and opposition to military rebels as seen in the example of the holy feast of the Forty Martyrs. They took part in conflicts and reflected their negative opinions through diverse practices. It is important to note that the rioting itself has not entirely been considered a crime, as Jill Harries has argued, and tolerated to a degree in the Byzantine society, especially for the Late Antique period. She has claimed that

> Romans were not in the habit of controlling riots through legal actions in law courts, except where individual organisers of riots could be identified and prosecuted for violence contra rem publicam. (…) within certain limits, the crowd had a right to riot. Chanting, public demonstrations, acclamations, and imprecations were, if not routine, nevertheless tolerated as a necessary part of civic life.[241]

There is a little sense in assuming that these particular circumstances dramatically changed in the middle Byzantine period. The people, during the course of the eleventh century, were able to manifest their political discontent and employed a number of different methods for these purposes. For example, how they poured out

[240] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 408.
[241] Harries "Violence, Victims, and the Legal Tradition in Late Antiquity," 89.

into the streets (ἐκχέω) frequently mentioned by contemporary historians.[242] It seems that pouring out was not used neutrally but as a politics-laden word in order to show collective action of the people by appearing in the streets. They also took to the streets to be au courant with the news and to be a spectator of the events as well.[243] It seems that the public space in eleventh-century Constantinople, e.g. the forum of Constantine and the Hippodrome, has not only utilized by Byzantine emperors for political events such as official proclamations but also by the populace itself.[244] Their political visibility in public space might even question our reconstruction of medieval Constantinople. It is widely believed that public space mostly loses its social and political significance and reduced largely to the non-political, ceremonial purposes.[245] However, public space seems to maintain its political role, to a certain degree, during this period as a place where the population's demands and dissatisfaction were loudly uttered.[246]

According to Hobsbawm certain capital cities in the pre-modern period generated such an 'urban tradition,' and this tradition enabled the city mob to flourish and exert certain power in these developed cities; even though the author, in

[242] Not only "ἐκχέω" but also "προχέω" or "συρρέω" are also used.
[243] Some examples are Psellos, *Chronographia*, 217. "Nevertheless, to us, even the withdrawal from their entrenchments seemed a most glorious triumph, and the populace of the city poured out to see them." Attaleiates, *The History*, 23. "As the imperial missive was unrolled, a great crowd poured into the area of the proclamation." Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 463. "To the people already congregated below was now added another numerous hordes, for news of what was happening was already abroad. Hence, they came running by the hundreds, not only those who delight in some novel event, but also a good number of wiser folk and several senators whose affections the emperor had not cultivated."
[244] The public space was primarily used by emperors in order display their power and authority. One symbolic example is given by Skylitzes. He states that objectors of the emperor who supported Tornikios has not only been imprisoned but also been displayed in the Forum, see Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 416. "While those who remained faithful to the tyrant right to the end had their goods confiscated after being paraded through the Forum and were sent into exile."
[245] For example, Angold explains the change in the public sphere by stating that "still dangerous but more ready to react moral not self-interest." Angold, "The Byzantine Political Process at Crisis Point," 6-7.
[246] Garland, "Street-Life in Constantinople: Women and the Carnivalesque": "In addition, the streets of the capital were – quite literally – a riotous place, in which bystanders of all classes interacted in the carnival medium."

his book, has focused rather on later periods compared to the eleventh century, it is perhaps possible to trace roots of this tradition in earlier periods as well.[247] So, how to discover traces of this tradition in the eleventh-century Byzantine capital? In attempting to answer this question, at least partially though, one can first look at certain practices such as circulation of news, murmurs of gossip, offensive derision, and slogans propagated among the populace.

Constantinople was one of the most densely populated cities of its time and political center of the empire.[248] Its inhabitants, formally or informally, were knowledgeable about what was happening around them, mainly through oral communications.[249] The written sources have suggested that they knew it if a military rebel revolted in a rather remote part of the empire. For example, when Rouselious (Roussel de Bailleul), a frank general formerly serving in the Byzantine army against the Seljuqs, rose up against Michael VII and advanced through the capital, news quickly arrived at the city before the rebellious army.[250] Attaleiates has underlined that "When the news of the misfortune reached the ruler and the entirety of the people, everyone was concerned, as the emperor suspected that the Frank's attack was part of an inside plot."[251] Similarly, when Bardas Skleros gathered some

[247] Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, 114-115; Marc Boone emphasizes a similar phenomenon. He underlines the fact very existence of the tradition of rebelliousness flourished in the urban era. Boone, "The Dutch Revolt and the Medieval Tradition of Urban Dissent," 351. "This awareness of an important medieval legacy of rebelliousness has helped to elaborate a political culture in which historical consciousness and the practical defense of concrete urban interests and values through both political stance and urban rituals merged and were finally passed on to the following generations of burghers."; Dumolyn and Haemers, "Patterns of Urban Rebellion in Medieval Flanders," 371. "Since in cities like Ghent and Bruges almost every generation witnessed or joined an urban riot or revolt, it is hardly exaggerated to speak of a 'revolutionary tradition' in collective consciousness."
[248] Charanis, "Some Aspects of Daily Life in Byzantium," 53-54.
[249] See Dumolyn and Haemers, 'A Bad Chicken was Brooding' Subversive Speech," 52-53. "The circulation of medieval popular ideas about politics and society should be situated in a communicative situation of 'aurality'… The 'sins of the tongue' were manifold: gossip, boasting, slander but also blasphemy and political subversion."
[250] Krallis, *Serving Byzantium's Emperors*, 8.
[251] Attaleiates, *The History,* 339.

power in Asia Minor and revolted against the emperor Basil II, not only the emperor but also the people were informed about the rebellion. Skylitzes has recorded that "When news [of the uprising] reached the capital the emperors were greatly distressed and despair overcome those of the citizens who had intelligence and integrity."[252] As some of the major political and military events in the provinces seem to be publicly known among the people in the capital city, they probably did not fail to be au courant with what happens in the imperial palace as well.[253] We have some examples. The people were informed about and also displeased by the emperor Constantine IX's affair with her mistress Skleraina.[254] So as they knew the illness of Michael IV even though the palace tried to keep this secret.[255] Concerning this, Psellos has recorded that "For a while his friends attempted to hide his conditions and they took council for the State, to forestall any revolutionary movement, but when the whole city was talking about his illness and the report of it spread everywhere, they altered their former plans."[256] These are brief and anecdotal pieces of information which may seem irrelevant at first sight, however, taken together, they might shed light on the fact that there was a constant flow of information in the city and the news was constantly spread among the people. Even though we do not entirely know how their social organization was like to enable the Byzantines to receive this kind of information, or what kind of communicational practices they developed, news and rumors were disseminated among them.

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[252] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 301.
[253] Concerning this issue Garland states "Aligned with their interference in political matters was the populace's hit of making personal abusive attacks on emperors and their families and their use of ridicule and mockery express their views of the current political situation. The people had a very detailed knowledge of the personalities and lifestyles of their rulers and that such rumor and gossip on such matters was a normal part of city life." Garland, "Political Power and the Populace in Byzantium Prior to the Fourth Crusade," 49.
[254] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 408.
[255] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 123.
[256] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 123.

The social and political function of the rumor is noticeable for the Byzantine populace. Along with the official proclamations, the news was circulating mostly through rumor at the popular level. As shown in the second chapter, the fast-moving circulation of news was worrying for emperors in certain cases. For example, Psellos, in his narrative on Michael IV, has noted, "…but when the whole city was talking about his illness and the report of it spread everywhere, they altered their former plans."[257] Another example might be that, the author has written a dialogue between the emperor Michael IV and John Orphanotrophos. He has stated the latter to say he was "unable to restrain the tongues of the people," and warns the emperor by saying that "do not imagine, Sir, that the people have failed to hear…" and adds, "men's tongues constantly spread rumors."[258] Regardless of whether this dialogue between the emperor and his brother was authentic or invented for dramatic impact, one can deduce that the rumour was, from a certain point of view, a political phenomenon which is inherently subversive as it spreads the news from one to another by reproducing and reshaping the information.[259]

The constant flow of the news among the populace might perhaps be one of the indicators that the people were interested in politics. We are not fully knowledgeable about the ways in which they debated in political events; however, historical evidence clearly demonstrates that the city dwellers, at least some of them, engaged in such political practices.[260] One of the striking examples is that the

