THE DISCOURSE OF REBELLION

IN BYZANTIUM IN THE ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH CENTURIES

MUSTAFA YILDIZ

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

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Mustafa Yıldız

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The thesis of Mustafa Yıldız

has been approved by:

Prof. Nevra Necipoğlu
(Thesis Advisor) _____

Assoc. Prof. Koray Durak _____

Assoc. Prof. Murat Keçiş
(External Member) _____

July 2016

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

The Discourse of Rebellion in Byzantium in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries

This study focuses on the discourse of usurpatory rebellions in Byzantium in the eleventh and twelfth centuries through a detailed analysis of three primary sources from the period. Being historical narratives of one of the most turbulent periods in Byzantine history, these sources aimed at creating an apology for the protagonists of their (hi)stories, who were usurper-emperors who seized the imperial throne through violent rebellions. These texts can also be seen as an attempt of reconciliation between the ideology and reality of a society, in which rising up against the emperor was both an anomaly and common occurrence. Although it lacks comprehensiveness with regard to time and material, this study aims at fulfilling the need for an unprecedented reading and analysis of the literary strategies of Byzantine authors in dealing with the controversial concept of rebellion.

ÖZET

On Birinci ve On İkinci Yüzyıl Bizans'ında İsyan Söylemi

Bu çalışma, döneme ait üç birincil kaynağın ayrıntılı bir analizini sunarak on birinci ve on ikinci yüzyıl Bizans'ında tahtı ele geçirmeye yönelik isyan söylemini incelemektedir. Bizans tarihinin en çalkantılı dönemlerinden birine ait tarihi olaylara tanıklık eden bu metinlerin ortaklaştıkları nokta, başkahramanlarının kanlı isyanlar sonucu tahtı ele geçirmiş generaller olmasıdır. Bu kaynakların kaleme alınmasındaki esas amaç ise söz konusu isyancılar adına bir savunma anlatısı ortaya koymaktır. Kullanılan metinler, imparatora karşı isyan etmenin hem bir anomali hem de oldukça yaygın bir girişim olduğu Bizans toplumunun ideolojisi ve realitesini bağdaştırma çabası olarak görülebilir. İncelenen dönem ve kaynaklar göz önünde bulundurulursa bu çalışmanın kapsayıcılık iddiası olmadığı görülecektir. Burada esas olarak Bizanslı yazarların isyan gibi tartışmalı bir konuyu ele alırken kullandıkları edebi stratejilere yönelik daha önce girişilmemiş bir okuma ve inceleme amacı güdülmüştür.

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Anneme ve Babama,

Sevgi ve Saygıyla

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Byzantine rebellions do not stand out as an inadequately researched topic by the scholarship of the field due to their prevalence in the sources and relative significance on the social and political life of the empire. Rebellion in Byzantium was a highly political issue its primary focus was very often the imperial seat placed in Constantinople, which is also the chief interest of the present study that examines usurpatory attempts in Byzantium during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. While many modern works have embraced the study of Byzantine rebellions from different perspectives and highlighted various aspects of the rebellious activities that punctuated the long history of Byzantium, it is striking that the literary and rhetorical reflections of the phenomenon have not received adequate attention.[1] No matter how relevant it might be, the impact of the concept of rebellion on the Byzantine written word seems to be underrepresented in modern scholarship. Therefore, it is the chief purpose of this study to fill this gap to some extent, without any pretension of absolute comprehensiveness, and to demonstrate new insights that may be gained through a detailed analysis of the literary strategies employed in some contemporary accounts of usurpation in eleventh- and twelfth-century Byzantium.

The historical works written by Byzantine authors are widely recognized as tools of propaganda as much as sources of historical information. The fact that these

[1] On rebellions, riots, and usurpation in Byzantine history in general, see Bury, "The Nika Riot," 92-119; Manojlović, "Le peuple de Constantinople," 617-716; Cameron, *Circus Factions,* 271-96;Greatrex, "The Nika Revolt," 60-86; Evans, "The *Nika* Revolt of 532," 15-20; Kaegi, *Byzantine Military Unrest*; Olster, *The Politics of Usurpation in the Seventh Century;* Ashburner, "The Byzantine Mutiny Act," 80-109; Morris, "Succession and Usurpation," 199-214; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210);* Angelov, "Power and Subversion in Byzantium," 1-18; Penna and Morrisson, "Usurpers and Rebels in Byzantium," 21-42; Kaldellis, "How to Usurp the Throne in Byzantium," 43-56.

historians themselves were often important actors in contemporary events or at least very close to those figures who left a name in the narratives could only augment the propaganda value of our primary sources. Even though the idea of rebellion itself was universally condemned and the sanctity of the imperial office was widely recognized, these conceptions were not enough to eradicate the reality of continuous conspiracies against emperors, and the sources' depiction of rebels remained controversial.[2] In his monumental book on Byzantine rebellions between 963 and 1210, Jean-Claude Cheynet listed 223 revolts, 127 of which were with usurpatory purposes.[3] This fact only leads us to the main question of the present study: how did Byzantine historians treat rebels in their narratives, even more so when some of those figures were so close to them? The need to understand the literary strategies that were utilized in the relevant sources in order to justify usurpation compelled us to narrow our research with respect to time and material. Thus, this study focuses on three primary sources written in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This timeframe overlaps with that of Cheynet's book and not without good reasons. The eleventh and twelfth centuries stand out as one of the most critical and turbulent periods of Byzantine history, during which the political and military power of the empire endured many vicissitudes due to internal and external challenges.[4] Although the imperial domain stretched from the plains of Armenian highlands to the shores of south Italy in 1025 thanks to the expansionist policies of the emperor Basil II (r. 976-

[2] Dagron's work remains influential on the sanctity of the imperial office in Byzantium: Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium.*
[3] Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210),* 20-156.
[4] For the period in question, see Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism*, 69-142; Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, 583-611; Angold, "The Byzantine State on the Eve of Manzikert," 9–34; idem, "Belle époque or crisis? (1025–1118)," 590-601; Magdalino, "The Year 1000 in Byzantium," 233-70; Stephenson, "The Balkan Frontier in the Year 1000," 109-34; idem, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier*; idem, "Byzantium Transformed, c. 950-1200," 185-210; Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 500-1250*, 248-365; Holmes, "Political-Historical Survey, 800-1204," 264-79; Balard et al., "Byzance, l'Orient chrétien et le monde turc," 331-61.

1025) and the empire resurged as arguably the most powerful political entity in the Mediterranean basin, the durability of this powerhouse proved less than tenable when it was reduced to a smaller portion of its territory and glory in a half century.[5] Following the three decades after Basil II's death, the imperial throne was occupied by a series of husbands espoused by the empress Zoe, the daughter of Constantine VIII (r. 1025-1028). Even Zoe's devout sister Theodora was compelled out of her monastic life to rule for the short period of 1055-57, followed by the even shorter reign of Michael VI (r. 1056-1057) who was to be overthrown by the first Komnenian emperor Isaac. Isaac I Komnenos (r. 1057-1059) was succeeded by a couple of emperors from the Doukas family, whose rule was interrupted by Romanos IV (r. 1068-1071) and his fateful campaigns against the Seljuks and finalized by the successful rebellion of Nikephoros III Botaneiates in 1078. The elderly Botaneiates (r. 1078-1081) himself was to be overthrown by the vigorous and young Alexios Komnenos, ushering a new era of stability and military glory. Although constantly threatened by interlopers, Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081-1118) was nevertheless able to establish his own dynasty and steered the empire through the rough waters of external challenges such as the ambitious Norman invaders and the dreadful Crusader knights.

Encroached by the invasions of new and potent neighboring actors, notably the Normans and Turks, crippled by political instability and suffering military losses, the emperors in Constantinople were challenged by an ever larger number of pretenders among their subjects. Although most of them were doomed to fail in their endeavors to seize the imperial throne, it was not a rare occurrence for a rebel to

[5] On the reign of Basil II, see Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976-1025);* Stephenson, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer;* Cheynet, "Basil II and Asia Minor," 71-108; Von Falkenhausen, "Between Two Empires: Southern Italy in the Reign of Basil II," 135-60.

accomplish his enterprise with success. During the period from the end of Basil II's reign in 1025 until the beginning of the Komnenian dynastic rule in 1081, Byzantium witnessed three successful usurpers: Isaac I Komnenos, who captured the throne from the feeble Michael VI in 1057, Nikephoros III Botaneiates, who was able to take advantage of the chaotic situation following the Manzikert disaster of 1071 by a popularly supported rebellion in 1078, and finally Alexios I Komnenos himself, the very nephew of the abovementioned usurper, who revived the Komnenian dynasty three years after the ascension of Botaneiates.[6] This situation itself meant that historians were often faced with the challenge of penning the subversive deeds of their heroes, and three sources stand out in this respect for the period in question: the histories of Michael Attaleiates, Nikephoros Bryennios the Younger, and Anna Komnene. The choice of using only three sources for a period abounding with historical narratives can only be justified with a very specific focus of analysis, on which the present study is built. The period in question produced some of the finest examples of the entire Byzantine historiography including Michael Psellos and Niketas Choniates, who were able to transcend their works beyond the limits of dry historical events. However, we opted for excluding these sources along with others, for they differed in their main motive of composition. That is, the works of Attaleiates, Bryennios, and Anna Komnene were carefully shaped as narratives in support of usurper-generals who managed to seize the imperial throne through violent actions. Therefore, these three historians acted in the capacity of chief propaganda ministers for usurper-emperors and perfectly qualified for the framework of this study.

[6] On the establishment of the Komnenian dynasty, see Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025–1204*, 136–56; Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, 612–29; Mullett, "Alexios I Komnenos and Imperial Renewal," 259-67; Magdalino, "Innovations in Government," 146-66.

Michael Attaleiates was born in the 1020s to a family of modest origins from Attaleia (today's Antalya in southwestern Turkey) and managed to rise in the Byzantine hierarchy to hold the title of *proedros* and act as a senator and judge.[7] His most important work, the *History* dedicated to the emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates, begins with the events of the reign of Michael IV (r. 1034-1041) and concludes with a laudatory account of Botaneiates' short rule.[8] Mainly a rhetorical panegyric of the emperor Botaneiates, Attaleiates' history often incorporated his own experiences concerning the relevant events during the turbulent transition between the Macedonian and Komnenian dynasties. For instance, the account of his presence in the capacity of a military judge during the campaigns of the emperor Romanos IV Diogenes in the east against the invading Turks provided both first-hand observations on the battlefield and a quite sympathetic portrayal of Romanos IV as a self-sacrificing ruler betrayed by his own family and subjects following the disgraceful defeat at Manzikert.[9] Romanos IV Diogenes, who rose to the imperial throne by marrying the widow of Constantine X Doukas (r. 1059-1067), represented an interruption for the rule of the short-lived Doukas dynasty that was finally ended by Botaneiates when Michael VII Doukas (r. 1071-1078), the son of Constantine X, was forced into monastic life in 1078. The rule of Michael VII, overshadowed by the influential eunuch Nikephoritzes, was greatly detested by Attaleiates, whose fortune was individually affected by the imperial financial policies. Referring to the reign of

[7] For the manual of Roman law by Attaleiates, *Ponema Nomikon,* see Zepos, *Jus graecoromanum 7,* 411-97.

[8] For the socio-political views and historiography of Attaleiates, see Kazhdan, "The Social Views of Michael Attaleiates," 23-86; Markopoulos, "The Portrayal of the Male Figure in Michael Attaleiates," 215-30; Krallis, "Attaleiates as a Reader of Psellos," 167-91; Kaldellis, "A Byzantine Argument for the Equivalence of All Religions," 1-22; Krallis, "'Democratic' Action in Eleventh-Century Byzantium," 35-53; idem, *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline*; Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians,* 312-28.

[9] On the presence of Attaleiates at the fateful battle, see Vratimos, "Was Michael Attaleiates Present at theBattle of Mantzikert?" 829-839; on the role of the empress Eudokia in the downfall of Romanos Diogenes, see idem, "Eudokia Makrembolitissa," 277-84.

Michael VII as an absolute tyranny on several occasions, Attaleiates specifically strove to build an image of unjust government that had to be rightfully destroyed by his personal hero. His disgust for the Doukas family seems to play a substantial part in his efforts to aggrandize Romanos Diogenes, whose cruel blinding causing his death shortly after is depicted with graphic details.[10] Attaleiates' history also represented a major voice accusing Andronikos Doukas, cousin of Michael VII and maternal grandfather of Anna Komnene, of betraying Romanos IV on the battlefield of Manzikert.[11]

Nikephoros Bryennios the Younger, born ca. 1064 or 1080, belonged to an aristocratic family hailing from Adrianople. His unfinished work, *Materials of History,* aimed as a collection of materials for later historians, deals with the shorter period of 1070-1079 and focuses primarily on the heroic deeds of his father-in-law Alexios Komnenos and Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder. Although the degree of relationship between the two Bryennioi, whether our author was the son or grandson of the other, is still a matter of dispute among scholars, the elder Bryennios, who lost his chance on the imperial throne following his unsuccessful rebellion quelled by Alexios Komnenos in 1078, was surely meant to be the real hero of the narrative.[12] The rebel Bryennios was later reconciled with the throne as he was given the governorship of his hometown Adrianople, and the historian Bryennios managed to marry the daughter of Alexios Komnenos, securing himself one of the highest

[10] Attaleiates, *The History,* 322-25. Also see Vryonis, "The Blinding of Romanus IV at Kotyaion (29 June 1072) and His Death on Proti (4 August 1072)," 3-14.
[11]Attaleiates, *The History*, 293. On Andronikos Doukas, see Polemis, *The Doukai*, 55-9.
[12] For the bibliography of Bryennios, see Jeffreys, "Nikephoros Bryennios Reconsidered," 201-14; Stanković, "Nikephoros Bryennios, Anna Komnene and Konstantios Doukas," 169-75; Neville, "A History of the Caesar John Doukas," 168-88; Paidas, "Issues of Social Gender," 737-49; Neville, *Heroes and Romans;* Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians,* 343-86; on differing views about the relationship between the two Nikephoroi, see Wittek-de Jongh, "Le César Nicéphore Bryennios, l'historien, et ses ascendants," 463-68; Gautier, *Historiarum,* 20-24; Carile, "Il problema della identificazione del Cesare Niceforo Briennio," 74-83.