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[257] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 123.
[258] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 99.
[259] Kaldellis argues that the latter can even be more informative: Kaldellis, "The Corpus of Byzantine Historiography," 220. "Like their ancient counterparts, they invented speeches for their characters and sometimes invented or transposed the characters themselves for dramatic effect, and an episode that was factually untrue could still point to a deeper truth that a historian wanted to develop as a theme during the course of his narrative, in fact, it could point to this truth with more clarity than a factual episode."
[260] Though, this passage below is from a later period, it might be helpful to illustrate the vibrant atmosphere in the city. Vryonis notes how the people of the market-place, according to Gennadios, engaged in discussion on religious subjects in fifteenth-century Constantinople. Vryonis, "The

meetings where the city people discussed whether or not support the rebel. Psellos has stated that during the siege of Leo Tornikios, in Constantinople, "… mass meetings were held in a different part of the city where they debated whether they ought to run away and join the pretender."[261] He has also added that "Throughout the city were men on the way back to their homes, or men who contemplated going over to the pretender."[262]

Another example of the people being informed about what happens around them is that they were conversant with and concerned about the power struggle between the empresses Zoe and Theodora after the deposition of Michael V. Some people thought that the former deserves to be the sole empress, on the other hand, some argued that Theodora herself has a right to be the ruler. Even though it was not the primary aim of the author to convey this rumours, Psellos' narrative on the empress Zoe has provided some information on how the public opinion was shaped. He has stated that "While these rumours were spreading, first one way, then another, among the people, Zoe anticipated their decision and seized all power for herself a second time."[263]

Niko Besnier, in his anthropological study, has examined talk as a political practice, and argued that it is such a practice to "make sense of what surrounds them, interpreting events, people, and the dynamics of history."[264] Ethan H. Shagan, likewise, in his article, has studied the practice of rumor in the early sixteenth-

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Freedom of Expression in 15th Century Byzantium," 287: "For Gennadius, then, there is too much freedom in the discussion of matters concerning dogma, synods, canons of the church and the personality of Christ. He criticises the fact that not only the Greek theologians discuss such matters, but all the people of the marketplace who often attack the theologians. All this is somewhat reminiscent of the atmosphere of fourth century Constantinople when one of the Cappadocian fathers found everyone quarrelling about theology and discoursing about the incomprehensible."

[261] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 210-211.

[262] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 215-214.

[263] Psellos *Chronographia,* 160.

[264] Besnier, *Gossip and the Everyday Production of Politics*, 2-3, 191-192.

century England and has emphasized its uncontrollable nature and its usage by the people as a tool in the context of popular discourse.[265] The social function of gossip, in the Byzantine context, seems not to be much less important. In the written sources, it was depicted to be a way of spreading the news in the popular level, and perhaps had a role in the production of the popular political opinion in the city. Even though, these practices called by the contemporary historians as rumor and gossip, with a neutral connotation, if not negative, they seem to be more useful than we ever thought for the populace since this practice served to the communication among the people, reproduction and reinterpretation of the news, and dissemination of political ideas.

In the Byzantine society, laughter, mainly believed to be vulgar, frivolous and even obscene, has not been considered in positive terms. The Christian tradition that the Byzantium was nurtured, conversely, appreciated modesty as a virtue in expressions. Most importantly, Christ himself was an ideal model for this modesty as he was depicted, in the Bible, only with smile but never with laughter, so the church fathers have also perpetuated this tradition, besides many of them associated the laughter with sinfulness and they strictly condemned it.[266] For example, John Chrysostomos, is known to strictly emphasize in his sermons that laughter would not be reconcilable with the Christian lifestyle.[267] As Lynda Garland has presented, those twelfth-century canonists, like Theodore Balsamon, raised an objection to laughter as their predecessors.[268] Yet humour was part of Byzantium. It can be found both in the

[265] Shagan, "Rumours and Popular Politics in the Reign of Henry VIII," 30-32.
[266] Garland, "Street-Life in Constantinople: Women and the Carnivalesque," 163-164.
[267] Webb, "Mime and the Dangers of Laughter," 220.
[268] Garland, "'And His Bald Head Shone Like a Full Moon ...': An Appreciation of the Byzantine Sense of Humour as Recorded in Historical Sources of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," 3; See also Kazhdan and Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium*, 62.

Byzantine literature and everyday life.[269] Furthermore, its manifestations existed in the political sphere as well.

It seems safe to assume that there was a political plurality in eleventh-century Constantinople. The political repertoire of the Byzantines was wide and antagonism towards an unwanted emperor has been reflected in various ways, among them one can find derision as a common practice.[270] Laughter and humour, embedded in verbal derision, are considered to be powerful and subversive instrument of popular politics.[271] Concerning the laughter in popular politics in Byzantium, Lynda Garland has argued that "Populace had a predilection for ridicule and satire. Such ridicule was also an important factor in the political life of the capital often serving as the public expression of the people's opinions and views and as a serviceable weapon in social and political controversies."[272] The Byzantine approach to ridicule, as it was inherited from the antiquity, and its symbolic power has been studied in the context of politics.[273] John Haldon has suggested that humor has been widely used as a rather 'safe vehicle' to address the authority in Byzantium.[274] The people of Constantinople were, time to time, satiric to emperors and rebels. Unpopular rulers were often derided by the people openly in a number of ways. Haldon has provided some general examples of mockery and stigmatization that the Byzantine emperors experienced. For example, he has written that the emperor Phokas was shouted by

[269] Kazhdan and Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium*, 64.
[270] Garland, "Political Power and the Populace in Byzantium Prior to the Fourth Crusade," 50. "Despite the theory of imperial authority which was so intrinsic a concept of byzantine society, it is clear that the Byzantines in 11th and 12th c., despite their lack of former political rights, were not afraid to laugh at their masters and betters, and frequently, if not always, openly expressed their opinions on current events, often in songs, but sometimes in lampoons, and even though talking birds, their interests including coup d'etats and revolutions, battles of national importance, political intrigues and issues within the capital of which they show quite an intimate awareness, and the vilification of current rulers and plans for their downfall, as well as a knowledge of and willingness to criticize wherever possible high-ranking bureaucrats and officials."
[271] Haldon, "Humour and the Everyday in Byzantium," 55.
[272] Garland, "Political Power and the Populace in Byzantium Prior to the Fourth Crusade," 20.
[273] Magdalino, "Tourner en dérision à Byzance," 55-72.
[274] Haldon, "Humour and the Everyday in Byzantium," 64.

the people as “You’ve drunk too much again, pissed out of mind again…” or “Get up and learn about the situation; Maurice [the deposed ruler] isn’t dead yet.”[275] Kaldellis has also provided some other examples and underlined that the people frequently mocked emperors through abusive songs and improper nicknames such as “Chalker” for Michael V and “the Old Man” for Michael VI.[276] The written sources provide us further examples of mockery and derision towards both emperors and rebels. Apparently, these were used by the people as a way of political disparagement thus innately subversive.[277] In eleventh-century Constantinople, for instance, the public reaction against the military rebel Leo Tornikios was rather demeaning. As mentioned in the second chapter, though he attempted to curry favor with the citizens, when he sieged the city, the inhabitants of Constantinople used verbal derision as an apparatus to reflect their opposition to him. As Attaleiates has cited in the *History*, “…when he bid them open the gates, they mocked and insulted him.”[278]

Nikephoros Bryennios and his rebel army experienced a similar public rejection through verbal and performative derision when they approached the city dwellers for their approval. Attaleiates has noted that “they heard the citizens issue

[275] Haldon, “Humour and the Everyday in Byzantium”, 64.
[276] Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: Power and People in New Rome*, 146; Hatzaki, “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly,” 98. The author emphasizes that the emperors were mocked due to their physical appearance as well. Certain characteristics of ugliness in the eyes of the Byzantines such as baldness and dark-skin were used in oral derision. He states, for example, the populace “howling with laughter” mocked John Doukas to be bald or Andronikos I Komnenos was mocked for his head “balder than an egg.”
[277] Hinterberger, *“*Messages of the Soul,” 139-140. As he points out that laughter was an expression of contempt as much as joy depending on the context. Psellos, *Chronographia,* 149. For example, when the people made fun of Michael V and his uncle, Psellos states “insults were tempered with laughter,” as an expression of contempt. Laughter seems to be one of the instruments used to undermine the authority of the emperor.
[278] Attaleiates, *The History,* 47. Yet it was not a one-sided mockery. Attaleiates also states that those who are in the camp of Tornikios insulted the emperor. It also gives us some information on the terminology of political insult. As they uttered some words such as ‘corruptor of the people,’ Attaleiates, 47. “As no favourable reply was forthcoming from the persons to whom these remarks had been addressed -- actually they poured forth a torrent of abuse, with all manner of disgraceful epithets, both on them and their pretender -- they definitely gave up all hope of support from the people of the city. Thereupon they began hurling insults at the emperor. They reviled him for his bodily weakness. They called him 'accursed', a 'degenerate seeker after unholy pleasures', 'the bane of the city', 'corrupter of the people', with a whole string of other disgusting and scurrilous invectives.”

insulting cries and violent taunts."[279] Then the author has provided some further details by saying that "they were driven away with javelins and stones, and were made a laughingstock, as in a mime performance."[280] Przemyslaw Marciniak has suggested that the mime performances in Byzantium, especially in the later period, were very important and went hand in hand with political mockery and insult.[281]

Psellos, in his narrative on Michael V's deposition, has noted that public mockery and derogatory insults that targeted the emperor along with his uncle as follows: "Along with us a great multitude of folk poured in, roaming abuse at the accursed fellow. All manner of indecent epithets were hurled at him."[282] Skylitzes has recorded the same situation by saying that "…insults were hurled," towards to the emperor Michael V.[283] Attaleiates, likewise, has stated how the people mocked another emperor, Michael VII Doukas, because of the chrysoboullon he sent to the people: "When it was read out in the church not only did it not please anyone, it instead caused everyone to hurl insults at him and shameless slurs."[284]

Yet derision in the Byzantine world was not limited to a verbal mockery and used in symbolic level as well. One example of this symbolic ridicule is related to mules. In the pre-modern world, mules, along with horses and asses, had a central role in many aspects of everyday life. Mark Griffith has explained their role in the ancient Greek and Roman period and argued that mules were valuable animals which were mainly used for transportation purposes in both the military or agricultural

[279] Attaleiates, *The History,* 459.
[280] For the mime performances in Byzantium, see La Piana, "The Byzantine Theatre," 173; Tougher, "Having Fun in Byzantium," 139-140. Marciniak, "How to Entertain the Byzantines: Some Remarks on Mimes and Jesters in Byzantium," 125-148. For twelfth-century mime performed for entertainment in Constantinople, see Mango, "Daily Life in Byzantium," 350-351.
[281] Marciniak, "Laughter on Display," 234.
[282] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 145.
[283] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 394.
[284] Attaleiates, *The History*, 469.

life.[285] Theodore Prodromos, a twelfth-century Byzantine writer, has proven through his satirical poems that they had a similar value and function in Byzantium as follows:

> My boy, see Mr so-and-so? He used to go on foot,
> He now rides a fat mule with double leather straps[286]

The mule was used as a symbol of prestige. It was still an important animal and used more or less for the same purposes in everyday life in Byzantium. Nevertheless, the contemporary sources suggest it might have a double meaning as that to be carried in a 'wretched' and 'pitiful' mule (ἡμίονος or ὑποζύγιον) was seen a derogatory experience, particularly for a former emperor, and this image was an object of ridicule for the Byzantines since the process of humiliation for an overthrown emperor was concluded with his transportation through a poor mule. Attaleiates has noted that the emperor Michael V has been loaded into "a pitiful and wretched mule" (ἡμιόνῳ τῶν εὐτελεστέρων καὶ ταπεινῶν), "an object of ridicule," (καταγέλαστον).[287] He, then, has added that "So they were pulled down from their mules in a disgraceful way (κατενεχθέντες οὖν τῶν ἡμιόνων ἀτίμως), and with everyone looking on."[288] This seemingly pejorative detail of being carried in a poor mule can also be found in the forced abdication of the emperor Michael VII in favor of Nikephoros III Botaneiates as well. The author has described the event by stating that "They deposed the emperor Michael who had fled to the Blachernai palace, converting him to the monastic life and sending him under guard to the monastery of Stoudious on a humble mule (μετ᾽ εὐτελοῦς τοῦ ὑποζυγίου)."[289] As the examples of

[285] Griffith, "Horsepower and Donkeywork: Equids and the Ancient Greek Imagination," 236-239.
[286] Haldon, "Humour and the Everyday in Byzantium," 49.
[287] Attaleiates, *The History*, 27.
[288] Attaleiates, *The History*, 27.
[289] Attaleiates, *The History,* 493.

derision, both symbolic and oral, suggest that there were relatively safer ways of humiliating a Byzantine emperor and these were reported to be used by the Constantinopolitan populace as subversive tools.

Can political slogans allow us to hear the voice of the people in the lines of written sources? Do historians get a chance to establish such a direct relationship with the actors of the past through the writers' quotation of their words? The modern scholarship is rather skeptical about this perspective. It is argued that voices ought to be interpreted with great caution, in light of the fact that authors used them as literary apparatus to elaborate their ways of expression, narrative, and thought.[290] Yet, it still might be one of the key instruments in understanding the popular politics in Byzantium.[291] "Unworthy," "Let the bones be broken," and "Dig up the bones," are of the most common slogans uttered by the Byzantines when the populace aimed to depose the unpopular emperor.[292] In this way, they manifested their negative perception and posed a verbal and symbolic threat to the targeted emperor. According to Kaldellis, these slogans were chanted as a curse since they "signaled popular rejection of someone's authority."[293] The subversive nature of popular political slogans can be easily conceived in the historical sources. For example, when Michael V's decision to exile the empress Zoe became known to the city dwellers, they were all concerned and frustrated. Skylitzes has stated what was yelled out when the proclamation of the emperor was read out loud:

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[290] See Kaldellis, "The Study of Women and Children," 66-68. He questions the search for "voices" as "authentic experience." For the authorial voice and literary representation, see Neville, "Pity and Lamentation in the Authorial Personae of John Kaminiates and Anna Komnene," 65.
[291] Kaldellis, "The Corpus of Byzantine Historiography: An Interpretive Essay," 220. "Like their ancient counterparts, they invented speeches for their characters and sometimes invented or transposed the characters themselves for dramatic effect, and an episode that was factually untrue could still point to a deeper truth that a historian wanted to develop as a theme during the course of his narrative, in fact, it could point to this truth with more clarity than a factual episode."
[292]For some curses employed by the people, see Vryonis, "Byzantine 'Δημοκρατία' and the Guilds in the Eleventh Century," 306-308; Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic*, 147-148.
[293] Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic*, 128.

> We do not want a cross-trampling caulker for emperor, but the original and hereditary [ruler]: our mother Zoe'; and the entire population immediately broke out into shouts of: 'Let the bones of the caulker be broken.'[294]

The populace, in a direct way, has expressed their demur as they no longer want Michael V as emperor. For the same event, Psellos has recorded what particularly female protestors, though they were part of the women's quarter of the imperial palace, cried out when they poured into the streets in favor of the exiled empress:

> 'Where can she be?' they cried. 'she who alone is noble of heart and alone is beautiful. Where can she be, she who alone of all women is free, the mistress of all the imperial family, the rightful heir to the Empire, whose father was emperor, whose grandfather was monarch before him - yes, and great-grandfather too? How was it this low-born fellow dared to raise a hand against a woman of such lineage? How could he conceive so vile a thought against her? No other soul on earth would dream of it.'[295]

This passage implies a deficit of legitimacy for the rule of Michael V as mentioned in chapter two. They were bold to criticize the emperor's deed openly by uttering that they do not accept his authority as he was seen as a *parvenu* by them. Another slogan chanted by the people was recorded by Skylitzes on what happened after the emperor fled and subsequently the two empresses were brought together by the Senate. They gathered the people to make a speech and after Zoe showed gratitude to the people of Constantinople for supporting her, she asked the people what should be done to the emperor. Hence, the crowd answered the question of the empress all together by crying out, "Death to the murderer! Get rid of the criminal! Impale him! Crucify him! Blind him!"[296]

[294] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 393.
[295] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 138-139.
[296] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 395.

The deposition of the emperor Michael V is, no doubt, one of the most thoroughly narrated political events in which the participation of the people can be clearly seen, but it does not necessarily mean that it is the sole example. Urban unrest in eleventh-century Constantinople has also been recorded by the contemporary writers though not as detailed as the case of Michael V. One of the examples is that on the people's disgruntlement on the affair of Constantine Monomachos with Maria Skleraina.[297] Skylitzes has narrated that Constantine IX Monomachos was heavily censured by the inhabitants of Constantinople due to having an affair openly with his mistress Maria Skleraina.[298] He states, "a voice broke out in the crowd" and adds what the people have shouted, "We do not want Skleraina for empress and we do not want our mothers, the *porphyrogennetoi* Zoe and Theodora, put to death on her account."[299] As the author has stated the disturbance was just about to turn a rebellion if not the empress Zoe calmed down the masses.