positions in the Byzantine hierarchy as *kaisar*. Bryennios' narrative includes an account of the virtues and information on the earlier years of Alexios' father and uncle, the latter of whom was to seize the imperial throne to be dubbed as the first Komnenian emperor. The author also informs us about the resentment created in Anna Dalassene, Alexios Komnenos' mother, by the reluctance of Alexios' father John to accept the rulership from his brother, who eventually retired to monastic life delivering the imperial diadem to his friend Constantine Doukas.[13] The *Materials of History* has also been suggested to incorporate information from a lost history on the deeds of the kaisar John Doukas, father of the abovementioned Andronikos Doukas, mainly because of the details given from the perspective of the kaisar and unattested elsewhere.[14] An important episode in the work highlighting the early successes of Alexios Komnenos is his struggle against the formidable rebel captain Roussel of Bailleul, who was finally captured by the help of an alliance with the Turks and Alexios' ingenuity. Bryennios also stands out as an important source to compare with Michael Attaleiates especially with regard to the rebellions of Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder and Nikephoros Botaneiates. His account contrasts sharply in his depiction of the rebel Bryennios as a brilliant general forced into rebellion by the ambitions of his own brother and the murderous schemes of the emperor in Constantinople. Botaneiates, on the other hand, is portrayed as an aged and incompetent usurper, whose lavish expenses in order to secure his position on the newly acquired throne would hardly be considered as imperial munificence as depicted by Attaleiates.[15]

After the death of her father Alexios Komnenos, Anna Komnene strove to claim the throne for her husband Bryennios instead of her brother John but the

[13] Bryennios, *Historiarum,* 82-85.
[14] Neville, *Heroes and Romans,* 49-59.
[15] Bryennios, *Historiarum,* 54-55.

reluctant kaisar would rather serve his brother-in-law, even participating in his campaigns in the east. As for the fate of our third and last author Anna Komnene, she was forced by her brother John II Komnenos to retire to the Kecharitomene Nunnery, where she wrote one of the most important contributions to Byzantine historiography. The *Alexiad,* an allusion to the Homeric epic and meant to be a comprehensive account of the reign of Alexios Komnenos, still remains as a most significant source on Byzantine-Western relations following the fateful events of the First Crusade.[16] Born in 1083 as the *porphyrogennete* daughter of Alexios Komnenos and Irene Doukaina, Anna mentions in her history the remarkable education she received on various subjects, which was later praised by the historian Niketas Choniates as well.[17] Even though at an early age she was betrothed to Constantine Doukas, the son of Michael VII and Maria of Alania, she had to marry Nikephoros Bryennios in 1097 due to the untimely death of her fiancé. Disgruntled upon her husband's failure to secure the imperial throne instead of her brother after Alexios' death in 1118, Anna would nevertheless memorialize her deceased husband Nikephoros with tears and words of affection in her history written during her long and forced isolation. The *Alexiad,* featuring Alexios Komnenos as the unrivalled hero

[16] For the bibliography of Anna Komnene, see Buckler, *Anna Comnena: A Study;* Leib, "Les silences de Anna Comnène," 1-10; France, "Anna Comnena, the Alexiad and the First Crusade," 20-38; Thomas, "Anna Comnena's Account of the First Crusade," 269-312; Howard-Johnston, "Anna Komnene and the *Alexiad*," 260-301; Hill, "A Vindication of the Rights of Women to Power by Anna Komnene," 45-54; eadem, *Imperial Women in Byzantium 1025-1204,* 187-98; eadem, "Actions Speak Louder than Words, 45-62; Gouma-Peterson, "Engendered Category or Recognizable Life," 25-34; eadem, "Gender and Power," 107-24; Magdalino, "The Pen of the Aunt," 15-44; Macrides, "The Pen and the Sword," 63-82; Reinsch, "Women's Literature in Byzantium?" 83-106; Anderson, "Anna Komnene, Learned Women, and the Book in Byzantine Art," 125-56; Albu, "Bohemond and the Rooster," 157-68; Ljubarskij, "Why is the *Alexiad* a Materpiece of Byzantine Literature?" 169-88; Frankopan, "Perception and Projections of Prejudice," 59-76; Stephenson, "Anna Comnena's *Alexiad* as a Source for the Second Crusade?" 41-54; Smythe, "Middle Byzantine Family Values," 125-39; Stanković, "Nikephoros Bryennios, Anna Komnene and Konstantios Doukas,"169-75; Quandahl and Jarratt, "'To Recall Him…Will be a Subject of Lamentation'," 301–335; Papaioannou, "Anna Komnene's Will," 99-121; Neville, "Lamentation, History, and Female Authorship in Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*," 192-218; Buckley, "War and Peace in the *Alexiad*," 92-109; Sinclair, "Anna Komnene and Her Sources," 143-85; Stouraitis, "Conceptions of War and Peace in Anna Comnena's *Alexiad*," 69-80; Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians,* 343-86.

[17] Choniates, *O City of Byzantium,* 8. For a more insightful comment, see Tornikes, "An Unpublished Funeral Oration on Anna Comnena," 404-5.

of his age, begins with the narration of Alexios' early military services under Romanos IV, most notably the capture of Roussel of Bailleul. Promoting the image of her father as a valiant and crafty general who crushed the further rebellions of Nikephoros Basilakes and Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder, Anna continues with the discussion of the circumstances leading to the rebellion of the Komnenos brothers, which is primarily depicted as a defensive maneuver against the scheming court officials of Botaneiates. Furthermore, she greatly emphasizes the support provided by Isaac in favor of his brother Alexios to urge his own partisans to proclaim the latter as the emperor, even with the help of alleged metaphysical signs demonstrating divine approval of Alexios' rule. Upon his succession, Alexios would create the title *sebastokrator*, second only to emperor itself, in order to honor his selfless brother.[18] Once emperor, Alexios Komnenos found a Byzantium besieged by two serious threats, the Normans and Seljuks. The Norman ruler Robert Guiscard and his successor Bohemond I of Antioch are depicted by Anna as the chief antagonists of a story whose main hero is Alexios Komnenos. Until the death of Robert Guiscard in 1085, Alexios was able to hold off the onslaught of the Normans by enlisting the help of the German king and Venetians, the primary Western powers with conflicting interests with this rising power in southern Italy.[19] However, Bohemond would prove to be an equally formidable foe for the Byzantines when he appeared with his army before Constantinople as one of the most prominent Crusader leaders in response to the historic call of Pope Urban II with the purpose of liberating the Holy Lands from Muslim infidels. Anna's account clearly shows that the relationship between Byzantium and Crusaders was quite problematic from the beginning and it would

[18] Also see Frankopan, "Kinship and Distribution of Power in Komnenian Byzantium," 1-34.
[19] On the Byzantine-Venetian treaty with far-reaching results and its dating, see Frankopan, "Byzantine Trade Privileges to Venice in the Eleventh Century," 135-60; Madden, "The Chrysobull of Alexius I Comnenus to the Venetians," 23–41.

further escalate as Bohemond refused to give up the territories captured from the Turks and established his own principality based in Antioch. Even though he was eventually forced to sign the Treaty of Devol in 1108 that made him a vassal of the Byzantine Empire, his nephew and successor Tancred failed to respect the terms of the treaty and the hostilities resumed. However, partly because of the Crusader campaigns, the Byzantines were also able to restore most of the Asia Minor coast from the Seljuks. Aside from the major threat posed by the Norman expansionism, Alexios successfully eliminated the danger of the Pecheneg nomads with the help of a tentative alliance with the Cumans in 1091 and thwarted the raiding activities of Tzachas (Çaka), the prominent maritime emir of Smyrna. During his 37-year reign, Alexios Komnenos faced a great number of pretenders and was exalted by his daughter for his zealous struggles against such major heretical communities as the Paulicians and Bogomils. For instance, the execution of the Bogomil leader Basil by burning at the stake in the Hippodrome of Constantinople in 1118 may represent a unique use of this punishment for religious persecution in Byzantium.

The common feature of these three authors was their relationship with the protagonists of their historical narratives, whose fates were eventually intertwined with each other. Michael Attaleiates' hero, Nikephoros Botaneiates, was a prominent general from the east, who at a late age orchestrated a successful rebellion against the last emperor of the Doukas family. However, once he seized the imperial capital, Botaneiates himself was to face multiple rebellions on both sides with meager financial sources and manpower, and our sources make it clear that his main helper was the young general Alexios Komnenos, who managed to crush the uprisings of two veteran generals, Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder and Nikephoros Basilakes. The talented strategist Alexios Komnenos himself would later stage a successful

rebellion against Botaneiates and usher an era of relative political stability and military success. The story of his revolt was discussed and justified through the account of his daughter Anna, while his son-in-law Nikephoros would mainly heroize his namesake ancestor. At the end of the day, our authors would face the challenge of vindicating the subversive actions of their protagonists and this situation makes their handling of other rebels even more intriguing for the reader. At this point, there emerges the need to discuss our sources according to the intended realities projected by their respective ideologies rather than their consistency concerning the historical facts. That is to say, it is necessary to view these narratives as literary works as much as historical sources and analyze their message in a totality. For instance, the introduction contained in Bryennios' account is exclusively included in the interpretation of the source even though the authorship of this part is not universally attributed to Bryennios, whose history was preserved in only one manuscript that does not exist anymore.[20]

Byzantium has long been appreciated for its preservation of the legacy of Roman legislation and the laws considering rebellion as a crime against the Roman state and its head were a part of this legacy since antiquity. For this reason, it would be expedient to begin our analysis by describing the legal implications of rebellion in Byzantine legal codes and the application of these laws in political reality. The second chapter of this study is thus dedicated to this topic and focuses on the concept of imperial *oikonomia* as a well-established tenet in Byzantine political ideology concerning the punishment of rebels. Chapter Three on the other hand represents the main bulk of this study and provides a detailed literary analysis of the three primary sources and the interpretation of the research results. The first part of this chapter

[20] Bryennios, *Historiarum*, 33-42.

elaborates upon the argument that by the period in question Byzantium had long developed an ideology to allow the reintegration of subversive subjects into the political system through a discussion of the concept of loyalty and the handling of rebels in Byzantium. Then, in the second part, we offer an unprecedented terminological analysis of subversive vocabulary in Byzantine literature in order to demonstrate the fine shades of semantic differentiation between certain terms and the manipulation of these nuances by our sources. Last but not least, the third part of this chapter expands on the strategies utilized by the authors by providing extensive exemplification with the purpose of answering the major question about the existence of common rhetorical tendencies or idiosyncrasies of individual styles in our narratives.

To recapitulate, it is not the purpose of this study to present a comprehensive look on Byzantine subversive literature focusing on the particular issue of usurpation but to provide an analysis of literary strategies of a selective range of historical sources from one of the most turbulent periods of Byzantine history. It is hoped that this contribution will demonstrate the ever-present need for new perspectives in examining such fundamental themes as subversion.

CHAPTER 2

LEGAL PRESCRIPTION VS. POLITICAL TENDENCIES

2.1 Punishment of rebels in Byzantine law

It is a well-known and acclaimed fact that the Byzantine Empire preserved and utilized the Roman legal texts and practices as the continuation of the eastern part of Roman Empire.[21] The Byzantine civil law was based upon the firm foundation of the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, which was compiled by the order of Justinian I (r. 527-565) and "summarized the achievements of Roman jurisprudence."[22] The Justinianic *Corpus* itself heavily drew upon the *Theodosian Code*, which was compiled by the command of Theodosius II (r. 408-450), the last emperor to rule over both parts of the empire. Throughout centuries various changes were made upon these texts to create more up-to-date and relevant versions by several emperors. Therefore, it is expedient to present a clear picture of the evolution of Byzantine laws with regard to the concept of rebellion.

The compilation of the *Basilika*, or the *Basilics*, began under the first Macedonian emperor Basil I (r. 867-886) and was finished under his successor Leo VI (r. 886-912).[23] These two emperors left behind an extensive text of 60 volumes that constituted the main reference of the Byzantine law for the coming centuries. The popularity of the manuscript tradition of the *Synopsis Basilicorum*, the alphabetically rather than thematically arranged and abridged version of the *Basilika*, has led scholars to think that it served as a replacement for the *Basilika* and was quite

[21] On Byzantine legislation, see Simon, "Legislation as Both a World Order and a Legal Order," 1-26; Fögen, "Legislation in Byzantium," 53-70; Lokin, "The Significance of Law and Legislation in the Law Books of the Ninth to Eleventh Centuries," 71-92.
[22] Kazhdan, "Law, Civil," 1191.
[23] Fögen, "Reanimation of Roman Law in the Ninth Century," 11-22; Van Bochove, "On the Date and Status of Byzantine Law Books," 7-27.

commonly used.[24] Therefore, it would be a convenient point to start our quest to understand the development of the laws on rebellion in Byzantium by looking retrospectively from the creation of the *Basilika* and the *Synopsis.*[25]

The content concerning rebellions and plots against imperial authority was provided in Book 60, Title 36 of the *Basilika* under the name of "Julian Law on the Plots." This title includes a considerable number of headings, which not only give us insight about what Romans and their successors understood by "plot"[26] but also shed light upon the evolution of the term. The original Latin name of the law, *Lex Julia de maiestate,* comes with the necessity of understanding the Latin term *maiestas.* Often used as a tool for political manipulation, the concept of *maiestas* included a widely ranging spectrum of crimes against the "majesty" of those who held the *imperium.*[27] Drawing its origins from the treason laws of the Roman Republic, *crimen laesae majestatis* (crime against majesty, or lèse majesté as it was borrowed from French into English) was later to be converged with the ancient Roman concept of *perduellio.*[28] Predating the concept of *maiestas, perduellio* used to designate the crimes against the state, and Lear gives us five categories of crimes that can be classified under *perduellio:* 1) desertion to the enemy, 2) *proditio* (handing over a Roman citizen, military force, city or territory to the enemy), 3) aid and comfort for

[24] Burgmann, "Synopsis Basilicorum," 1995.
[25] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,* 145-48; for an example of Byzantine canon law from the period by Theodore Balsamon, partly influenced by Roman law, see Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Greaco-latina, vols. 104, 137-138;* Stolte, "Balsamon and the Basilica," 115–25; on the canon law of the period, see Stolte, "Civil Law in Canon Law," 543–54; Troianos, "Byzantine Canon Law to 1100," 115-69; idem, "Byzantine Canon Law from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Centuries," 170-214; on the *Peira* of Eustathios Romaios, see Vryonis, "The Peira as a Source for the History of Byzantine Aristocratic Society," 277-84; Oikonomidès, "The 'Peira' of Eustathios Romaios," 169-92.
[26] Here, the Greek term is *ἐπιβουλή*. A further analysis of the term is provided in this study in Chapter 3.2 Subversive Terminology.
[27] On the manipulation of treason trials in Ancient Rome, see Colunga, "Untangling A Historian's Misinterpretation of Ancient Rome's Treason Laws," 11-36.
[28] Lear, "The Crime of Majesty in Roman Public Law," 10.