These aggressive slogans supposed to be uttered by the people over their opposition to the emperor. Although these utterances might have been used by historians for the purpose of polishing their writing, they might still shed some light on daily politics in Byzantium. These slogans were attested not only in these three historical narratives under consideration but also can be found in writings from earlier and later centuries as well.[300] Frequency of these slogans attested in the sources by itself is important as Dumolyn and Haemers emphasize that the orality of

[297] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, 409. "There was plenty of complaining by the people, the senate and by the sisters, the Sovereign Ladies, about the daughter of Skleros being the emperor's mistress."
[298]For more information on Maria Skleraina, see Garland, *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium AD 527-1204*, 146-152.
[299] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 408.
[300] Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic*, 120-125. For example, in the sixth century, the emperor Anastasios was also shouted "unworthy of the basileia" as well.

the rebellious speech is an important factor in its disappearance in the written sources easily.[301]

4.3 Emotions: Those who love and hate

Aristotle was first to describe what emotion (πάθος) is. He stated that "The emotions are all those affections which cause men to change their opinion in regard to their judgments and are accompanied by pleasure and pain; such are anger, pity, fear, and all similar emotions and their contraries."[302] In the last few decades, the history of emotions has seen a scholarly interest, particularly in the medieval context. As Martin Hinterbergen has argued, emotions have been examined in the Byzantine context as well, primarily within the context of theology mainly through hagiographical sources.[303] In addition to these sources, a set of emotions are mentioned within different contexts in the Byzantine historical narratives as well.[304] Moreover, it is discernible that narratives on the actions of the people often overlap with the references on the variety of emotions such as fear, hatred, anger, love, and longing. So, one might perhaps ask why these emotions were coupled with the people, why this "emotionally-charged language" has been particularly preferred in these sections of historical narratives?[305] Many different feelings, both positive and negative, were involved in the Byzantine popular politics mainly in a form which is

[301] Dumolyn and Haemers, "'A Bad Chicken was Brooding'" 51; For the "irretrievability" of the orality, see Camille, "Seeing and Reading: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy," 36.
[302] Aristotle, *The 'Art' of Rhetoric*, 173. Quoted in Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*, 12.
[303] Hinterberger, "Emotions in Byzantium," 126.
[304] Especially Attaleiates makes use of the emotions in his narrative very skillfully as this following passage depicts the very beginning of the 1042 revolt. Attaleiates, *The History,* 21. "In short, everyone wanted to exalt greatly what they had seen. But when the evil fate of the empress became known to the populace and the news everywhere, you could see everyone's mood instantly change to its opposite: sullenness rose up against joyful thanksgiving and an outbreak of implacable hatred took the place of the honour and praise that they had bestowed upon the emperor. People strove to surpass each other in the anger and express their displeasure and lack of respect for him."
[305] The term has been used by Plamper in *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*, 35.

directed to emperors.[306] So, why some emotions aroused were often directed to one emperor and some others to another? In other words, what makes people love one emperor and what makes them hate another one? How these emotions were expressed in the literary sources? What insights do these emotions reflected by the people give us about the Byzantine society?

As Attaleiates dedicates his book to the emperor Botaneiates, it seems clear that the emotion of love (ἀγάπη), like many other positive emotions, was mainly reserved for him in his narrative.[307] We have several examples from his account that the people said to be expressed their positive emotions to him. The author uses the term "affection" (πόθος) to describe the emotions of the people. Describing the emotions of the people, Attaleiates has stated that "This affection for him [Botaneiates] was universal and spoke with one tongue, long since acclaiming the son as worthy to wear the imperial crown."[308] Similarly, the emotion of "joy" (Χαρμονή) was also used to describe the emotions of the people when Botaneiates was proclaimed emperor. He records that "When the news of his proclamation reached the Imperial City, everyone's hearts were lifted, filled with joy." Then, by describing this joy in an inflated language, he adds, "It seemed that people would have put on wings, were such a thing possible, so willing were they to fly toward him, forgetting about their children, wives, and their households, which many of the

[306] Yet not exclusively. For example, "fear" (φόβος) was stated to be felt by the populace during the Rus' attack in the city in 1043. Attaleiates, *The History,* 33. "The City of Byzas panicked in fear, as no preparations had been made to meet this unexpected foreign invasion." Or it is attested to be felt among some people when Constantine Doukas began punishing those who had been part of the failed plot planned against him. Attaleiates, *The History,* 137. "Every day many people were being arrested and most were gripped by the fear that might be accused and arrested."

[307] I would like to note that what is mentioned here is ἀγάπη. Love is the English translation of more than one feeling. In Greek, there are differentiated—yet they can still be used interchangeably depending on the context—terms such as "affectionate love" (ἀγάπη), "passionate love" or "desire" (ἔρος) and many other related words as "longing" (πόθος) and "affection" (στοργή). For further examination, see Messis and Nilsson, "*Eros* as Passion, Affection and Nature: Gendered Perceptions of Erotic Emotion in Byzantium," 159-180.

[308] Attaleiates, *The History,* 435.

inhabitants of the City actually did."[309] The author has described what the populace of Constantinople felt after he became emperor with the word "happiness" (εὐδαιμονία) by saying that "Happiness was common for all, and care was taken that the benefactions go to all."[310] "Love" (ἀγάπη) was another emotion which frequently stated in the narrative on Botaneiates. Attaleiates has underlined that "the city loved him for his extreme mercy and gentleness as well as for his manly hands, which were invincible in wars and in weapons and incomparable in handing out gifts."[311] Interestingly, Attaleiates has also used the word "passionate love" (ἔρος) to describe the emotions of the people, as he has stated that "For everyone was gripped with a mad longing for Botaneiates."[312]

Alexander Kazhdan examines the ways in which Attaleiates, in his narrative, constructed the image of 'ideal emperor' for the emperor Botaneites. It is still significant even if this were mostly a literary construction because it, in fact, represents eleventh-century Byzantine values. Kazhdan has focused on a set of virtues that the author associated with Botaneiates, among them are his "nobility of lineage," "military prowess," "philanthropy," "generosity," "divine favor," "piety," and "intelligence."[313] The author has also underlined that the lineage was one of the important elements of his eulogy; in order to praise the emperor, Attaleiates, in his narrative, has created an ideal image for Nikephoros Botaneiates' father, Michael Botaneiates as well. What virtues have been emphasized in his narrative is quite crucial as the author has eulogized him for being respectful to the people. Thus, this excerpt below is worth quoting:

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[309] Attaleiates, *The History,* 435.
[310] Attaleiates, *The History,* 501.
[311] Attaleiates, *The History,* 467.
[312] Attaleiates, *The History,* 459.
[313] Kazhdan, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, 26-27.

> What then? Did this man, who enjoyed such repute and success, was admired and celebrated by everyone, and exalted by the greatness of his feats, think highly of himself on account of his achievements and act arrogantly toward ordinary people? Did he address the residents of the City and treat them as if they were vulgar market types and unarmed civilians, without courtesy or respect? Or did he, like those are held fast by the vice of vainglory, exalt his own person and emphasize his special status with boasts, as many soldiers like to do? Not at all! No one ever saw Michael Botaneiates behave arrogantly toward another citizen, look down his nose at anyone, remain aloof from the normal company and gatherings of the citizens, or lack urbanity, a noble bearing, a calm demeanor, and the gracious smile that was part of his nature. Thus he was regarded by all people as a great marvel, worthy of adoration, for inasmuch as he was invincible, spirited, and stunning in his momentum when it came to military contests, so much more was he pleasant, gentle, and affectionate toward the people of Byzantion in times of leisure, when he was, as they say, "off duty," and spent time in the Imperial City. He liked urbane conversation, made friends with those had a sense of humor, and thought it unworthy to be addressed by any name other than the one he derived from the City. It is for this reason that he was exceedingly loved by everyone and was both called and known to be a benefit for all, a feast of all good things and an object of universal praise, an incomparable soldier and inimitable citizen.[314]

Virtues which led the people to love Michael listed in the passage are quite significant since Attaleiates' ideal image of emperor throws some light on what might have been appreciated and expected by the people in eleventh-century Byzantium. His not being arrogant towards the people, his respect and affection were, as the passage suggests, among the reasons behind the love of the people.

The negative emotions such as "hatred" (μῖσος) and "anger" (ὀργή) were commonly associated with the emperors Michael V and Michael VII in the narratives under consideration. Yet it is significant that these are not considered entirely negative in the Byzantine mentality.[315] Daniel Lord Snail, for example, observes that

[314] Attaleiates, *The History,* 431-433.

[315] Anger as a natural part of narratives on eleventh-century politics, see White, "The Politics of Anger," 142. "When public displays of anger are located in eleventh and twelfth century political narratives, they do not provide evidence of emotional instability, instead, they reveal the position occupied by displays of anger in a relatively stable, enduring discourse of disputing, feuding, and political competition. Anger, in other words, has a well-defined place in political scripts in which other emotions figure as well." For the 'righteous' anger in Medieval context, see Freedan, "Peasant Anger in the Late Middle Ages," 171-188.

"some kinds of wrath are virtuous, as the hatred of sin."[316] Similarly, Andriani Georgiou argues that hatred can be considered to be rather positive in some cases, if proportional, when "repairing damages or punishing wrongdoers."[317] So hatred toward these emperors was, to a certain extent, not criticized in the narratives, but seen as a natural part of the urban unrest. For example, Skylitzes has stated that the people of Constantinople were, in fact, "burning with anger," because of the deeds of Michael V.[318] Similarly, Psellos notes that "…circumstances were far too unfavourable and the people's hatred too general."[319]

Attaleiates has expressed in his narrative that some other negative emotions were aroused in the people for the emperor Michael V. For example, he has mentioned "enmity" (δυσμένεια) and "lack of respect" (ἀναίδεια) as he has stated, "People strove to surpass each other in the anger and express their displeasure and lack of respect for him."[320] Wrath (Θυμός) is also expressed to be felt towards the eparch of the city just after he read out the proclamation of the emperor to the people. The author has stated, "Those present rushed against the *eparchos* roaring and yelling, full of anger and wrath."[321] As a slightly more aggressive emotion, it is instantly directed to the one who is present at the area of proclamation. These aforementioned emotions, during the 1042 revolt, must have been "the moral sentiments that behind the violence" as As Daniel Lord Smail states.[322]

Why did the Byzantines find the emperor Michael V that detestable? Tracing his deeds which aroused hostility among the people sheds some light on their social

[316] Smail, "Hatred as a Social Institution," 93.
[317] Georgiou, "Empresses in Byzantine Society: Justifiably Angry or Simply Angry?" 130.
[318] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 395-396.
[319] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 148.
[320] Attaleiates, *The History*, 23.
[321] Attaleiates, *The History*, 23.
[322] Smail, "Hatred as a Social Institution," 92.

and political values. One of the reasons behind the anger of the people seems to be stemmed from the feeling of injustice. By sending the empress Zoe into the exile, Michael V has instantly been considered by the people to be "ungrateful" (ἀχάριστος) and "unfeeling" (ἀγνώμων) thus "unworthy of his office" (ἀνάξιος).[323] Moreover, Gilbert Dagron has underlined the importance of the "deep attachment" the populace felt for the reigning family by defending their rights.[324] Kaldellis has also argued that the people respected the dynastic rights by arguing that "The people liked to defend the rights of dynastic heirs, which, as we saw, largely explains how the underage emperors Basil II and Constantine VII survived their childhood."[325]

Negative sentiments towards Michael VII can perhaps be associated with economic hardship as well. The emperor was criticized and condemned due to the general misery that held sway throughout the city. In the second half of the eleventh century, Constantinople suffered economic and demographic crisis. First of all, vast territories in Anatolia that once belonged to the Byzantine Empire were to be captured by the Seljuqs, and thus a large group of people from these areas migrated to the imperial capital "on a daily basis."[326] So, the food supply fell short of what was required; hence famine and scarcity exacerbated the situation in the capital city. Thus, it might be one of the reasons behind the antagonism towards the emperor. As Ruff points out that the shortage and dearth were some of the reasons behind the riots in early modern Europe as well.[327] Attaleiates has explained the damage and stress in the city that the number of people died reached such a high record so that there was not enough place in the city to bury corpses due to this catastrophe.[328] He has also

[323] Attaleiates, *The History*, 23.
[324] Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, 15.
[325] Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood*, 178.
[326] Attaleiates, *The History,* 385.
[327] Ruff, *Violence in Early Modern Europe*, 192-195.
[328] Attaleiates, *The History,* 385.

mentioned the severe debasement as "one *medimmos* of grain was being sold for three gold coins."[329] Besides, they thought it was because of the "stinginess" of the emperor as follows:

> When the winter arrived because the emperor lacked generosity and was extremely stingy, he offered no succor from the imperial treasuries or any other form of provident welfare either to those in office or to the people of the City, and so each person wallowed in his own misery, nor did he hold out an abundant hand that could assist the poor and provide them with daily provisions, for it is through these means that the poor are normally supplied with necessities.[330]

Yet, economic hardship was, by no means, the only reason for the people's hatred. On the other hand, in the Byzantine context, negative behaviors of an emperor such as tyranny, mistreatment, and abuse of power were more frequently criticized. The emperor's "ignorance" and "arrogance" were blamed by the people and considered as a reason behind the economic troubles as well.[331] So the people of the city disapproved of Michael VII for several reasons, on the one hand his parsimoniousness, on the other hand, his injustice, tyranny, and oppression.[332] Attaleiates, throughout his narrative on Botaneiates, has continued to use the negative image of the previous emperor to contrast his virtues with Michael VII's impropriety as the passage below shows,

> For this reason, everyone was overcome with puzzlement and extraordinary wonder, for the previous emperor Michael was always lamenting his poverty

[329] Attaleiates, *The History,* 471.
[330] Attaleiates, *The History,* 385.
[331] Attaleiates, *The History,* 471.
[332] Attaleiates, *The History*, 385. "Everywhere you saw sad faces and the Reigning City was filled with misery. The rulers did not let up on their daily injustices and illegal trials but acted as though the Romans were not being afflicted by anything out of the ordinary, be it foreign war, divine wrath, or poverty and violence oppressing the people; it was with such nonchalance that they practiced all their tyrannical impieties. Every imperial scheme and plan, in fact, was preoccupied with some injustice against their own subjects, at the ingenious looting of their livelihood and their resources for living. And so what came of all this?"

> and the pressing lack of funds, and that he could not extend his hand to make a small benefaction on the alleged grounds of the miserable condition of the state.[333]

How the emotions of the people were perceived by the rulers? One can perhaps assume that emperors took them into consideration since Attaleiates' narrative on Bryennios provides some evidence that rebels, at least, considered what they were said to feel and act accordingly. For example, the author has noted that Bryennios was reported that the people were angry (ὀργή) with Michael VII and that they hated (μῖσος) him so that he thought the people "would go over to their side."[334] Yet, Attaleiates has suggested Bryennios himself was the one the people hated since he damaged the houses around the city: "He was like a man who wishes to extinguish fire by pouring oil on it, thereby dramatically increasing its strength. The citizens already detested him and his brother, but now he earned an even greater hatred with this thoughtless act."[335]

As Meyer argues, emotions in the Byzantine literature has quite a strict perspective gender wise, hence some emotions are generally associated with men and the others with women; for example, while anger is considered man-like, grief is reserved to the women.[336] Representation of grief itself depends on the gender as well. For example, Psellos depicts the ways in which women participants of the revolt of 1042 reflect their grief as follows:

> And the women -but how can I explain this to people who do not know them? I myself saw some of them, whom nobody till then had seen outside the women's quarters, appearing in public and shouting and beating their breasts

[333] Attaleiates, *The History,* 501.
[334] Attaleiates, *The History,* 455.
[335] Attaleiates, *The History,*
[336] Meyer, "Towards an Approach to Gendered Emotions in Byzantine Culture: An Introduction," 4.

> and lamenting terribly at the empress's misfortune, but the rest were borne along like Maenads, and they formed no small band to oppose the offender.[337]

The author has made an analogy between the revolting women and the Maenads in this excerpt above and their grief unlike men, described with a set of excessive physical expressions in a performative manner, as the Byzantine women and eunuchs are generally expected to manifest emotions such as anguish more performatively unlike the Byzantine men who are supposed to be rather unexpressive in their grief.[338]

4.4 People as a political entity

The Byzantine people enjoyed frequenting public processions and gatherings. Skylitzes' remark is a quite typical example of the involvement of the people into the public political sphere as he has stated, "Together with the Senate he set out in procession wearing the diadem, and the whole city came out to see the spectacle."[339] The crowds which poured out into the streets of Constantinople to witness political events consisted of many different groups including women, students, hermits.[340] For example, we see the inhabitants of the city poured out into the streets to see Michael IV's return to Constantinople from Bulgaria.[341] Another example of their interest with political events surrounding them is that their wait for the declaration of the emperor Michael V. The city was barely appeased by Zoe as the crowds were very much concern themselves about the next emperor.[342] And, the day after the

[337] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 138.
[338] Constantiou, "Gendered Emotions and Effective Genders: A Response," 287.
[339] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 392.
[340] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 300.
[341] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 116.
[342] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 123.

proclamation Michael V, they all discussed the event enthusiastically.[343] Lynda Garland underlines the fact that the Byzantines, especially in the given period, were interested in politics, she has noted,

> The eleventh and twelfth centuries are marked for the significant depth of political awareness and involvement shown by the populace the continuous impact which they had on internal policies and dynastic struggles, and the spontaneous reactions and challenging responses which even the most minor of issue could evoke from them.[344]

Kaldellis has argued that the period which begins with the death of Basil II was "the return of multipolarity to the political sphere."[345] During this period, the imperial throne was challenged and changed hands on a regular basis. Therefore, there is little sense in considering the dwellers of the city without some level of curiosity, interest, and awareness about politics especially in such a turbulent period. So, how were these supposed qualities manifested in urban politics?