the enemy, 4) inciting war, 5) breach of ban of exile.[29] On the other hand, *maiestas* came to serve as an umbrella term for the concept we can broadly call treason under the Principate and *perduellio* became only one of these various meanings of the word.[30] Hence, during the time when Justinian I commissioned the compilation of his law code, *maiestas* included not only plots against the emperor and state but any violation of civic duties. For example, according to the decree by the emperors Theodosius I, Arcadius and Honorius in 394, the governors who inscribed their names on the works built by public funds were liable to the punishment of treason (*maiestas*).[31] Another such crime against majesty was the violation of the well-known ban on weaving and wearing purple-dyed garments.[32] Therefore, the treason laws of late Roman antiquity were formed in order to include and punish a wide range of offences against those who held the supreme power in the empire. However, for the sake of consistency we shall focus on the definition and punishment of the crimes that were directly aimed at the rule and life of the Roman head of state, and could be defined as rebellion or usurpation. In the *Basilika,* just like in the *Digest,* plotting is given as an offence resembling sacrilege and defined as a crime committed against the well-being of the Roman people.[33] The first two headings belonged to the noted Roman jurist Ulpian and broadly defined the actions that could be regarded as treason.[34] Although at first sight the *Basilika* might seem like a dry

[29] Ibid., 6-7.
[30] Ibid., 26.
[31] Blume, *Annotated Justinian Code* 8.11.10 (This unprinted version of Blume's translation is preferred over the scholarly debated and older translation of S.P. Scott. The full text can be reached online at http://www.uwyo.edu/lawlib/blume-justinian/ajc-edition-2); Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels, and the Sirmondians Constitutions*, 5.1.31.
[32] *Justinian Code* 11.9.4; *Theodosian Code* 10.21.3.
[33] Heimbach, *Basilicorum Libri LX* 60.36.1.
[34] Watson, *The Digest of Justinian*, 48.4.1-2: (1) "He is liable, by whose agency a plan is formed with malicious intent to kill hostages without the command of the emperor; or that men armed with weapons or stones should be, or should assemble, within the city against the interests of the state, or should occupy places or temples; or that there should be an assembly or gathering or that men should be called together for seditious purposes; or by whose agency a plan is formed with malicious intent to kill any magistrate of the Roman people, or anyone holding *imperium* or

copy of a much earlier law code, its originality lies in the *scholia*, the explanatory additions to the Roman legislation. In this case, the author of the *scholium* for the second heading differentiates between three worst cases of plotting against the Roman people: 1) attempt against the emperor, 2) *προδοσία,* 3) murder of a senator by conspiring with soldiers and a faction.[35] By the word *προδοσία* we can understand the betrayal of a Roman citizen, city or territory to the enemy. However, what is more intriguing is the hierarchy the author of this addition makes between these crimes. He clearly points out that the first two of these treacherous actions are minor offences as opposed to the murder of a senator, which is designated as the gravest crime against the Roman people.

In the following headings more actions are listed under the crime of treason as given by Marcian and Scaevola.[36] However, the most relevant ones appear to be provided by Ulpian, for his headings include such actions that would threaten the

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power; or that anyone should bear arms against the state; or who sends messengers or letters to the enemies of the Roman people, or gives them a password, or does anything with malicious intent whereby the enemies of the Roman people may be helped with his counsel against the state; or who persuades or incites troops to make a sedition or tumult against the state;" (2) "or who failed to relinquish his province although his successor has arrived; or who has deserted the army, or, as a private citizen, has fled to the enemy; or has knowingly written or dictated a falsehood onto the public records; for this also is set out in the first chapter of the statute on treason;" *Basilicorum Libri LX* 60.36.1.

[35] *Basilicorum Libri LX* 60.36.1, scholium c. VII 603.

[36] *Digest*, 48.4.3-4: [Marcian, *Institutes, book 14*] "*The Law of the Twelve Tables* commands capital punishment for the man who stirs up the enemy or hands a Roman citizen over to them. But the *lex Julia* on treason makes him liable who injures the public *majestas*, such as he who surrenders in war or recklessly yields a citadel or camp. Under the same law who, without the command of the emperor, wages war or raises a levy or prepares an army; or who, though he has been superseded in his province, has not handed his military command over to his successor; or who has abandoned his *imperium* or an army of the Roman people; or who, being a private citizen, knowingly and with malicious intent acts as though holding office or magistracy; or who brings about the doing of any of the above; (4) [Scaevola, *Rules, book* 4] or he by whose malicious intent a person is induced to take an oath to act against the state; or whose malicious intent an army of the Roman people is led into an ambush or betrayed to the enemy; or whose malicious action is alleged to have prevented enemies falling into the power of the Roman people; or by whose agency with malicious intent the enemies of the Roman people have been assisted with provisions, arms, weapons, horses, money, or any other thing; or who so acts that allies of the Roman people become their enemies; or by whose malicious intent it is brought about that the king of a foreign nation fails to make submission to the Roman people; or by whose agency with malicious intent it is brought about that hostages, money, or cattle are handed over to the enemies of the Roman people against the interests of the state; also the man who lets go someone charged and found guilty in a [treason] trial and for this reason cast into prison..."

lives and *imperium* of not only the emperors but also rest of the magistrates of the Roman state. Moreover, the *Digest,* going further than just defining what treason is, prescribes capital punishment for the crime as well as informing who could bring the charges of treason and what to do with the property of the accused. The Justinianic legislation, which otherwise denied the right of accusation for slaves and freedmen, made an exception for the charge of high treason against their masters and patrons. This exception remained intact in the *Basilika* alongside with the legislation permitting women the right to bring charges of treason.[37]

What to do with the property of the person accused of treason was another issue and part of the punishment. The *Basilika,* in that matter, again preserved the prescriptions of its Justinianic predecessor, which separately legislated on the rights of the children and wife of the accused person concerning inheritance. Death and confiscation were the standard penalties awaiting a condemned traitor, and the stigma of treason was meant to be smeared upon the whole household of the criminal. This intention is made quite clear in the *Justinianic Code,* which totally deprived the sons of the guilty person of the inheritance, while providing the Falcidian portion - that is, a quarter of the property - of the maternal inheritance for the daughters. As for the wife, she was granted the right to keep her dowry.[38] This

[37] Ibid., 48.4.7: [Modestinus, *Encyclopaedia, book 12*] "The infamous, who do not have the right of accusation, are nevertheless undoubtedly permitted this accusation. 1. Soldiers also, who cannot bring other kinds of actions; for those who are on guard to keep the peace should more and more be permitted this accusation. 2. Slaves also who bring [this] accusation are given a hearing, even against their masters, as are freedmen against their patrons;" *Basilicorum Libri LX* 60.36.8; 48.4.8: [Papinian, *Replies, book 13*] : "Women also are given a hearing in questions [of offenses] against the *majestas* [of the Roman people]. It was indeed the woman Fulvia who revealed the conspiracy of Sergius Catiline and gave information to the consul M. Tullius [Cicero];" *Basilicorum Libri LX* 60.36.9.

[38] *Justinian Code* 9.8.5: "Whoever enters into a criminal conspiracy with soldiers, private persons or barbarians, or takes or gives the oath in connection therewith, (the object of which is) to kill men of illustrious rank who participate in our consultations in the imperial counsel, also senators - for they too are a part of use - or finally any person whatever in our service, shall be stricken with the sword as one guilty of treason and his goods confiscated and given to our fisc, and we want to punish the intention of such crime equally with the effect thereof. 1. And their sons, whose lives

same heading also included a preventive measure by promising reward or amnesty to the co-conspirators or servants of the plotters if they betrayed their plans before it was too late. The shared fate of the servants and their masters was highlighted in certain articles. The law permitted the former to be tortured in order to reveal any secret plans of their masters in case of an accusation.[39] Another article declared that any action of alienation or manumission undertaken by the charged person after the commencement of his seditious deed was null and void.[40] Yet again, according to a decree attributed to the emperor Severus, even the goods of the freedmen were to be appropriated by the fisc only if the transgressor left no inheritors behind.[41] In Roman legislation, the death of a person accused of any other crime was enough to drop the charges, but this rule exempted the accusation of treason. That is, even after his death the person was to suffer *damnatio memoriae*, and his successors had to prove their

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we spare through special imperial leniency - for they ought to perish be the same punishment as their fathers, for it is to be feared that they will follow the paternal, that is hereditary, example - shall be strangers to the inheritance from their mother, grandmother, and all their relatives; they shall take nothing under a testament of strangers, and shall be perpetually needy and poor; the paternal infamy shall ever accompany them; they shall be admitted to no honors and no oaths of loyalty; they shall, finally, be such that, groveling in perpetual poverty, death shall be a solace and life a punishment to them. 2. We further order that all who attempt to intercede with us for such persons shall be infamous, without hope of pardon therefor. 3. The daughters (of such conspirators) whatever their number, shall only receive the Falcidian portion from the property of the mother, whether she dies testate or intestate, so that such daughters may have a moderate support, rather than the full advantage and name of heirs. For daughters, who, we are confident, will be less daring, on account of the infirmity of their sex, should not be dealt with as severely (as the sons). 4. Emancipation of sons or daughters, made by such conspirators after the enactment of this law, shall not be valid. Dowries or gifts or finally alienations of any kind of property, which appear to have been given or made, fraudulently or legally, after the time when such persons first thought of entering such conspiracy, shall be of no force. 5. Wives of the aforesaid man may, of course, recover their dowries. If they are so situated that whatever they have received from their husbands as a gift must be preserved for their children (as would be the case if e.g. she remarried), everything which according to law would (otherwise) go to the sons, will go to the fisc from the time that the usufruct (of the wife) ceases. The Falcidian portion in such property shall be given to the daughters but not to the sons. 6. The provisions made as to the aforesaid persons and their sons, shall apply with equal severity to their guilty satellites and servants and their sons;" *Basilicorum Libri LX* 60.36.18.

[39] *Basilicorum Libri LX* 60.36.19; *Justinian Code* 9.8.6.

[40] *Justinian Code* 9.8.6.3: "So the Divine Severus and Antoninus also decreed that a man could made [sic] no alienation or manumission from the time that he began his crime; and Magnus Antoninus wrote, that no debtor could rightfully pay him;" *Basilicorum Libri LX* 60.36.19.

[41] *Digest*, 48.4.9; *Basilicorum Libri LX* 60.36.10.

pater familias free of the charges if they wanted not to be deprived of their rightful inheritance.[42]

Another observation would be the emphasis on the Roman people, as this focus was to shift in favor of the Christian community during the time when the *Ecloga* was prepared in the eighth century.[43] The *Ecloga,* prepared at the instigation of the emperor Leo III, promised a more humane touch to the ancient laws and further promoted the Christian element of the society on a legal level. Although it is less elaborate and straightforward than its predecessors, it would be useful to quote the passage on treason from the *Ecloga* in order to understand the approach of the first Isaurian emperor to this critical issue:

> Anyone who secretly plots or conspires against the Sovran or conspires with others against him, or the State of the Christian people, shall from that very hour be suitably put to death upon the ground that he is aiming at the destruction of the entire community. But to prevent judges who have a grudge against anyone putting the accused to death, and then excusing themselves by alleging that the accused defamed the Sovran, it is expedient that the accused be brought into safe custody, and that the charge against him be brought before the Sovran to be tried; and the Sovran shall decide what is to be done with him.[44]

This passage serves as the only reference to the punishment and proceeding of the crime of rebellion in the *Ecloga.* As concise as it is, this bit contains certain necessary ingredients. First of all, an attempt against the emperor or the state of the Christians is condemned as an attack against the well-being of the whole society, and a prompt death penalty is demanded. However, it is also noted that this promptness

[42] *Digest* 48.4.11; *Basilicorum Libri LX* 60.36.12.
[43] Freshfield, *A Revised Manual of Roman Law,* 76: "Anyone who secretly plots or conspires against the Sovran or conspires with others against him, or the State of the Christian people..."
[44] Ibid, 76.

could be abused by judges against their enemies. Another motive for the misuse of this charge was mentioned in the *Digest* of Justinian as the desire of overzealous judges to ingratiate themselves with the emperor:

> But this charge should not be treated by judges as an opportunity for showing their reverence for the imperial majesty, but as a matter of fact; for the nature of the person must be considered; could he have done it, had he done or devised anything beforehand, and was he in his right mind? Nor should a slip of tongue readily bring a man to punishment; for although thoughtless persons may deserve punishment, nevertheless, they should be pardoned as not of sound mind if their crime was not of such a kind that it derives from the actual wording of the statute or merits exemplary punishment.[45]

Another measure against the abuse of the accusation of treason was a deterrent article threatening the false accusers with torture, which was the same procedure, deemed fit for the trial of treason, if they failed to prove their charges. Decreed by Constantine the Great in 314 and first included in the *Theodosian Code*, this law survived in the *Basilika* as an intimidation.[46]

The *Basilika* closely followed the outline of the Julian Law in the *Digest* and made additions of other headings from the *Justinianic Code.* The interesting detail is that the notion of treason, which was given either as *maiestas* or *perduellio* in Latin, was expressed by the Greek word *καθοσίωσις* in the *Basilika.*[47] It is worthy of mention that among our three main sources it was used only by Michael

[45] *Digest* 48.4.7.3.
[46] *Justinian Code* 9.8.3: "If anyone accuses another of the crime of treason, he may know that since a person convicted thereof is not protected from severe inquisition by reason of any privilege of rank, he, too, is to be subjected to torture, if he cannot prove his accusation by other, clear evidence. 1. And that is true not only in the case of the man guilty of such rashness (as to bring such accusation) but he too, must be subjected to torture, by whose counsel and instigation the accusation appears to have been made, so that the punishment provided by law may be visited upon all who have guilty knowledge of the crime;" *Basilicorum Libri LX* 60.36.16.
[47] For example, see *Basilicorum Libri LX* 60.36.1 scholia.

Attaleiates, which might be explained by the fact that being a jurist Attaleiates was familiar with the legal use of this term.[48] On the other hand, no matter how prevalently it was used, *καθοσίωσις* did not completely replace *perduellio,* and it was necessary to differentiate the terms in order to follow the original text. For instance, we encounter the word *perduellio* in a trimmed and Graecized form in one of the scholia for a heading belonging to Ulpian's *Disputations,* where the author feels the need to mention that *perduellio,* or *δουελλί* as he puts it, was a different and more severe crime than ordinary treason for it was aimed with a "barbaric spirit" against the state and the emperor.[49]

A significant aspect of the Byzantine social life was urban unrest. Urban unrest or rioting could break out due to various reasons, and here we are concerned with the type of unrest that was associated with the political conjuncture. Riots could be either the cause or result of rebellion and did occasionally contribute to political changes. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the legislation concerning the riots bursting out in Byzantine cities. The relevant law can be found in Book 60, Title 61 of the *Basilika,* entitled "On Those Who Cause Sedition and Stir the People against the State." Repeating the prescription of the Theodosian and Justinianic codes, the first heading of this title commands "the gravest punishment" for the offenders.[50] The second heading of this title again orders the same punishment for those who make their claims by causing clamor and confusion in the public. This heading, absent from the *Theodosian Code* as it was decreed by the emperor Leo I in 466, deemed it fit to punish the clamor-makers severely for it could easily lead to the creation of a

[48] Attaleiates, *The History,* 136.
[49] *Basilicorum Libri LX* 60.36.12.1 scholia. *Digest* 48.4.11: "Clearly, not everyone charged with treason under the *lex Julia* is on the same footing, but he who is charged with *perduellio,* animated by a hostile spirit against the state or the emperor [is liable even after death]"
[50] *Basilicorum Libri LX* 60.61.1: "Whoever takes the responsibility of leading the people into doing something against the public order shall be punished with the gravest punishment."

crowd demanding other things than the original cause or just seeking an opportunity of plunder amidst the tumult. The penalty for this crime was further explained in Title 61 of the same book, devoted to the punishments. The people responsible for seditious upheavals were to be beaten; however, the repetition of the same offence could incur tonsuring and perpetual exile for the involved.[51] Another heading of the same title also condemns those who stirred the people into sedition to the gibbet, beasts or banishment.[52]

This brief review of the Roman legislation on treason and rebellion has so far shown the harsh and quick execution demanded by the laws. The charge of treason was a serious and multifaceted issue. Throughout the ages it was manipulated to defame or eliminate political adversaries by the potentates in the empire. The *Basilika,* the valid law code for the eleventh and twelfth centuries, retained many features of its Justinianic predecessor, more so concerning the punishment of rebellion. The standard penalty for plotting against the emperor alongside with other treacherous actions was death and confiscation. Causing an urban unrest or gathering a crowd was seen as a potential threat to the well-being of the state and society, hence to be punished by very harsh measures. Treason was regarded as an anomaly and invalidated other laws on several occasions. For instance, it was normally forbidden for slaves to bring an accusation against their masters or it was impossible to pursue a case against a person who died. However, the laws of treason were above these rules and they were in fact rather harsh. The punishment did not only entail the chastisement of the accused person but his household, including the freedmen and slaves. The children were easily deprived of their inheritance and the successors of the deceased person were responsible for clearing the name of the accused. To

[51] Ibid., 60.51.16.3.
[52] Ibid, 60.51.34.2; the same punishment was prescribed by the *Digest* 48.19.38.2.

conclude, *ἐπιβουλῶν νομός* of Rome was severe and deterring but it was just prescription and a very ancient one. Therefore, our next task is to investigate the application of the legislation during the turbulent period of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when one might have expected the emperors to be stricter as to their handling of the rebels.

2.2 Reality: The ideology of imperial oikonomia

Oikonomia is one of those Greek words which has acquired a multitude of meanings throughout its long history and thus quite tricky to translate into English though it managed to be a part of the international vocabulary in the sense of economy. We can trace the origins of the word to Greek antiquity but another significant feature of oikonomia is the fact that it has also gained strong religious connotations with Christianity just like some other key vocabulary to be analyzed in this study. In fact, Lampe's *Patristic Greek Lexicon* provides four fundamental meanings for the word: (1) ministration; (2) disposition, organization, constitution; (3) dispensation, ordering; (4) adaptation of means to ends, prudent handling.[53] The first of these meanings expresses the general sense of administration and management, be it secular or ecclesiastical, alongside with such technical meanings as the tenure of the office of an *oikonomos* or alms. The second sense might be used to state physical, mental or functional disposition, while the last one can mean prudence, discretion and concession. The third sense of the word stands out as the most relevant to be examined within the Christian context. While it can be associated with the ordering of the world, either by the laws of nature or Providence, it also comes to express such

[53] Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon,* 940-43.

dispensations as divine grace and mercy. In this sense, the religious connotations of the word have been the subject of various studies and it is not the object of this study to dwell upon the theological discussions concerning the matter.[54] To briefly review, it can be understood as reconciliation in the form of providential grace for the strict application of religious laws to facilitate the salvation of erring souls. What is relevant to our present discussion is the reflection of this concept on the political ideology of Byzantine thinking. It is common knowledge that Byzantine emperors were regarded as the representatives of divine order on earth and expected to imitate the Savior in their deeds.[55] Perhaps the best expression of this idea of imitation and oikonomia is provided by Nicholas I, patriarch of Constantinople, in a letter addressed to the Pope on the issue of the fourth marriage of emperor Leo VI:[56]

> Dispensation is a concession unto salvation, saving him who has sinned, stretching out the arm of help, and lifting up the fallen from his fall; not permitting him to lie where he has fallen, or rather pushing him toward a miserable pit. Dispensation is an imitation of the Divine Mercy, a snatching out of the jaws of the beast that howls against us the man who is about to be devoured by those jaws of destruction. But he who still commits the sin is by no means snatched away; only he who by the Divine expedient of this

[54] Rai, "L'économie dans le droit canonique byzantin," 273-77; Erickson, "Oikonomia in Byzantine Canon Law," 225-36; L'Huillier, "Quelques précisions sur la notion d''Economie'," 43-52; Azkoul, "Oikonomia and the Orthodox Church," 65-79; Dagron, "Le règle et l'exception, analyse de la notion d'économie," 1-18; Psarev, "The 19th Canonical Answer of Timothy of Alexandria," 297-320. On the significance of *oikonomia* in Byzantine political and legal thought: Ahrweiler, *L'idéologie politique de l'empire byzantin,* 129-47; Kazhdan, "Some Observations on the Byzantine Concept of Law," 199-216.

[55] On the emperors' "capacity as God's image and representative on earth," see Alexander, "The Strength of Empire and Capital," 339-57; for the most recent and vigorous counter-argument to Alexander, and on Byzantine *oikonomia*, see Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic,* 165-98; 74-5, 79-80.

[56] The issue of the fourth marriage or tetragamy was a tenth-century controversy between the emperor Leo VI and the patriarch Nicholas I that broke out when Leo VI decided to marry his mistress Zoe Karbonopsina in a fourth marriage with the desire of producing an heir. See Boojamra, "The Eastern Schism of 907 and the Affair of the Tetragamia," 113-33; Karlin-Hayter, "Le synode à Constantinople de 886 à 912," 59-101; eadem, "La 'préhistoire' de la dernière volonté de Léon VI," 483-86; Oikonomidès, "Leo VI's Legislation of 907," 174-95; idem, "La dernière volonté de Léon VI au sujet de la tétragamie (mai 912)," 46-52; idem, "La 'préhistoire' de la dernière volonté de Léon VI au sujet de la tétragamie," 265-70; Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI (886-912),* 133-63; Laiou, "Imperial Marriages and Their Critics in the Eleventh Century," 165-76.

> Dispensation puts himself far off from his sin, and avoids its pursuit of him.[57]

This passage clearly shows the assumption that one was supposed to handle justice in a spirit of philanthropy and oikonomia (here, translated as "dispensation"), moderating the harshness of the laws set by humans.

We have already examined the laws of treason dating back to the Roman Republic and inherited by Byzantium, and commented on the severity and promptness of the punishment. However, it is also a well-known fact that the crime of plotting against the emperor was rarely punished by the death penalty in Byzantium and this is more so for the period in question here. By the eleventh and twelfth centuries, capital punishment for treason was mostly replaced by mutilation of the accused person, especially by the practice of blinding. In fact, mutilation proved to be so effective that there were only a few exceptional cases in the whole Byzantine history where the mutilated person later managed to sit on the throne. Although this preference for letting the accused live cannot simply be explained by Christian philanthropy, it is beyond the scope of this study to provide a detailed history of mutilation as a punishment for treason. For the sake of consistency, we shall focus on the examples from our three primary sources in order to understand the reception and application of the idea of oikonomia in Byzantium in the eleventh and twelfth centuries concerning the attempts of usurpation. Trying to find out the motives of Byzantine political mechanism in punishing rebels, this inquiry will also demonstrate the individual standpoints of the authors.

[57] Nicholas I, Patriarch of Constantinople, *Letters of Nicholas I*, 237.

First of all, it is worthy of mention that the cases of rebellion and plotting did not necessarily end with the chastisement of the offenders. Although the tendencies changed from the reign of one emperor to another, it was common occurrence for conspiracies to end with a patronizing amnesty or even rewards and honors. Surely the handling of plotters was dependent upon the power held by the authors of the mischief, who consistently belonged to the aristocracy. They were more often punished by confiscations, exiles, humiliation, and incarceration rather than mutilation. It is one of the arguments of this study that unless it was really jeopardizing the position of the emperors, they shunned from delivering irreversible penalties to the offenders. One could be recalled from exile with extra honors and property but it was something even beyond the capability of the emperor to restore the sight of a man. Therefore, taking the life of an offender appears to be an anomaly in our sources, which show that it was only a few heretics and foreign prisoners of war - as opposed to native Byzantine soldiers captured in civil wars - that were executed by the orders of emperors. While we should highlight the exceptional nature of these punishments, it is also necessary to review certain cases that indeed ended up with death. The most significant example in our sources is the fate of the emperor Romanos IV Diogenes, whose story became notorious amongst the contemporaries for the cruel punishment he received at the hands of his former family members as opposed to the humane treatment of his captor, the Seljuk sultan Alparslan.[58] It would be redundant to repeat the whole story again here but certain details from the narrative of Michael Attaleiates merit attention. It is an undeniable observation that Attaleiates felt and expressed great compassion for the former emperor, providing a graphic account of the blinding scene itself. However, it should

[58] Vryonis, "The Greek and Arabic Sources on the Eight Day Captivity of the Emperor Romanos IV," 439-50.

be remembered that the blame was directed upon the young emperor Michael VII and his entourage, who were to be toppled by Attaleiates' own hero, Nikephoros Botaneiates. Therefore, the gory details of Attaleiates' depiction ought to be read for their propaganda value as well. According to him, the punishment was pointlessly severe, for Diogenes had already suffered much at the hands of his enemies and donned the monastic garb as agreed with the imperial party. The long lamentation also emphasized the sacrifices made by the former emperor, the compassionate treatment of Alparslan, and the ingratitude of young Michael VII towards his stepfather:

> As for you, O emperor, what was this order that you gave? Who exactly was to be deprived of light itself and the power of visual perception that was given to him by God? This man, who behaved toward you as a father in both law and fact, who set aside imperial power and yielded it to you; who replaced the imperial purple with those rags...[59]

As he continued his dirge, Attaleiates provided important information about the operation of blinding, which was done rather unprofessionally by "a certain Jew who was inexperienced in this kind of business."[60] Setting aside his anti-Semitic comment on Jews, whom he denounces as "the race of God-killers", Attaleiates gives us the idea that blinding was a delicate operation that was to be handled by experts of it.[61] However, Diogenes was blinded with an iron pin plunged into his eyes repeatedly until he swore that he could not see anymore. But it appears that what was even more important was the medical treatment to be provided for the blinded person, because it

[59] Attaleiates, *The History*, 321.
[60] Ibid., 323.
[61] On blinding in Byzantium in general, see Herrin, "Blinding in Byzantium," 56-68.

was due to harsh handling and lack of care that Diogenes lost his life shortly afterwards:

> He was led on a wretched beast of burden as far as the Propontis, dragged along like a rotting corpse with his eyes gouged out, his head and face all swollen up and maggots were visibly dropping off. A few days later he died in excruciating pain, and even before his death he had begun to stink.[62]

Attaleiates' account is, in my opinion, a very good example to show how the penalty of mutilation could be abused to cause the death of the person. Michael VII and his advisors could not directly decree the execution of the former emperor for it would have been against the tradition and endanger their position. Instead, they deliberately murdered Romanos Diogenes through their negligence with the pretext of blinding a rebel.

Our sources provide another case of fatality, which was an example of both abuse of violence and the repercussions of regime change. Nikephoritzes was a powerful and notorious eunuch acting as the chief advisor of Michael VII Doukas. Personally derided by Attaleiates for his fiscal activities, Nikephoritzes was the mind behind the creation of the warehouse, *phoundax,* in Rhaidestos in order to establish a state monopoly on the corn supply of Constantinople.[63] According to Attaleiates, this foundation in Rhaidestos, where he also owned estates, was the cause of severe food shortages and inflation.[64] We cannot comment whether his depiction of this

[62] Attaleiates, *The History,* 325.
[63] On the *phoundax,* see Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204,* 121-24; Brătianu, "Un expérience d'économie dirigée," 643-62; Lemerle, *Cinq études sur le XIe siècle byzantin,* 300-2; Antoniadis-Bibicou, *Recherches sur les douanes de Byzance,* 185f.
[64] Attaleiates, *The History,* 367-73. For the numerous properties owned by Attaleiates in Rhaidestos and elsewhere, see Talbot, "*Rule* of Michael Attaleiates," 326-76.

influential official reflects the reality but it should be remembered that Michael VII Doukas and Nikephoritzes were among the chief antagonists of Attaleiates' (hi)story, which was basically a statement of propaganda in favor of Nikephoros Botaneiates. With the usurpation of the imperial throne by Botaneiates, Michael VII was forced to abdicate and accept the position of metropolitanship of Ephesus, which was supposedly a more suitable office for his disposition.[65] However, such a lenient handling was denied to the right hand of the former emperor and Nikephoritzes was tortured to death at the island of Oxeia.[66] What is more interesting is that we learn this bit of information not from Attaleiates but from Nikephoros Bryennios. Although he had dedicated pages of criticism against the potent eunuch, Attaleiates remained awkwardly silent about his end and punishment. This could only be understood by his reluctance to associate the new emperor Botaneiates with the execution of a member of the former regime, which would have been quite bad press for the usurper no matter how notorious the deceased was. In fact, it was a rather common theme to portray a favorable emperor as a most merciful ruler in Byzantine historiography, and Botaneiates could be justifiably praised for such virtue.[67] Lauding rulers for lenient treatment of offenders was for one thing a *topos* but, if we are to trust Attaleiates' account, Botaneiates deserved the credit for reviving an ancient law concerning the application of corporal punishment. The Theodosian decree that commanded a 30-day waiting period before the execution of any corporal punishment was reinstated centuries later by Botaneiates, and our jurist/narrator Attaleiates would not miss the chance to note this important legal detail down,

[65] Attaleiates, *The History,* 552-55.
[66] Bryennios, *Historiarum,* 154-55.
[67] Constantelos, "*Philanthropia* as an Imperial Virtue," 351-65; McGuckin, "Embodying the New Society," 50-71.

rightfully exalting his protagonist.[68] Yet, the cynical will notice that it was not until Botaneiates solidified his position on the imperial throne that we see this legislation put into force. Nikephoros III Botaneiates, once officially emperor of the Romans, faced two ongoing revolts to deal with, first that of Nikephoros Bryennios and then of Nikephoros Basilakes. None of our sources including Michael Attaleiates made any mention of or hinted at such a delay for the punishment of these rebels. In fact, both Nikephoroi were hastily blinded even before their arrival at Constantinople, Bryennios at Philopatio and Basilakes at Chlempina. Attaleiates clearly lacked the compassion, which he felt and vividly expressed for the blinded emperor Romanos Diogenes, in the case of these two men. He rather went to any length to justify the punishments meted out by claiming that Botaneiates acted in compliance with the laws of treason. Among our three primary sources, Attaleiates stands out as the only one to use the phrases "law on plotting" or "law on usurpers" (*ἐπιβουλῶν νομός, τυραννῶν νομός*).[69]

First in the case of Nikephoros Bryennios, Botaneiates is praised for his merciful handling of the co-conspirators of the rebellion, whom he punishes not abiding by the law but as befits a real emperor who should imitate God:

> On none of the other, however, did the emperor decide to impose corporal punishment; rather, he did something that made him equal to God himself: all those who rebelled with Bryennios, who were moaning and trembling because of the laws against conspirators and the harsh vengeance that awaited those who committed that sin, he deemed worthy of total amnesty.[70]

[68] Attaleiates, *The History*, 573.
[69] Ibid., 178, 534, 546.
[70] Ibid., 535.