"So everyone now began to join the one fraction, that of Komnenos, and the regime of the Old Man collapsed," stated Attaleiates in his account on the events which led to the deposition of the emperor Michael VI in the year of 1057.[346] Likewise, on the same event, Skylitzes has implied that there was a consensus among the people for supporting Isaac I Komnenos as "the entire urban multitude" was on his side.[347] These two lines might lead us to think about a crucial political concept, which was quite important in the manifestation of the people's political tendencies, in eleventh-century Byzantium: the common consent.

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[343] Attaleiates, *The History*, 21.
[344] Garland, "Political Power and Populace in Byzantium Prior to the Fourth Crusade," 51.
[345] Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic*, 224.
[346] Attaleiates, *The History,* 28.
[347] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 462.

It is rarely seen the political engagement of an ordinary individual was recorded in the historical accounts. Contrarily, the populace was considered as a unity in their deeds. References made to the inhabitants of the Constantinople related to the political activities depicted them as a group acting in consensus and they were, in this way, to some extent, able to exert force to achieve their goals. Concerning this concept, Kaldellis argues that the Byzantine populace was "true sovereign of the political sphere."[348] He has claimed the political legitimacy in Byzantium was based on popular consent as he explains these by saying that "The moment the 'entire people' reached a point of consensus against an emperor, he was legitimate no longer."[349] The power of the people's unanimity in support of Isaac I Komnenos is not a rare case. Our sources are choke-full of examples on their unanimous actions which produced successful results. For example, when the people brought the empress Theodora from Petrion "by a common consent," and deposed Michael V, they proclaimed her with the empress Zoe.[350] The very existence and function of common consent among the people has been underlined for the case of Botaneiates' accession as well. Attaleiates has recorded that "this affection for him was universal and spoke with one tongue, long since acclaiming the son as worthy to wear the imperial crown."[351] The author has also underlined that he was proclaimed "by a common vote" by everyone in the City."[352] So that the present emperor was forced to abdicate and the other rebel who was strategically and militarily more advanced, failed to usurp the power.

[348] Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic*, ix.
[349] Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic*, 93.
[350] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 393-394.
[351] Attaleiates, *The History,* 435.
[352] Attaleiates, *The History,* 491.

Representative cases on the relationship between the common consent and political success in the Byzantine context can be multiplied. Yet, on the other hand, examples of the lack of common consent reinforce this idea since some of the failed revolts in Byzantium, in the given time period, seem to share a certain feature: the lack of consensus on their side.[353] The historical sources has suggested that when an apparently small portion of people participated in a plot or a revolt, or when the number of people supporting the rebel outside of the walls was smaller than those who do not, their political abilities remained rather limited compared to the cases in which consensus among the people turned a decisive political power. Plots planned by a small clique without the support the city masses failed to overthrow the emperor, hence they were suppressed quite easily and punished severely. For instance, in *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*, we see the example of a failed plot planned against the emperor Michael IV. Skylitzes has narrated that "At that time there was an attempted insurrection against the emperor led by Michael Keroularios, John Makrembolites and several other citizens, who were likewise deprived of their goods and exiled."[354] The passage provides us an important side of the plot that it was lacking of the mass support. The insurrection planned and performed by a group of important political actors of the period, yet it was not popularly supported and eventually failed. Another example is that those who supported the rebel Tornikios has been severely punished by the emperor Constantine IX Monomachos. They were paraded in the city and then exiled as well as their properties were confiscated."[355]

[353] What the consequence of a failed revolt is a harsh punishment. Psellos, *Chronographia*, 53. "If his own subject rebelled, it was different: they were punished with savage retribution. Suspicion of revolutionary plots, or of party factions, resulted in vengeance, and the suspects were condemned without trial. The Romans became his slaves, not won over by acts of kindness, but subdued by all manner of cruel punishment."
[354] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 387.
[355] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 416.

This severe punishment outwardly suggests that the emperor exerted a supreme power over the people, on the other hand, yet we do not see such a consensus on the support of Tornikios as Skylitzes has recorded that nobody paid any attention to him and his army.[356] Consequently, Tornikios' revolt failed and the emperor survived. However, there is no evidence that the revolt was unanimously supported among the citizens. We might perhaps speculate that the rebel could have been successful with massive popular support.

Bryennios' failure seems to share similar characteristics with of Tornikios. It is safe to assume that his failure was related to the fact that there was no such common consent among the people for supporting him. Concerning his reception, Attaleiates has recorded,

> They were in no way surprised by the arrival of that army, but rather treated it as if a few rams or herds of cattle were butting their heads against the columns or the walls of Semiramis, or as if they were drone bees buzzing around men who were giant-killers.[357]

This passage above points out that the rebel was by no means supported by the people of Constantinople, quite contrarily, they ignored him and his army so that he failed to take the imperial power.

The plot planned for overthrowing the emperor Constantine X Doukas is another illustrating case. In fact, it typifies the political opposition which eventually failed due to the lack of common consent. Those who "longed for regime change" plotted to overthrow the emperor by organizing a faux uproar.[358] It was planned to stir up the crowds to join the upheaval hence terrify the emperor, then they planned

[356] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 414.
[357] Attaleiates, *The History,* 457.
[358] Attaleiates, *The History,* 131.

to assassinate him in a boat where he supposed to embark in order to protect himself from the danger.[359] However, they failed when his brother intervened and suppressed the small number of people who conspired against the emperor. So, the reaction of the people to this revolt was emphasized by Attaleiates as follows: "for the rest of the people of the city did not want to join the rebellion and be destroyed by the stupidity of the plotters."[360] The participants who were said to be "a few people only," and could not receive the universal consensus, as underlined by the author.[361] Those who engaged in the plot has been "convicted of treason directed against the emperor," and being put in prison or "miserable little dwellings," while those arrested were whipped and get their property confiscated.[362] This insurrection was a plot of a few people and they were not particularly successful in inciting the masses to join them so that without the participation of the masses it was suppressed rather easily.

Preemptive measures and harsh punishments for plotting against the emperor when the plotters failed can easily be construed as a manifestation of the power of the emperor who is exerting force over those who engaged in subversive activities. Yet, on the other hand, it also proves that popular politics, in eleventh-century Constantinople, was by no means castrated under the hegemony of the emperor. It also suggests that political opposition was prevalent in every level of the society that despite harsh punishments emperors were not able to keep the imperial seat for a long time. Confinement of those who attempted to undermine the imperial authority and confiscation of their goods proves the existence of the opponents in the city as much as the power of the emperor. Moreover, all these aforementioned failed plots

[359] Attaleiates, *The History,* 133.
[360] Attaleiates, *The History,* 135.
[361] Attaleiates, *The History,* 137. "…the emperor's associates and the emperor himself ascertained fully that his subjects had been buffeted by the ill will and conspiracy of a few people only; it was not a universal consensus and movement that had launched the attack."
[362] Attaleiates, *The History,* 137.

point out that imperial power was fragile particularly for the cases in which the opposition obtained common consent and mass participation of the people of Constantinople.

Kaldellis provides another example of what happens if the people preferred not to join a revolt. He has stated that at the beginning of the reign of the emperor Michael VI, the cousin of the former emperor Constantine Monomachos, Theodosios, tried to usurp the imperial power by creating an uprising, however, he failed due to the fact that nobody in the city joined his revolt.

> The first to make a bid was Monomachos' cousin Theodosios. He and his clients paraded down the Mese, mimicking a popular uprising by protesting and freeing the prisoners from the prefect's headquarters. But the streets emptied out. Theodosios found the palace barred against him, and also Hagia Sophia, where he had hoped the patriarch, clergy, and people would proclaim him emperor. In the end, he was abandoned there with his son, to beg for mercy. He and his associates were exiled to Pergamos. It was too soon, or he was just not popular.[363]

As the passage points out that though the Byzantine politics, in the popular level, can be rather easily traceable in the people's involvement; their non-involvement, in particular cases, might be an important sign of their political attitudes.