Aside from eschewing corporal punishment, Botaneiates prudently castigated certain ringleaders with confiscation while he apparently endeavored to win the hearts of the vanquished by distributing honors and grants:

> Out of ineffable compassion he did not deprive them of their property either, though he made an exception for three of four of them, whom it would not have been safe to leave in possession of their property, but even in their case gave them others in exchange, making his benefactions equal to what they had lost. Nor was the generosity of his imperial compassion limited to that, for he also adorned Bryennios with all kinds of honors, while to some he offered grants, so that everyone was overcome with wonder at the inscrutable nature of his goodness.[71]

The legality of Botaneiates' punitive decrees was further reinforced by the account of Basilakes, next rebellion on the agenda of the new emperor, which ended with on the spot blinding of the offender as he was "indicted according to the laws on sedition, and sent to the emperor, carried on horses of the public post."[72] This emphasis on the mild application of the laws on treason concerning the only two cases of blinding during Botaneiates' reign cannot be dismissed as mere coincidence. Attaleiates, an ardent eulogizer of the emperor, was apparently concerned with the relevant parts of his narration and felt the need to highlight that these two rebellions were punished even less severely than the book demanded. Yet, Attaleiates' history provides another curious case, which can give us an even clearer idea about our author's thoughts on the punishment of rebels. This intriguing episode is about the fake blinding of the famous mercenary captain and rebel Roussel of Bailleul by Alexios Komnenos.

[71] Ibid., 535-37.
[72] Ibid., 547.

Replacing the position of Crépin as the leader of foreign mercenaries of the empire, Roussel revolted with the Franks under his command and set his eyes upon the imperial throne while defeating one army after another sent against him from Constantinople. Young Alexios Komnenos managed to capture this adventurer by a ruse but he faced the opposition of Amaseian *archons* and dreaded the idea of losing Roussel out of his grasp because of the locals who benefited from the rebellion. Resourceful as he was, Alexios devised yet another "Palamedian plot", as Anna Komnene calls it, to fend off the danger posed by his captive by staging a fake blinding.[73] This scheme, which is again a good case to show the efficacy of blinding as a punishment for rebellion, proved to be effective as the Amaseian opposition died out along with their hopes. However, what is more relevant to our discussion is the real punishment meted out by the imperial authority when Roussel arrived at Constantinople in chains. According to Attaleiates, he was delivered to the hands of the torturers, who whipped him like a "runaway slave" and imprisoned him in a gloomy tower. What could have been the proper handling of the affair provides an interesting passage for the reader:

> The emperor had no intention of bringing the captive before his presence and into his sight, nor did he reach a decision worthy of imperial benevolence and magnanimity, which would have been to bring legal proceedings against him, and, after the verdict had been reached, to condemn him to death, all in order to be able, at that point, to temper his righteous wrath with gentleness and compassion and thus to preserve for the Roman Empire a soldier and commander of his caliber, who was capable of healing many of the wounds festering in the east.[74]

[73] Komnene, *The Alexiad*, 11; eadem, *Alexias*, 16.
[74] Attaleiates, *The History*, 377.

This account is a very good example showing the relationship between the real application of the penalties and the legal prescriptions of Byzantine law. Ancient laws on treason inherited by Byzantines demanded capital punishment, and the contemporaries were fully aware of this fact. However, the practice had so far adopted a different and more efficient recourse rather than strictly implementing the book. The offender was to be gained back by a show of imperial clemency, which was to be preceded by a fake condemnation and threat of death. The result was expected to be the gratitude of the ex-rebel to be demonstrated by future acts of loyal service for the emperor:

> Thus the latter would have acknowledged an immense gratitude toward the emperor for his salvation and would express endless thanks - which it would have been necessary for him to do in any case, as he was a reasonable man with firm judgment - and then he would assume command of the war and free the east of the raids that pressed upon it...[75]

Such oikonomia was certainly expedient more than ever as the eastern parts of the empire were continuously ravaged by Turkish raiders and the emperors needed every hand that could wield a sword against the enemy much so in the case of such a figure as Roussel. Although we read nothing of the fate of Roussel at the hands of Michael VII's torturers in the accounts of Anna Komnene and Nikephoros Bryennios, they nevertheless recount an interesting encounter between Alexios Komnenos and his cousin Theodore Dokeianos on his way back to Constantinople from Amaseia.[76] Stopping by the latter's house in Paphlagonia, Alexios Komnenos shows Dokeianos his most recent trophy, Roussel of Bailleul with a bandage over his seemingly

[75] Ibid., 377-79.
[76] Komnene, *The Alexiad*, 12; eadem, *Alexias*, 15; Bryennios, *Historiarum*, 194-97.

blinded eyes. Dokeianos grows indignant at this sight and strongly admonishes Alexios for cruelly depriving such a valiant man of his sight and thus denying him the chance of serving the Roman Empire. However, Dokeianos' grief turns into awe and merriment as Alexios orders his captive to remove the bandage to reveal his sight still intact. Regarding Attaleiates' prospect of ideal punishment and Dokeianos' rejoicing to behold Roussel still able to see, it becomes quite clear a picture that such men as Roussel of Bailleul were expected to switch sides easily and it was an acceptable risk to assume that these ex-rebels would join the Byzantine cause once again after they were pardoned and sufficiently honored.

The supreme authority in punishing the rebels seems to be the emperor himself, and it would be natural to presume so as the crime of usurpation was an attempt against the majesty of the ruling emperor. However, certain examples from our sources present a different picture and raise the question of the authorization of punishment in the cases of treason. Although it is another fact to be kept in mind that Byzantine historians often endeavored to distance their protagonists from the implementation of harsh penalties to highlight their virtue as propitious rulers, our sources provide undeniable cases of initiative in the distribution of punishment. In fact, we may even argue that the person in charge of the suppression of rebellion had quite legitimate authority to deliver summary punishment to the offenders. The fake blinding of Roussel, for which Alexios Komnenos was censured by his cousin, can indeed present such a case. Theodore Dokeianos harshly criticized Alexios without even asking on whose authority the Norman mercenary was blinded, for he took it for granted that it must have been Alexios himself, the person in charge of the expedition against Roussel. In another example, a certain Bryennios, one of the chief plotters in Isaac Komnenos' rebellion, was blinded by an imperial paymaster for

imprisoning the latter to seize the sum sent for the military pay. Bryennios' impetuous action cost him his sight and forced his co-conspirators to start their insurrection before schedule.[77] It is clear that this anonymous imperial official acted without any imperial order and blinded the offender by taking initiative probably in order to destroy the hopes of other conspirators, much like Alexios did to Amaseians. These examples indicate that imperial officials possessed some right of initiative to punish the offenders as severely as blinding them in order to pacify the ongoing tension. However, as it has been stated, it was also a common theme to put the responsibility of punishment on people other than the emperor. In this case, Anna Komnene clears her father of the charge of blinding the plotters either during his reign or when he was just a young general. In the case of the blinding of Nikephoros Bryennios, the blame was placed upon Borilos, who was of foreign descent and a chief advisor for the emperor Nikephoros Botaneiates.[78] During Alexios' rule, on the other hand, we can count two incidents that ended with the blinding of the plotters. One was the serious conspiracy of Nikephoros Diogenes, son of the late emperor Romanos IV Diogenes, who had persisted in his seditious activities despite being repeatedly warned and foiled on a few of his murderous attempts against Alexios Komnenos. When his plot was revealed by the threat of torture, he denounced the names of his numerous fellow conspirators. The situation was more calamitous than the emperor thought and required gentle handling. The events following the revelation of the plot are the subject of speculation and deserve attention. Alexios declared a general amnesty excepting a few chief conspirators while Nikephoros Diogenes and Katakalon Kekaumenos ended up being blinded. Although she first accused the other plotters for blinding and thus denying any association with

[77] Attaleiates, *The History,* 96-7.
[78] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 20; eadem, *Alexias,* 27.

Alexios, Anna Komnene could not leave the matter without stating that the responsibility of Alexios Komnenos in Diogenes' blinding was still a question of uncertainty and speculation even during her lifetime.[79] Moreover, Diogenes is depicted as an impenitent and ingrate figure in Anna's account, for he continues to plot against Alexios despite being blinded and subsequently honored by Alexios. The second example of blinding during Alexios' reign concerns the rebellion of Pseudo-Diogenes, who claimed to be Leo Diogenes, another son of the emperor Romanos IV. According to Anna, he was truly an impostor, for the real son of Romanos IV was killed in the vicinity of Antioch fighting against the Turks.[80] Although scholarship seems to be divided on the issue of the authenticity of this figure, Pseudo-Diogenes nevertheless posed a considerable threat against Alexios Komnenos when he appeared at the borders of the empire with his host of Cuman allies.[81] Eventually captured through a ruse, he was blinded by the order of Anna Dalassene, mother of Alexios Komnenos. It is well-known that the emperor had great respect for his mother and virtually delivered the whole imperial authority over the state affairs to her, but it is also noteworthy that Anna Komnene felt the need to state that the exact order of blinding was given by her grandmother and not by her emperor father.[82]

Conclusion: "*νίκα καὶ μὴ ὑπερνίκα*"

This old saying quoted by Michael Attaleiates is probably the best maxim to summarize this chapter. Ancient wisdom recommended, "Win but do not wipe out,"

[79] Komnene, *The Alexiad*, 232; eadem, *Alexias*, 279.
[80] Komnene, *The Alexiad*, 241-42; eadem, *Alexias*, 288.
[81] Frankopan, "Unravelling the Alexiad," 147-66.
[82] On Anna Dalassene and the power invested in her by Alexios Komnenos, see Garland, *Byzantine Empresses, AD 527-1204*, 180-98; Skoulatos, *Les personnages byzantins de I'Alexiade*, 20-24.

and Byzantines remembered.[83] The evolution of the punishment of treason in Byzantium is so broad a subject that it requires another study to dwell upon. Although blinding, confiscation and exile had become the standard procedure for plotting against the emperor by the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Byzantines were still aware of the possible legal sanctions of this crime. Capital punishment, now some rare application, was still in the law codes as a deterring factor, and jurists like Attaleiates apparently liked the idea of reminding it against their adversaries. However, the office of emperor required more prudence and the punishment of rebels presented perfect opportunities or rather dilemmas by which the imperial rulers were to show their understanding of the tradition of oikonomia. Oikonomia was not just a show of mercy by the emperor against his vanquished opponents but the careful administration of the powerful subjects who were rather inclined to rise against their *basileus* if treated indignantly. Therefore, pressed between tradition and reality, the office of the emperor was a delicate position that could slip away for being too mild or too harsh. Yet, it would be naïve to limit the concept of oikonomia within the sphere of religion and define it merely as an influence of Christianity. As the next chapter of this study will argue, its consequences were beyond the confines of Christian philanthropy and closely related to the fluent loyalty of Byzantine subjects. This concept, a vital part of the imperial strategy, enabled the "economical" utilization of human resources, which proved to have absolutely crucial results in Byzantine politics. On the other hand, it can also be argued that in favor of the aristocracy the ongoing process of the decentralization of the Byzantine state not only forced the hand of the emperors to apply milder measures against wayward subjects but also initiated ideological changes with regard to the imperial and

[83] Attaleiates, *The History*, 44.

aristocratic ideals.[84] In any way, the questions about the prevalence of oikonomia in Byzantine ideology and the existence of certain deciding factors in the application of softer and more humane punishments as opposed to the earlier periods still seem to be legitimate points of inquiry and await further investigation.

[84] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, 24-73, 104-16; Kazhdan, "The Aristocracy and the Imperial Ideal," 43-57; Magdalino, "The Byzantine Aristocratic *Oikos*," 92-111; Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy (8th-13th Centuries)," 1-43.

CHAPTER 3

WRITING THE HISTORY OF YOUR FAVORITE USURPER

3.1 Fluent loyalties and the reintegration of rebels

It has been amply shown that the punishment of rebels in Byzantium had certain patterns not abiding by the law and it has also been argued that these patterns let the imperial rulers to handle and manipulate the allegiances of their subjects as well as promoting their own image as Christian and philanthropic sovereigns. As we are able to support or refuse this argument as much as our sources allow us, it is crucial to resort to the help of examples in examining the fates of the rebels after their attempts on the imperial throne. However, it is also necessary to remember that our sources are not exhaustive in their accounts of the rebellions, nor do they mention all of the revolts and acts of unrest in their narratives. Yet we have arguably enough evidence to purport a view on the Byzantine strategy and its utility. Although this study puts forward the idea that it was a priority for Byzantine politics to reintegrate wayward subjects - who almost always belonged to the aristocracy - into the system and this policy in fact benefited the Byzantine state, it is also compulsory to investigate the cases of failure.

It was quite a common practice in Byzantine politics to pardon an offender either immediately after the announcement of his sentence or after a certain time spent in prison or exile. Even more common was the release and recall of the person by the succeeding ruler. Byzantine history abounds in stories of rise and fall or vice versa of this kind as Michael Attaleiates aptly puts it in the case of the eunuch Stephanos Pergamenos, "But good fortune that comes from imperial favor is highly

unreliable."[85] The forceful release of prisoners en masse during unrests was a prevalent occurrence that bolstered the leverage of the crowds against their opponents but gracefully pardoning political prisoners was a delicate strategy. However long their reign might be, the emperors were prone to gain enemies against their rule, who were often incarcerated in prisons, monasteries or their own abodes. These "malignant" subjects offered an abundant supply of human resources and had a good chance of being recalled to imperial service by the next person on the throne. This show of clemency and benevolence frequently strengthened the loyalty of ex-offenders for the new ruler but that was not the case in every instance. Such a notable example from our sources comes from Michael Attaleiates. George Maniakes was a prominent general in eleventh-century Byzantium, who waged successful campaigns against Arabs in Sicily during his prime, almost conquering the island for the Byzantines. However, being an object of envy, he fell victim to slanders of usurpation, was recalled from his position and imprisoned in Constantinople by the emperor Michael IV. His presence in southern Italy was so much appreciated by Michael Attaleiates that his downfall and the ineptitude of his successors were given as the primary reasons of the loss of Sicily.[86] But that was not the end of story for Maniakes for he was recalled from his captivity along with Constantine Dalassenos - also imprisoned for years with the suspect of usurpation - by the next emperor Michael V and honored with the rank of magister being appointed the catepan of Italy.[87] Michael V, nicknamed the "Caulker", was quickly succeeded by Constantine IX Monomachos after he was blinded by a furious crowd in favor of the last

[85] Attaleiates, *The History,* 33.
[86] Ibid., 13.
[87] Ibid., 17.

Macedonian empresses.[88] According to Attaleiates, George Maniakes, now at the head of the Byzantine troops in Italy, grew indignant with the pretext of negligence and previous hostility of the new emperor, and raised the banner of rebellion. Scoring several victories against imperial armies, Maniakes enjoyed a good chance of capturing the throne until he was struck fatally during the battle and met his end.[89] The story of George Maniakes clearly demonstrates the risks and advantages to result from the manipulation of a humiliated man. If we are to believe Attaleiates' word, Maniakes was slandered, unjustly punished and thus prone to grow resentment. His account ensures us that Maniakes' eventual rebellion was due to the sore relations between the man and the emperor. But we cannot know for sure whether he would still have revolted if Michael V himself had not been overthrown and replaced by Constantine IX. The latter's story, on the other hand, is another example of descent and ascent. Similarly banished by Michael IV, Constantine Monomachos was recalled from his exile by the empress Zoe and crowned as emperor of the Romans. Attaleiates tells us that he was exiled in the first place due to his suspected desires upon the imperial throne.[90] Authentic or not, his desires were eventually realized by a curious turn of events that enabled him to hold the Roman scepters for more than a decade.

An even more ambivalent figure was Basil Kourtikios/Kourtikes - the former name preferred by Anna Komnene and the latter by Nikephoros Bryennios while both providing for him an alternative name "Little John."[91] Basil Kourtikios, offshoot of a family of Armenian descent, first appears as a member of retinue

[88] Ibid., *The History*, 21-29; Psellos, *Michel Psellos Chronographie*, 322-23; on the downfall of Michael V, see Garland, *Byzantine Empresses*, 40-44.
[89] Attaleiates, *The History*, 33.
[90] Ibid., 28-31.
[91] Bryennios, *Historiarum*, 229; Komnene, *Alexiad*, 128; eadem, *Alexias*, 156.

(*οἰκεῖος*) in the household of Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder. Described as an adolescent of the same age as the latter's son, the patrician Bryennios, Kourtikios was pivotal in the capture of Traianoupolis when young Bryennios, Koutzomites and he launched a surprise attack against the guards of the city and managed to have the citizens acclaim Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder as emperor.[92] Although Traianoupolis became the first city to accept the rebel as the emperor, their rashness left the reluctant usurper no choice but to continue his enterprise against the imperial city. Bryennios' revolt ended with failure but the career of young Kourtikios had just started for he reappeared in the service of the emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates, who gave the order of Bryennios' blinding. The defeat of his usurper-master was not a hindrance for the young man to provide his services under the command of Alexios Komnenos against the rebellion of Nikephoros Basilakes. In fact, his youthful zeal or rather his desire to prove his loyalty to the new ruler worked quite well in a single combat during the final battle against Basilakes, by which he managed to capture the usurper's brother Manuel.[93] However, the emperor Nikephoros III was to confront yet another rebellion, this time in the Asian territory of the empire started by Nikephoros Melissenos. The victor of the two previous wars against usurpers in Europe, Alexios Komnenos, was to be sent against Melissenos but he refused to fight against his brother-in-law. Therefore, Kourtikios participated in the campaign led by the eunuch John the protovestiarios against Melissenos. According to Bryennios, George Palaiologos and Kourtikios strongly opposed the stratagem of the protovestiarios to besiege Nicaea for they would be unable face the numbers of the Turks. Even though we do not know anything about the rank of Kourtikios at that time and his advice was disregarded in this situation, regardless of his young age he seems to be an

[92] Bryennios, *Historiarum*, 226-31.
[93] Ibid,, 293-5.

important figure in military affairs alongside with George Palaiologos.[94] This idea is reinforced by a later comment of Anna Komnene's on him: "an outstanding figure renowned for his bravery and military skill."[95] Again, the remaining account of Kourtikios comes from her for she names him among the ambassadors sent by Alexios I Komnenos to the Seljuk sultan Melikshah many years after his last appearance.[96] It is clear that Basil Kourtikios, known for his military skills and ardor, also proved himself as a representative of the emperor who overthrew Nikephoros III. However, Kourtikios' loyalty was far from sustainable and he was part of a major conspiracy led by Michael Anemas against Alexios I Komnenos.[97] We have no information about the fate of Kourtikios after his participation in this plot but our extant information is enough to conclude that he was a resourceful figure to ensure his survival under different rulers by a display of his military and political skills. It is reasonable to speculate that lack of our knowledge on his further career was due to his advanced age and decreased ability to serve.

The fragility of the process of reintegrating the subversive elements in the Byzantine political system became even more apparent in the dealings including the non-Byzantine subjects of the empire. Considering the abundant use of the people who joined the Roman ranks through various incentives, it is necessary to provide a suitable example from our sources. The precariousness of the situation included the careful choice of missions to be assigned for these foreign elements and the constant need of assuring their loyalties. In this case, the passage in Michael Attaleiates

[94] Ibid,, 305.
[95] Komnene, *The Alexiad*, 128. (This older translation by Dawes is preferred to the more readable version of Sewter's in this study due to its praisable faithfulness to the Greek text.); eadem, *Alexias*, 156.
[96] Komnene, *The Alexiad*, 161; eadem, *Alexias*, 195.
[97] Komnene, *The Alexiad*, 311; eadem, *Alexias*, 372.

regarding Amertikes, a Turkish general under Byzantine service for a while, is worth quoting in full:

> One of their [Byzantines] prominent men, named Amertikes, had changed sides there. He was very hostile to the Romans because he had been deceived in his dealings with them. He had formerly come to the emperor of the Romans, who was then the Old Man [Michael VI], and was splendidly received during his stay in the Reigning City. But he was accused before the emperor Konstantinos [X] Doukas of plotting to stab him and was condemned to exile. Then, after his return, he was sent out to fight for the Romans against the Huns [Seljuks], and it was then that he went over to the ruler of Aleppo [the Mirdasid amir Rashid al-Daula Mahmud] because the money for the soldiers' rations was withheld. Now, whether it was prudent to send this barbarian against his own people, especially when he had been ill-treated and would not have even received the promised ration money, I leave to my readers to investigate.[98]

As our author informs us, Amertikes received ambivalent treatment from different Byzantine rulers, a situation that jeopardized his already frail loyalty. Attaleiates' narration suggests that he was recalled from exile by the empress Eudokia during the short period between the death of Constantine X Doukas and her marriage to Romanos Diogenes. His criticism of the decision that led to the defection of Amertikes seems well-founded and justified, and shows us that the sole act of pardoning an exile was not enough to ensure his allegiance for different cultural backgrounds could be the deciding factor alongside with inadequate compensation. After the accession of Romanos IV, Amertikes reappears at the head of Turkish troops fighting with the Arabs against Byzantines near Aleppo.[99] Although we have already touched upon the story of Romanos IV, it is again noteworthy to remember

[98] Attaleiates, *The History*, 173.
[99] Ibid., 199.

that just like Constantine IX Monomachos he was one of those Byzantine emperors, who rose to the imperial office after receiving amnesty from his exile, though an ill-fated one.

We have briefly reviewed the occasional failures in Byzantine policy of reintegrating the rebellious subjects. However, it is time we investigated the successful cases to be able to fully appreciate the overall picture. The rebellion of Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder is important for being one of the most notable usurpation attempts to be examined in the study as well as one of the rare cases where we have substantive information about the career of the rebel after his rebellion. All three of our sources touch upon the story of Bryennios at some point and again all except Anna Komnene explicitly mention the honors bestowed upon the vanquished rebel by the emperor Nikephoros III. According to Attaleiates, even though emperor confiscated the property of only three or four of the rebels who took part in Bryennios' plot, he compensated their material loss with other grants and especially "adorned Bryennios with all kinds of honors."[100] Similarly, Nikephoros Bryennios the Younger also does not skip the fact that the emperor generously stipulated the safety of the conspirators and their families as well as keeping and even improving their current ranks and possessions.[101] The relative generosity of the emperor was understandable regarding his own vulnerable situation on the imperial throne and the ongoing rebellions against his rule; Botaneiates was not in a position to be vindictive against his adversaries. Therefore, the blinding of Bryennios and the humiliation of the ringleaders in a parade were enough to dispel any further

[100] Ibid., 537.
[101] Bryennios, *Historiarum*, 284 : "Le basileus, au bout de quelques jours, fit venir Bryennios, s'apitoya sur son malheur, lui restitua tous ses biens et regagna son amitié par des honneurs et l'octroi d'autres propriétés. Les notables de son parti étaient fréquemment convoqués ; tous se redaient dans la reine des cités et le basileus les recevait tous avec affabilité..."

challenge on that front and we do not hear any other punishment like the exile of the man and his participants. In fact, the blind Bryennios reappears as one of the chief generals whose advice was sought after by Alexios I Komnenos during his campaigns against Pechenegs and Cumans. Reminding the reader of his previous conspiracy, Anna Komnene yet acknowledges his value as a commander: "For although this man had had his eyes dug out for rebellion, yet he was recognized as by far the cleverest strategist, and most skilful and ingenious in the arrangement of troops."[102] However, Bryennios' value and loyalty were further proved during another critical episode of the reign of Alexios I. The threat of Pseudo-Leo Diogenes, who pretended to be a son of the emperor Romanos IV, became even more serious after his escape from captivity and finding support for his cause among the Cuman host. He managed to subdue certain settlements in Byzantine Thrace and hoped Adrianople to surrender as well, trusting the close relations between the governor of the city, Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder, and the late emperor Romanos IV, his alleged father. It was a fact that the emperor had adopted Bryennios as his brother "observing his open disposition and general truthfulness in word and deed."[103] Appearing before the gates of Adrianople, Pseudo-Diogenes demanded Bryennios' submission and was "so shameless that he actually called Bryennius 'uncle.'"[104] However, his hopes were thwarted when the blind governor did not recognize the voice of his "nephew" and decided to wait for the imperial army to dispel the siege of the enemy. This passage in Anna Komnene's account is very important because it demonstrates the crucial position entrusted upon Bryennios as the governor of Adrianople. We know that the Bryennios family hailed from the very city and it would only make sense that the old general would spend the rest of time there.

[102] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 170; eadem, *Alexias,* 206.
[103] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 241; eadem, *Alexias,* 288.
[104] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 241; eadem, *Alexias,* 288.

However, Bryennios apparently not only preserved his respected status in his hometown but was also granted the full authority over it as Anna's passage makes it clear: "ἐν ἐκείνῳ γὰρ ἡ πᾶσα ἐξουσία τῆς Ἀδριανουπόλεως ἦν."[105] We can only speculate on a scenario where Bryennios decided to open the gates of this strategic city to the pretender and acclaimed him as the emperor; nevertheless, it is better to acknowledge this possibility, given Bryennios' failed attempt on the throne and blinding alongside with the fact that the identity of the pretender is not universally agreed upon among scholars.[106]

The case of Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder is a good example of successful reincorporation of a Byzantine rebel coming from an aristocratic family. Our next example is related to another crucial event with familiar characters at hand, this time having a non-Byzantine general as its protagonist. Robert Crépin was one of the prominent Norman commanders, who sought their fortune as mercenaries and led their countrymen either against or for the Byzantine Empire. His story of ups and downs clearly proves that sustaining the allegiance such foreigners could be vital for the Roman politics. Crépin, known as Krispinos in Byzantine sources, made his first appearance with reference to his rebellion against Romanos IV a year after his entrance into Byzantine service. Although Attaleiates derides the Franks including Crépin for being "faithless" (*ἄπιστον*) by nature, he nevertheless finds fault with the Byzantines who attacked Crépin's army on Easter Day disrespecting the Resurrection and praises the Norman for his piety for refusing to fight on that holy day and treating his prisoners leniently.[107] Even though he proved himself superior against the Byzantine forces, Crépin demanded amnesty from the emperor, who gladly

[105] Komnene, *Alexias*, 289.
[106] See Frankopan, "Unravelling the Alexiad," 147-66.
[107] Attaleiates, *The History*, 226-9.

granted it due to "man's courage and his reputation for martial deeds and ability to command."[108] But not long after his submission, he was accused of plotting against the emperor again and thus exiled to Abydos. This was the main reason of the resentment Crépin grew against Romanos IV and brought the latter's end. When Diogenes turned into a rebel being denied any right on the government of the empire after the fateful Battle of Manzikert, the young emperor Michael VII resorted to taking advantage of this old hostility between the two men to get rid of his stepfather. In a classic example of peripety for the disgraced hero, Crépin was recalled from his exile with great honors and immediately forwarded into the conflict. The presence of this man, who was "extremely brave in hand-to-hand combat and seemed to be the strongest man alive," had such a powerful impact on the soldiers that it not only boosted the morale of the army but also greatly weakened the hand of Diogenes.[109] Even the rumor of Crépin's arrival was enough for the Franks under Diogenes' general Alyates to change sides resulting in the capture and blinding of Alyates. Bryennios mentions the bad blood between the two figures as well and adds that Diogenes was desperately trying to provoke Crépin's "barbaric pride" (*τὸ βάρβαρον φρόνημα*) against his benefactor Michael VII by promising even more honors and favors.[110] However, Crépin's rancor obviously preponderated and the reduced number of Diogenes' soldiers eventually decided to deliver their leader to the imperial army.

After Crépin's death, his position as the commander of Frankish troops under Byzantine service was undertaken by another Norman, Roussel of Bailleul. We have already mentioned the rebellion of Roussel and his subsequent capture by

[108] Ibid., 227.
[109] Ibid., 311.
[110] Bryennios, *Historiarum*, 137.

Alexios Komnenos. What is relevant for the present discussion is the fate of this valiant warrior after he was dispatched to Constantinople as a prisoner. The handling of Roussel by the emperor Michael VII was harshly criticized by Michael Attaleiates for he was inhumanely tortured. According to our author, this conduct cost the empire substantially because Roussel could have been the liberator of the eastern territories at the head of the Byzantine army only if he had received a suitable treatment befitting him. Nevertheless, Roussel's value as a commander was later appreciated when Michael VII faced multiple rebellions against his rule and resorted to the military skills of the man. Attaleiates tells us that Roussel had managed to escape from his captivity to join the forces of the rebel Botaneiates only to be captured again.[111] A few days later the emperor pardoned him with abundant gifts and honors in order to convince him to fight against another rebel, Bryennios. Roussel's first action was to try to persuade the Franks fighting under Bryennios into defection. Although his attempt failed, the idea of sending the former commander of foreign mercenaries against their compatriots seems to be a reasonable strategy and demonstrates Roussel's significance. Subsequently, having sworn terrible oaths to keep his allegiance, Roussel marched against Bryennios' army. It is also worthy of note that the imperial forces were not wholly entrusted to the Norman general but Alexios Komnenos was sent alongside with Roussel. While Roussel was clashing with the army of John Bryennios, brother of the rebel whose pressures had brought the rebellion to fruition, Botaneiates was also preparing his march against the imperial city from his base in Nicaea. Roussel's victory against John Bryennios was interpreted as a gift from God to the future emperor Botaneiates by his admirer Attaleiates.[112] When Michael VII was eventually forced to abdicate in favor of

[111] Attaleiates, *The History*, 461.
[112] Ibid., 491.