Common consent is a notion which has not been rarely underlined by contemporary authors. Those passages quoted here on the common consent, on its existence and lack, provide a representative image of dynamics of urban politics when they are considered together, in conversation with each other. The support and active participation of the city masses was one of the things that a plotter or a rebel definitely needed in eleventh-century Constantinople to overturn the present emperor. On the people's tendency of not to join a revolt, Ethan H. Shagan also

[363] Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood*, 216.

crucially notes that "Yet if the political nature of popular revolts is now largely accepted, we also need to accept that the decision not to revolt could be a politically complex one."[364] His perspective is, in fact, very much applicable to the Byzantine popular politics. It is possible to consider this choice of the masses for not participating in a revolt to depose an emperor might be political as well as their participation. In this passage below, concerning to the people's participation in rebellions, Kazhdan has aptly underlined that the people did not participate in every rebellion on a whim, on the other hand, they made choices. He has stated,

> The author of Bryennius' introduction (who may or may not have been Bryennius himself, but who was at any rate a contemporary) expresses dismay at the fact that the plebs (πᾶς ὁ δῆμος) has a tendency to become excited by any rebellion (Bryen., p. 55/7-9). But, we notice, the plebs nevertheless rejected an attempt by the nobles to enthrone the brother of Michael VII (p. 57/20-1). That is to say, the plebs supported not just any rebellion, but specifically the rebellion of Nicephorus Botaneiates.[365]

If the people's non-participation into a revolt is as telling as their participation, the question, then, arises: did the people of Constantinople, on their collective action, act with some level of political thinking?[366] In other words, did they have 'rational' aims and motives for their decisions?[367] If so, how to trace it?

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[364] Shagan, "Rumours and Popular Politics in the Reign of Henry VIII," 58.
[365] Kazhdan, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, 83.
[366] Freeden has examined the notion of political thinking and made some assumptions on what features thinking politically can possibly have. Freeden, *The Political Theory of Political Thinking: The Anatomy of a Practice*, 33-34. "…that political aspect is activated when we constantly make decisions, act under orders we justify or resist, imagine a better life for ourselves and the groups to which we are attached, choose what is more important or urgent when we have to attend to a number of concerns, find ways of adjudicating among competing claims on our principles or emotions, and seek support for our actions and the identities we adopt." In the light of his perspective, one may perhaps perceive that the collective action of Constantinopolitans encompasses some of these traits.
[367] 'Rational' is as a term here does not necessarily refers to having a clear-cut agenda. It rather focuses on reasoning. Did the populace have rationale behind their deeds? Did the thinking process take part in their decisions and actions? Many scholars have enquired about whether these urban movements in Byzantium were well-organized and target-oriented or just the excitement of disorderly hoi polloi without a purpose and clear direction. Barker, for example, has posed this question for one of the most important upheavals of the Late Byzantine period. He has inquired the Zealot movement within its context of socio-economic tension and civil war; Barker, "Byzantine Thessalonike: A

Concerning this question, the revolt of 1042 provides a significant example for us. Krallis, for example, has asserted that "the people's subsequent actions," just after the proclamation was read, "as recounted in the *History*, are rationally planned and executed."[368] In the initial stages of the revolt, the people not only compelled other people to join their struggle against Michael V but also, they persuaded important political actors to give support to their "just cause."[369]

In the course of the rebellion, the people's search for support deserves to be looked at closely. It seems that the people thought they needed powerful allies in order to be able to topple the emperor and acted accordingly. Concerning this, Attaleiates has clearly recorded that the patriarch of Constantinople, Alexios was compelled for "not to remain indifferent to the empress."[370] In his narrative, these lines below are, in fact, crucial about the objective of the revolt. He has noted that "Their leading object was neither to yield nor to show weakness nor to suffer any delay, but to depose from power that ungrateful and unfeeling man who had turned against his own benefactress and violated the most fearsome oaths, on the grounds that he was guilty and unworthy of his Office."[371] For achieving this objective, as mentioned in chapter three, the empress Zoe's sister, Theodora, residing in Petrion Monastery, has been persuaded to join the revolt. As the author stated, "They

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Second City's Challenges and Responses," 19. "Nature of the zealot regime remains unresolved. An organised movement of social protest with a serious program of reform? Or was it simply the lashing-out of the bitterly disaffected "have-nots", seeking to turn the tables on the haves?" Similarly, Alan Cameron has examined the urban collectivity in late antique Constantinople, particularly the Nika riot, and asked that "Is it possible, then, that Blue and Green riots really were genuine protests, misunderstood by the upper/middle-class writers who have come down to us?" It must be noted that he has rather concluded that activities of the factions were not related to the socio-political and economic demands as he noted that "It is surely impossible to believe that it was the blue and greens who had planned the removal of Justin from the start. Their only visible aim was the release of the prisoners." Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium*, 280. For the full discussion, 272-296.

[368] Krallis, ""Democratic" Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium," 40.

[369] Attaleiates, *The History*, 25.

[370] Attaleiates, *The History,* 25.

[371] Attaleiates, *The History,* 23.

persuaded her to set aside her feminine modesty and weakness and follow them, for they were prepared and determined to suffer anything readily and risk their lives for her and her sister in order to rid them once and for all from the fear and danger posed by their enemy."[372]

Psellos' interpretation of the same event is also noteworthy since his account has depicted the people even much more conscious in their actions and rationally-driven in their decisions. He has related that the people realized the empress Zoe was perhaps tending to get along with the emperor Michael V so that the rebel people decided to adopt a new policy against the emperor.

> The war, therefore, flared up against him all the more bitterly. But the rebels were afraid lest the combined efforts of Michael and Zoe might yet prove their undoing and most of their supporters might be persuaded by her and give up the struggle. So a new policy was adopted, a plan which was a sufficient and complete answer to Michael's scheming...[373]

This excerpt provides us some insights to assume that the people might have an ability to making decisions depending on the changing situation. Moreover, another passage of the author below, has emphasized the fact that the people continued to revolt even after the empress was turned back to Constantinople. It seems that their objectives were intermingled but not limited to the rescuing the empress.

> As I have said, the people revolted against the tyrant, but they were afraid their efforts might be wasted. His force might get the better of them and the affair might develop into nothing more than an uproar. Since, therefore, they could not lay hands on the senior empress - the tyrant had anticipated that move and he was watching her with all the vigilance of a tax-gatherer waiting to collect dues from a ship in harbour - they turned their attention to her sister.[374]

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[372] Attaleiates, *The History,* 25.
[373] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 142.
[374] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 144.

The populace was clearly aware of the fact that the revolt might have been suppressed by the emperor so that they purposefully headed towards Theodora. The lack of confusion and disorder in their collective action seems to be another point which suggests that the people acted with some level of political awareness.[375] According to Psellos, after the people had decided to bring Theodora, they acted in such a reasoned manner as well. The author has underlined that there was no tumult in their actions.[376] Attaleiates has also emphasized the awareness and determination of the people in their political deeds, in another case related to the accession of Botaneiates, as he stated that the deposition of Michael VI took place without a "nosebleed."

> Everything was accomplished without bloodshed or destruction, without even so much as a nosebleed, which is a definitive and fitting sign of his faith in God and of his appointment by him. The former emperor, on the other hand, was enclosed and safeguarded in the most holy church of the Mother of God at Blachernai, where he relinquished his hair and renounced the world.[377]

Reason in the political behavior of the city populace can also be traced through their political demands. The reaction of the people to the empress Theodora might be conceived as an illustration of their not being an injudicious mob without political thinking. One of the stimuli behind the public uprising against Michael V was the deposition of the empress Zoe, the legitimate heiress of the Macedonian dynasty.

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[375] Krallis, ""Democratic" Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium," 41. He remarks rational actions of the people: "It follows from all the above that at least in Attaleiates' view of the events the people were not acting in a rash, chaotic manner. They were prepared and committed in their action against the resident of the anaktora."
[376] Psellos, *Chronographia,* 144. "There was no confusion, no disorderly tumult. On the contrary, they appointed one of her father's retainers to act as general at the head of their column, a man who was not a Greek by birth, but a person of the noblest character and a man of heroic stature, whose high-born ancestry inspired respect."
[377] Attaleiates, *The History,* 493.