Nikephoros Botaneiates, the emperor's chief advisor Nikephoritzes fled the city to seek refuge with Bryennios. According to Nikephoros Bryennios the Younger, he ran into Roussel who was resting at Selymbria after his victory and probably waiting for the developments upon Botaneiates' accession.[113] Disregarding the desperate requests of Nikephoritzes to take him to Bryennios, Roussel arrested the eunuch to deliver him to the new emperor. According to our sources, Nikephoritzes was a highly disliked figure in Constantinople and Roussel apparently saw it as a chance to ensure an even more favorable position under the new administration. Despite being perfectly coherent as a political maneuver, the Norman general was not able to reap the benefits of his strategy for another source tells us that he was poisoned by his captive.[114] Nikephoritzes himself was to yield to an excruciating examination on the island of Oxeia.

The priority of letting leave and giving another chance was closely associated with political concerns as well as compassion and the interceptions on behalf of the condemned persons provided good examples. One of the gravest plots against the rule of Alexios I Komnenos was that of Anemas brothers led by Michael Anemas in 1103. Although it was foiled thanks to the naïveté of one of the conspirators, John Solomon, the emperor was determined to punish severely the main participants in the plot by blinding them after a disgraceful parade. The pleadings of Michael Anemas and his fellows caused so much pity in Anna Komnene's heart that she rushed to her empress mother to intervene in this miserable procession. Anna explained her efforts in favor of his father: "For in them he [the emperor] would be deprived of such good soldiers, especially Michael on whom the heaviest sentence

[113] Ibid., 495.
[114]Tsolakis, *Skylitzes Continuatus*, 186.6.

had been pronounced."[115] Although Anna was successful in securing a pardon for the offenders, Michael Anemas was to spend a long time as a prisoner in the tower that received its name from the man himself. Obviously Michael Anemas was not released shortly after his incarceration to utilize his services and we have no further information on his fate but some of his co-conspirators did manage to maintain their careers under Alexios I. A few years after their participation in the plot, two Exazenoi, Constantine Exazenos Doukas and Nikephoros Exazenos Hyaleas, made noteworthy appearances with their deeds in a couple of operations against the Norman invaders:

> Consequently the Franks had a brilliant victory in hand, but our braver soldiers, especially those of the higher rank, pre-eminent among whom were Nicephorus Exazenus Hyaleas and his cousin Constantine Exazenus, called Ducas, and that most courageous man, Alexander Euphorbenus, and others of similar worth and rank-these, I say, mindful of 'impetuous valour' turned back, drew their swords and fought with all their might and main and revived the battle and carried off a brilliant victory over the Franks.[116]

Making no mention of their previous subversive activities, Anna Komnene does not show restraint in praising these two soldiers, who preserved or even probably improved their ranks after they were pardoned by Alexios I.

Our sources prove to be sufficiently useful in demonstrating the patterns displayed by the Byzantine policies toward defeated rebels. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the emperors had access to an ample supply of human resources in the form of former rebels and plotters, who waited for another chance at their exile

[115] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 314; eadem, *Alexias,* 375.
[116] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 318-19; eadem, *Alexias,* 380.

places. Many rulers were extremely successful in manipulating these elements in times of crises against their enemies, while sometimes the redemption of the ex-offenders proved to be false. However, combined with the pressure of Christian virtues and values as well, the average Byzantine ruler tended to take the risk to regain the loyalty of his subjects, and it has been argued that the success of this policy overweighed its shortcomings.

3.2 Subversive terminology

The terminology of political subversion in Byzantium encompasses a total of overwhelmingly creative lexical entries, ranging from basic conceptions to numerous less conspicuous ones and if we look up the most relevant words to subversion like rebellion, unrest, and usurper in an English-Ancient Greek dictionary, we would find such equivalents as *ἀπόστασις / ἐπανάστασις*, *στάσις* and *τύραννος* respectively.[117] These words are also the most prevalent expression of subversion in our three sources. Therefore it is necessary to examine the overall picture of the material by starting with the common terminology.

The word *ἀποστασία*, a later form of *ἀπόστασις*, and the related vocabulary (*ἀποστατέω*, *ἀποστάτης*, *ἀποστατικός*, *συναποστατέω*) indeed stand out as the most common way to define a rebellious activity. Its immediate meaning has both secular and religious connotations, that is to say, it can mean either simply a "defection, revolt" or a "rebellion against God."[118] Hence, the English word "apostasy" derived from the latter meaning of the Greek word. Regardless of its religious associations,

[117] Woodhouse, *English-Greek Dictionary*, 677, 930, 941.
[118] Liddell & Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 218.

this word came to be the common currency to refer to open defiance of authority in Byzantine literature.

Another common word to express open dissidence was *ἐπανάστασις*, which is given as the sole Greek equivalent of the entry "rebellion" in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (*ODB*).[119] Although Kazhdan adds in the last sentence of this entry that *ἐπανάστασις* could also be used for the attacks of the external enemies of the empire, this addition raises the question of the semantic differences between the words *ἀποστασία* and *ἐπανάστασις*. A couple of passages in the narrative of Anna Komnene provide clues that there was indeed a difference of meaning between these two words. To begin with, in support of the observation of Kazhdan, Anna seems to distinguish clearly between the external and internal threats to the imperial authority. Describing such a perilous time for the rule of her father when the Roman scepters were menaced by foreign and domestic powers, she notes, "τὰ τε γὰρ ἔνδον ἀποστασίας ἦσαν μεστὰ καὶ τὰ ἔξωθεν ἐπαναστάσεως ἔγεμε."[120] Here, it is clear that the two subversive terms were far from being synonyms. Although Anna obviously used *ἐπανάστασις* to refer here to the assaults of foreigners, most notably the Normans, another passage in the *Alexiad* indicated that it may be rash to limit the usage of the word to this meaning. In her account of an expedition led by Alexios I Komnenos himself against the invading Pechenegs, Anna feels the need to give the reason for the blinding of Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder by mentioning that it was either an "*ἀποστασία*" or "*ἐπανάστασις*" against the emperor Botaneiates that deprived the rebel of his eyes.[121] Here, it appears as a legitimate question to ask

[119] Kazhdan, "Rebellion," 1776.
[120] Komnene, *Alexias*, 371: "The internal affairs were full of *rebellions* and the external affairs were laden with *uprisings.*" (Emphasis added. For the sake of maintaining the consistency in the translations of the terms being analyzed, all translations in this subchapter are mine unless otherwise stated.)
[121] Ibid., 206.

whether Anna's differentiation between the two words was due to a deliberate awareness of a deeper semantic difference or whether she was just being redundant in her account. In order to answer this question definitively, we need to go over the context of the usage of these words throughout the text.

To begin with, Anna makes use of the word *ἀποστασία* more than a dozen times in her narrative, whether it is an attempt of usurpation or just a show of defiance against imperial authority. It does not require a display of open warfare to count a resistance as *ἀποστασία*. In the case of the conspiracy of Nikephoros Diogenes, the son of the emperor Romanos IV, the murder of the emperor Alexios Komnenos would have been enough to end his rule and elevate his murderer to the imperial throne, which was not without precedents in Byzantine history if we consider the well-known example of the murder of Michael III by Basil I, who established one of the most powerful and long-lived dynasties of the empire. On the other hand, the purpose of *ἀποστασία* could just be the desire to disentangle oneself from the forceful grip of an overlord as in the case of the population of Corfu, who rose up in rebellion as soon as they realized that their conqueror Robert Guiscard was losing ground against the forces of Alexios.[122] After all, *ἀποστασία* seems to be an all-encompassing and useful word to define any resistance against authority. Can we say the same thing about *ἐπανάστασις*? The first reference to this word in Anna's text appears to be quite personal. Self-lamenting as she often does, Anna pours out her troubles with tears that her whole life has been full of *ἐπανάστασις*.[123] Aside from the apparently metaphorical use, Anna's choice for this specific word might be more than just a literary preference and indicate the violent connotations of *ἐπανάστασις*. In fact, this word and its verb form *ἐπανίστημι* are used for five individual cases in

[122] Ibid., 176.
[123] Ibid., 9.

Anna's work: the rebellions of Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder, Nikephoros Botaneiates, Alexios Komnenos, and the invasions of Robert Guiscard and his son Bohemond. It seems that *ἐπανάστασις* was more than what *ἀποστασία* came to mean. It was a full-scale uprising and show of hostility to overthrow a certain power. In the case of the rebellion of Nikephoros Bryennios, Anna's brief suspense over how to describe this sedition seems to support this conclusion. Bryennios' reluctant actions at the instigation of his brother began as *ἀποστασία* and then later developed into *ἐπανάστασις*. It could have been limited within the boundaries of the former term if he just defected from his service under the emperor, but when his venture turned out to be a show of violence against the ruler in Constantinople, it was no longer simply *ἀποστασία* but *ἐπανάστασις*. However, as it has been variously observed, the latter was meant to be used not only for a domestic attempt of violence against the throne but a foreign one too. Anna Komnene makes use of *ἐπανάστασις* with reference to the invasions of the Norman ruler Bohemond and his ilk.[124] In fact, regarding both its prevalent usage and the semantic concurrency -rebellion refers to a resistance against authority, thus establishing a hierarchical power relation between the one who resists and the one who is resisted against- the word *ἀποστασία* could have been a better candidate as the Greek term for "rebellion" in the *ODB*. However, one explanation for the use of the word *ἐπανάστασις* in Anna Komnene can be the ultimate motive behind the Norman invasions. Anna, on several occasions, makes it clear that the purpose of both Robert Guiscard and his son was to overthrow the Byzantine emperor and capture the imperial capital. According to her, both the manipulation of Raiktor, the notorious monk who pretended to be the deposed emperor Michael VII Doukas taking refuge with Robert Guiscard, and the participation of Bohemond in

[124] Ibid., 407.

the First Crusade were pretexts for an attack on the empire. In this light, the offensives of both Norman rulers stand out as quite different in purpose with regard to the other external threats faced by Anna's father Alexios I Komnenos -such as the incursions of Cumans, Scythians and Turks. The Norman offensives, being more than routine plundering operations, threatened Roman authority with utter destruction. That is to say, if we ponder on this fundamental difference, it is plausible to suggest that the Norman invasions were regarded within the hierarchical structuring of the Byzantine political ideology, which considered the Byzantine emperor as the representative of God on earth, being at the apex of the worldly hierarchy over all other rulers.[125] The invading Norman rulers become quasi-subjects of the Byzantine Empire within this narrative and can be regarded as usurpers. One weak side of this idea is the fact that it is solely based on the references of Anna Komnene and further investigation of the use of *ἐπανάστασις* alongside other words would reveal both more conclusive answers and the need for a chronologically more comprehensive study of Byzantine subversive terminology, which is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, there remains the need to expound the usage of the rest of the terminology, before making solid conclusions regarding our material.

Anna's references to Norman invasions naturally bring up the question of the terminology of usurpation. As it was previously stated, the closest Greek equivalent for usurper was *τύραννος*. In fact, this word and its derivatives (*τυραννίς, τυραννεύω, τυραννικός, τυραννικῶς, τυραννοφρονέω*) were commonly used in Byzantine literature, presenting a more intricate case than other terminology and deserving some befitting attention. This may as well be due to the long history and heavy connotations of the word. It would not escape the notice of even a layman that

[125] Ostrogorsky, "The Byzantine Empire and the Hierarchical World Order," 1-14.

the English word "tyrant" comes from this very word, though it does not preserve its full semantic load. The word *τύραννος* used to mean simply "an absolute ruler" whether it was some divinity or human, and *τυραννίς* defined a "monarchy, sovereignty" but it came to be used frequently for a "despotic rule, obtained by force or fraud."[126] The ambivalent meaning of the word is also fully utilized in our sources. All three authors frequently refer to the attempts of usurpation against the emperor in Byzantium as *τυραννίς* and the actors as *τύραννοι*. On the other hand, the more neutral use of the word in the sense to mean just sovereignty can be clearly distinguished in the phrase *ἀξιόν τυραννίδος*. In fact, this phrase appears to have more than a neutral tone if we consider the examples. Literally meaning "worthy of sovereignty," it is used by Attaleiates to describe the ill-starred emperor Romanos IV Diogenes, for whom he displays much sympathy in his history. More understandably, Bryennios uses the same phrase for his rebellious ancestor, while Anna reserves it for her late husband Bryennios himself and quite curiously for Robert Guiscard. Considering the rather powerful invective she directs upon the Norman ruler, Anna's unexpected turn for a tribute may be understood in her use of the concept of worthy opponent. However despicable he might be, Robert Guiscard was regarded as a befitting antagonist against Alexios I Komnenos. Furthermore, he and his son are the only persons, providing an external threat and yet styled as *τύραννοι* due to their covetous plans regarding the Byzantine throne. A similar appearance of the word appears in another phrase too, which was used by Anna for kaisar John Doukas, whose aid substantially secured Alexios' bid on the imperial throne. John Doukas is praised for his mind and body as well as his appearance literally "befitting to a tyrant": "*ἦν γὰρ ἀπαράμιλλος οὗτος κατά τε φρονήματος ὄγκον*

[126] Liddell & Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 1836.

καὶ σώματος μέγεθος καὶ μορφὴν τυράννῳ *προσήκουσαν*."[127] Here again, *τύραννος* has discernibly positive associations of kingly power and fashion.

Michael Attaleiates, in his turn, makes his best to portray Michael VII Doukas as an ideal tyrant throughout his narrative. Despite the fact that Michael VII was the rightful ruler in Constantinople, he wanted to ensure the legitimacy of the rebellious action taken up by the protagonist of his narrative, Nikephoros Botaneiates. The emperor Michael VII is portrayed as a naïve young fellow, who is easily manipulated by his mischievous entourage led by the eunuch Nikephoritzes. His reign is a real *τυραννίς* and he rules not *βασιλικῶς* but *τυραννικῶς*, which provides enough justification for Botaneiates' rebellion supported by the Constantinopolitan people, who also regard Michael VII and the sycophants around him as *τύραννοι*.[128] The charge of *τυραννίς*, on the other hand, was not restricted exclusively to the secular power sphere and it was also valid for the religious authority. With reference to the Investiture Controversy between the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy, Anna Komnene uses the word *τυραννίς* for the accusations directed by the German emperor against the Pope.[129] Aside from my reluctance to delve into the issue of the controversies between these two powers, it might be useful to observe the potential contribution of this tiny reference in *Alexiad* to our understanding of the Byzantine perception of the power struggles between the German *ρέξ* in the West and the archbishop of Rome. It is noteworthy that the ascension of the Pope without imperial concession was regarded as *τυραννίς* -that is to say, hijacking of the highest religious position in the Medieval Western Europe -

[127] Komnene, *Alexias*, 73.
[128] Attaleiates, *The History*, 340-1, 386, 390.
[129] Komnene, *Alexias*, 43. On the Investiture Controversy in general, see Morrison, *The Investiture Controversy: Issues, Ideas, and Results*; Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century*.

by the Holy Roman Emperor or at least it was projected as such by an elder member of the imperial family of the East Roman Empire. But we shall refer to this hot debate later on.