Yet, that does not necessarily mean that the same people fully submitted to her authority. In fact, after the emperor was deposed, some supported her to be the sole empress, while the others thought that it is Theodora who deserves the throne. More importantly, upon Zoe attempted to discharge her sister when they reign together, "she was thwarted by the crowd demanding that she co-reign with her."[378]

Although the Byzantine populace was notorious for its volatile nature according to some Byzantine authors such as Choniates, Dimitris Krallis has argued that Attaleiates was not one of them, quite contrarily, the author himself tended to conceive the populace as a "rational player."[379] On the perception of Attaleiates, Krallis has noted,

> Attaleiates is certainly talking about the messy business of street violence, while concurrently undermining the language through which such phenomena are understood by showing how the mob could in fact operate as a rational player, mindful of dynastic legitimacy. In doing so he challenges traditional

[378] Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History,* 395.
[379] The following passage of Choniates on twelfth-century Constantinopolitan mob is well known as a good example of the elite view on the populace as impulsive, irrational and negative in general. Choniates, *History*, 233-234, quoted in Krallis, ""Democratic" Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium, 36-37. "The throngs of the other cities rejoice in disorder and are with great difficulty kept in hand. But the populace of the marketplace in Constantinople is the most disorderly of all, rejoicing in rashness and walking in crooked ways. As it is governed by different peoples and because of the variety of the trades, one may say that its mind is easily altered. But since the worst always wins out, and one scarcely finds amongst the sour grapes a ripe one, the populace of the market place, upon whatever undertaking it embarks, does not do so reasonably, nor with good will, nor suitably. But at a mere word it disposes itself to rebellion and becomes more destructive than fire ... accordingly, it suffers from an inconstancy of character and is untrustworthy. Nor are these people ever detected doing those things that are most advantageous to themselves, nor were they ever persuaded by others who counseled them for their own good. But they always do those things which are detrimental. Their indifference to the rulers is preserved in them as if it were inborn. Him whom today they raise as legal magistrate, this same one next year they will tear to pieces. They do not perform these things with any logic, but through simple-mindedness and ignorance." Rudé examines the negative consideration of the pre-modern urban crowd by their contemporaries. Rudé, *The Crowd in History*, 8. "It was certainly already fashionable in this 'pre-industrial age in France and England, when rioters and other disturbers of the peace were generally dismissed by contemporaries as 'banditti,' 'desperadoes,' 'mob,' 'convicts,' or 'canaille', and even a revolutionary democrat like Robespierre, though passionately devoted to 'the people', was inclined to see food retorts as agents of the English or the aristocracy… And the 'mob' in question, having no ideas or honorable impulses of its own, is liable to be presented as the 'passive' instrument of outside agents—'demagogues' or 'foreigners'—and as being prompted by motives of loot, lucre, free drinks, bloodlust, or merely the need to satisfy some lurking criminal instincts."

> Byzantine responses to the idea of popular participation in politics and opens a window for republican reinterpretations of such phenomena.[380]

As a conclusion, it is undeniable that violence was an important aspect of popular politics in Byzantium. Yet, it was certainly not the only way for the people to manifest their political discontent. As this chapter has demonstrated, the populace of Constantinople, as political beings, engaged in several non-violent political practices and it is possible to draw some general conclusions from this. First of all, the people were familiar with the political world around them. More precisely, they were part of this world. They were one of the actors of politics in eleventh-century Constantinople. For the manifestation of their support, we see that the populace took part in acclamations of emperors, they proclaimed their candidates for the throne, and participated in political celebrations after these candidates grasped the imperial power.

When they were against the ruler, on the other hand, their non-violent political participation obtained subversive characteristics. The constant circulation of news, rumors, and gossip among the populace indicate that the populace participated in political conversations and contemporary accounts shed some light on the transmission and reproduction of news which seems to enable them to stay up to date with important events around them. Furthermore, the verbal instruments were frequently employed to demonstrate their opposition as the emperors and military rebels were mocked and became objects of ridicule. Political slogans were also part of this non-violent political action they engaged in since the people cried out pejorative and often menacing words and slogans. As mentioned, some of them have historic origins, shouted for centuries to express political discontent of the people.

[380] Krallis, "Democratic" Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium," 48.

The emotional repertoire of popular politics was another aspect of this chapter. Wide range of emotions associated with the people's political deeds colored the historical narratives. These emotions, both supportive and subversive, seem to be an impetus for the popular politics in Constantinople. Popular politics has also been widely characterized by the existence or lack of the common consent. It is hard not to recognize the correspondence between the people' involvement and the success of a subversive action. The more the people participated in a revolt, the more it posed a threat to the ruler, on the other hand, subversive action of any kind, as seen in the examples of failed plots in the given period, was rather easy to quell once they do not attract the massive support of the crowds. The last point emphasized in this chapter was the degree of political thinking and reasoning that shaped their political engagement. Taken together, examples of their participation, and non-participation in certain cases, seem to indicate that they were driven by a set of political objectives, either supportive or subversive, in their activities.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In the *Chronographia*, Psellos, for the purpose of praising the emperor Constantine X Doukas, has written, "His family, as far back as his great-grandfathers, had been both distinguished and affluent, the kind of persons historians record in their works."[381] Attaleiates, similarly, in the preface of his narrative, has driven attention to the content of his book by stating that "Above all, it tells us about those who hold the highest office, how some of them successfully overcame clear and present dangers through their diligent military strategies, while others, even when victory was about to smile upon them, ruined everyone's hopes for a happy outcome by not making prudent use of the opportunities given to them."[382] These quotes from contemporary sources aptly indicate that Byzantine histories and chronicles predominantly focused on the ruling classes. On the other hand, the remaining majority largely remained silent, but not absolutely. This study intended to demonstrate that they, in fact, provide a considerable amount of information about the populace of Constantinople, even though brief and scattered, through which we can revisit the typology of popular politics in the course of the eleventh century.

The growing interest in the modern scholarship for the populace of Constantinople might surpass the distortion based on the identification of the city almost exclusively with the urban elite. One of the objectives of this study was to exceed this overidentification by shedding some light on the populace of Constantinople, in other words, the common people of the city, particularly on their political participation through scrutinization of the main historical accounts of

[381] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 333.
[382] Attaleiates, *The History,* 9.

eleventh-century Byzantium which are the *Chronographia* of Psellos, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History* of Skylitzes and the *History* of Attaleiates. Although this study does not claim to be conclusive but rather suggestive, various conclusions can still be reached from it. Concerning the political sphere, eleventh-century Constantinople was marked by the collective action of its inhabitants. The populace was a political entity and having a manifold political repertoire, they manifested it by engaging in various practices, violent and non-violent. The evidence retrieved from the written sources, when they are considered as a whole and in relation to each other, suggest that the populace of Constantinople participated in the political scene. They supported their favorite emperors; acclaimed, honored, and cheered them. On the other hand, they resisted the authority of the unwanted emperors; mocked, opposed, and deposed them.

Although the violent political action has been more noticeable at first appearance and studied by scholars in greater detail, the non-violent political action has not been well treated. Thus, the main contribution of this study lies in the emphasis put on the latter to show that these two complement each other. This study aimed to reveal that it constituted the other half of popular politics in Byzantium, if not the greater part of it. The passage of Dumolyn and Haemers below seems to be quite illustrative for the Byzantine context as well. One can perhaps see a crucial similarity between fifteenth-century Flanders and eleventh-century Constantinople with regard to the characteristics of popular politics. They have argued,

> Only when they failed to influence political decisions with words did the popular classes resort to physical violence to make their point. Violence remained the exception. By contrast, subversive utterances, though always risky, must have been the rule of daily politics in the urban centres of late

> medieval Flanders and, clearly, in many other European towns and cities as well.[383]

In the course of the eleventh century, popular non-violent activities, either to show support or opposition, seem to predominantly shape urban politics in Constantinople. A closer look at the political repertoire of the populace indicates that violent political participation was rather infrequent, if not rare, compared to the wide range of non-violent practices the people employed in their relation to the political authority in Constantinople. Hence it is plausible to assume that non-violent political participation was more representative of the popular politics in Constantinople as it was widespread and recurrent.

This study further aimed to provide a complementary background to the outbreak of violent rebellions in the city which can be otherwise misrepresented as a purposeless disorder. When considered together, it is reasonable to argue that urban violence might be rooted in the well-established political tradition and culture of dissidence in the city.

A further study is needed to investigate the socio-political roles of the people in eleventh-century Constantinople. Due to the limited scope of this study, the characteristics of the eleventh-century Constantinopolitan populace were not addressed thoroughly. Thus, further research could focus on the question of who the people of Constantinople were, as an attempt to clarify the political actors implicitly. Moreover, for a better understanding of the urban politics in eleventh-century Constantinople, more information is required to investigate how discontent turned into mass movements and to understand the organizational structure of urban collectivity.

[383] Dumolyn and Haemers, "'A Bad Chicken was Brooding,'" 86.

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