In the next batch of subversive vocabulary, we indentify a group of words that would not either go further than their simple dictionary meanings as an uprising or are used almost interchangeably, denying us any means to work on. Among these words we can count *στάσις, ἀνταρσία, διέγερσις, ἔνστασις, ἔπαρσις* and *ἀντίστασις*.[130] The dictionaries would yield only cursory remarks on these terms, which tempt us to consider these words as no more than synonyms or rather as condiments to cherish the narrative. But a closer scrutiny reveals more about the employment of these words by our authors. All these terms are used as nouns to describe the act of an open display of resistance against authority, which is the Roman imperial power challenged by Roman or non-Roman subjects of the empire in every but one case. Attaleiates makes use of this word in the context of foreign aggression directed against Byzantium: "*τῶν ἐθνῶν ἔπαρσις*."[131] Although this reference gives us the impression of a similar meaning as that of *ἐπανάστασις* in the sense of a foreign attack, we are bereft of further material to support our claim on as this is the only occurrence of the word in all three sources.

A more solid observation with regard to these words would be the common semantic connotations in the sense of denoting an upright stance or rising up. *στάσις*, *ἔνστασις* and *ἀντίστασις* derive their etymological origin from the verb *ἵστημι*, which means "make to stand / stand."[132] Among other vocabulary to share this same root

[130] Liddell & Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* 1634: *στάσις*: "faction, sedition, discord"; 150: *ἀνταρσία*: "insurrection"; 423: *διέγερσις*: "arousing"; 574: *ἔνστασις*: "opposition"; 611: *ἔπαρσις*: "rising, swelling"; 163: *ἀντίστασις*: "counter-faction; opposition."
[131] Attaleiates, *The History*, 176.
[132] Liddell & Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* 841.

are *ἀποστασία* and *ἐπανάστασις*, which we have already analyzed, and rarely seen verbs of *διανίστημι* and *κατεξανίστημι*.[133] The other prevalent group of vocabulary derives from the verb *αἴρω*, which basically means to "lift, raise up".[134] Other than *ἀνταρσία*, *ἔπαρσις* and their derivatives (*ἀνταίρω, ἀντάρτης*), we can add *συναίρω* to this group.[135] Finally the word *διέγερσις* can be touched upon, which derives its meaning from the verb *ἐγείρω*, meaning "awaken, rouse".[136] So, it is easy to realize that the totality of these subversive terms, which have come to mean an open resistance and defiance of authority, have strong physical associations of a certain stance, either upright, detached or against, and arousing. Aside from this "natural" inclination to associate the act of rebellion or more relevantly uprising with physical actions, there was another way to describe the seditious attempts and the verb to use for this purpose was *νεωτερίζειν*. Basically meaning to "make innovations," the word came to refer to the revolutionary activities with the purpose of a régime change.[137] Furthermore, the verb *νεωτερίζειν* had also religious connotations just like *ἀποστασία* and it could be used with reference to the "heretics introducing new-fangled doctrines."[138] Given the close connection established between attempting covetously against the imperial throne and preaching heterodox religious teachings, *νεωτερίζειν* seems to contribute more to our understanding of the Byzantine religio-political ideology, which regarded any innovation or change as a potential threat to its well-being or rather we could be falling for the age-old tendency of considering Byzantium as a monolithic and conservative socio-political entity in construing a far-

[133] Attaleiates, *The History,* 268.
[134] Liddell & Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* 27.
[135] Attaleiates, *The History,* 108.
[136] Liddell & Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* 412.
[137] Ibid., 1172.
[138] Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon,* 907.

fetched interpretation based on the usage of a single word.[139] At this point, I will leave the speculation to the delight of the reader.

Of the lately examined words, one would merit further explanation and this word is *στάσις*. Aside from dozens of meanings that can be attributed to the word, *στάσις* comes to mean a "faction, sedition, discord."[140] The verb form of the word, *στασιάζειν*, is mostly focused on the subversive connotations and it can mean to "be at variance" in general, of Greek states to "form a party or faction, be at odds," of states in general to "be distracted by factions and party strife," and in general to "be in a state of discord, disagree."[141] The word has either a generic sense of discord or strong associations with the subversive power struggle. Conforming more to this point, one last meaning of the verb in transitive relation is to "revolutionize, throw into confusion."[142] In this sense, *στάσις* and the related verb *στασιάζειν* are rather relevant to our discussion but what else can be commented upon these words regarding the sources in question? As well as being relevant, these lemmas are also prevalent in the texts. Conforming to the above-mentioned dictionary meanings, they also give us clues about their patterns of usage. In the majority of the cases, *στάσις* and its derivatives (*στασιάζειν*, *στασιώδης*, *συστασιάζειν*, *ἀστασίαστος*) are used with reference to an urban unrest with political background. During all periods of the Byzantine Empire, the support of the Constantinopolitans had been a crucial matter for those who set their minds at the usurpation of the imperial throne either from within or especially from outside the city walls.[143] The discontent of the citizens

[139] Kazhdan, "Innovation in Byzantium," 1-14; Spanos, "'To Every Innovation, Anathema' (?)," 51-59; idem, "Was Innovation Unwanted in Byzantium?" 43-56.
[140] Liddell & Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 1634.
[141] Ibid., 1633.
[142] Ibid., 1633.
[143] On the importance of popular support in a rebellion, see Kaldellis, "How to Usurp the Throne in Byzantium," 43-56. On the argument of the real sovereignty of the *δῆμος* in Byzantium, see idem, *The Byzantine Republic*, 89-164.

could occasionally lead to the demise of the ruling emperor either by an open display of violence by laying hands upon the God-chosen emperor or treacherously opening the gates of the city to the rebels. Thus, fomenting a *στάσις* within the city could be a significant part of the *ἀπόστασις* itself. Examples of successful attempts in manipulating the civilian urban unrest into solid support for the armed resistance outside the city are also present in our sources. However, *στάσις* could also mean a mutiny in the army itself. For example, Attaleiates tells us that the beginning of the *ἀποστασία* of Tornikios was due to a *στάσις* among the Macedonian troops in the imperial army.[144]

It is true that *στάσις* could trigger an armed rebellion but the opposite was pertinent too. During the narration of Isaac Komnenos' rebellion against Michael VI, Attaleiates gives us an insightful account of the developments in Constantinople. He notes the rumors about the participation of the then Patriarch Michael Kerularios in the plot aimed at the displacement of the old Michael VI in favor of Isaac Komnenos.[145] He gives the alleged motive of the patriarch in supporting the attempt to harangue the emperor into abdicating from the throne as a preference for the lesser evil on the part of the archbishop of Constantinople: "*ἵνα μὴ τὰ τῆς ἐνστάσεως εἰς ἐμφύλιον, ὡς εἴπομεν, ἐναποσκήψειε πόλεμον*".[146] It is clear that *ἔνστασις*, which is apparently used as a synonym for *στάσις*, was the first step for the conflict to grow into a full-fledged civil war within the city. However, as we have noted, these two concepts often recreated each other. Attaleiates also states that once *πόλεμος ἐμφύλιος* erupted in the first place, it was only expectable for it to generate more

[144] Attaleiates, *The History*, 36-8.
[145] Also see Krallis, "Sacred Emperor, Holy Patriarch," 169-90.
[146] Attaleiates, *The History*, 104: "so that the turbulence would not turn into a civil war, as we have said."

στάσεις elsewhere.[147] Therefore, it also becomes clear that the Byzantines had the conception of the conflict what we can call "civil war." However, can we safely assume that the words used for this conception meant the same thing as we use it today? That is to say, what does *ἐμφύλιος πόλεμος* exactly mean? Certainly, we can translate this term as civil war in the sense that it designates an armed conflict within the elements of the same state/society/nation as Treadgold suggests.[148] However, Treadgold's definition restricts the Byzantine term within the boundaries of our understanding of civil war and does not suffice. The term is not an exclusively Byzantine concept, for Nikephoros Bryennios applies it to a conflict between Muslims as well.[149] However, it has been clearly indicated that the definition of *ἐμφύλιος πόλεμος* extended beyond the imperial borders to encompass the stretch of Christianity, in which the conflicts between the Christian powers, including both sides of the Great Schism, were considered as a "civil war" claiming the lives of the fellow Christians.[150]

Almost synonymous is the term *πόλεμος ἐπιχώριος*, which is used by Attaleiates with reference to the rebellion of Leo Tornikios against Constantine IX Monomachos.[151] It is easy to deduce that it was used interchangeably with the previous terms as Attaleiates calls the same revolt as a *πόλεμος ἐμφύλιος* as well. Two other terms, seemingly similar in meaning but distinguishable by nuances, are *πόλεμος πολιτικός* and *στάσις ἐμφύλιος*. Both are made use by Attaleiates, who turns out to be the most copious with regard to his vocabulary, in the sense of an urban uprising. The urban and civilian connotations of *στάσις* has already been noted and

[147] Ibid., 102.
[148] Treadgold, "Byzantium, The Reluctant Warrior," 224: "an armed conflict in which a significant number of Byzantine soldiers fought on both sides with a significant number of casualties."
[149] Bryennios, *Historiarum*, 89.
[150] Stouraitis, "Byzantine War Against Christians - An *Emphylios Polemos*?," 85-109.
[151] Attaleiates, *The History*, 36.

the latter term, *στάσις ἐμφύλιος*, which Attaleiates employs in his narration of the uprising against Nikephoros Botaneiates in favor of the young Konstantios Doukas, corresponds to the similar situation that could have been called a *στάσις*.[152] Moreover, the term *πόλεμος πολιτικός*, which was applied to the famous revolt of Constantinopolitans due to the outrage committed by Michael V Kalaphates against the Macedonian empress Zoe, also refers to the urban character of the uprising.[153] It was a *πόλεμος* in the sense of violent clashes between the citizens and the imperial forces and it was also *πολιτικός* concerning the fact that it burst and died out in the city of Constantinople.

Thus far, we have examined the terminology of open sedition and resistance against the authority and left out the covert actions. Indeed, the whisperings and plots behind shut doors were the original begetters of all open rebellions and turbulences. We know of the open rebellions and treacherous conspiracies as much as they were recorded by the sources and we are ignorant of many more seditious plans hatched with one bloody purpose or another. Given the nature of the primary sources in question, we are probably informed about a tiny bit of the covetous plans and envious eyes upon the imperial throne. Moreover, considering the numerous attempts to topple the emperors, it is clear that not everybody shared Kekaumenos' conviction in the eventual victory of the ruling emperor in Constantinople over the plotters and rebels.[154] On the other hand, we can easily feel the contempt towards the hidden plots probably more than open rebellion. The favorite Byzantine word to describe a plot was *ἐπιβουλή*, which appears abundantly in all three authors. If we subtract the prefix *ἐπι-*, which adds a hostile meaning to almost every word it is attached to; we have

[152] Ibid., 560.
[153] Ibid., 25.
[154] Kekaumenos, *Cecaumeni strategicon,* 73-4.

βουλή, which is also frequently used for a plan or plot among other things such as will, determination, counsel, design, deliberation and even Senate.[155] *βουλή* does not necessarily refer to a mischievous plan and can have more of a neutral tone. However, it is rather easy turn it into an unholy, evil or unlawful plan by identifying it as *ἀνοσία βουλή* or *πόνηρα βουλή.*[156] Also metaphorically, a plot might even remind someone of the slow and covert process of making cheese.[157] An even more interesting metaphor likens the sedition to the inflammation due to some disease.[158] In fact, the medical imagery utilized in the depiction of rebellion could be more than a literary device as it is discussed in the part devoted to the notion of *ἀπονοία* would show. On the other hand, *ἐπιβουλή*, just like less frequently used terms *σκέμμα, σκαιώρημα*, *συνωμοσία* and *μελέτη*, was the perfect word to describe an evil design and the worst possible scenario was the blood of the emperor.

The scope of our terminological analysis will now be narrowed down to a particular word with greater possibilities with respect to its use as a rhetorical tool. Etymologically deriving from *νοῦς* and rather difficult to translate into English, *ἀπονοία* could mean loss of all sense, desperation, madness, and finally rebellion.[159] Just like *ἀποστασία* would be used in a religious sense for heretics, *ἀπονοία* could be applied to the desperate folly of heresies but it might also refer to the sin of fallen angels and Adam.[160] Hence, the word combines and more truly relates defiance semantically to madness and loss of reason. Moreover, given its religious connotations, it attaches a sense of transgression to it by likening the act of rebellion to the original sin, which was basically disobedience to God and the source of all

[155] Liddell & Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* 325.
[156] Attaleiates, *The History,* 130, 134.
[157] Ibid., 102: *τυρευομένη βουλή.*
[158] Ibid., 134: *τὸ φλεγμαῖνον,* 514: *φλεγμαινούση ἀποστασία.*
[159] Liddell & Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 211.
[160] Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 203.

wrongdoing and iniquity on earth. In this sense, the actions of the one who rebels are closely associated with sheer folly and deprived of any coherent thinking. If we were to provide a translation for *ἀπονοία*, it could be "rebellious folly." In this way, the word enables the author to mix a judgmental and even a religious tone to the narrative, which would not be otherwise possible by the usage of the more straightforward terminology, and provides a deeper understanding regarding the Byzantine way of expressing and perceiving dissidence.

The strong connotations of *ἀπονοία* set this word apart from bare madness or foolishness, and it appears as the perfect term to define a seditious action originating from a mindset of arrogance and unreason. Furthermore, its semantic load surpassed the physical and political evocation of rebellion and was able to express the mental denial caused by the blockage of senses by fierce rage.

Turning from these general remarks to our three authors, it should be noted that among them Nikephoros Bryennios never makes use of this highly loaded word, while in the narratives of Michael Attaleiates and Anna Komnene *ἀπονοία* is used in connection with a total of fifteen cases, not all of which, however, are examples of rebellion in a political sense. Nonetheless, most of the fifteen cases, in which individuals are charged with *ἀπονοία*, indeed constitute a form of open resistance, even though neither Michael Attaleiates nor Anna Komnene refers to the very action of rebellion as *ἀπονοία*, but rather to the mental state that caused the uprising in the first place. Another significant point to be observed is the close association of *ἀπονοία* with people whom Byzantines tended to call barbarians and heretics.

Thus, Anna, in all eight cases she makes use of this word, applies it to barbarians or heretics. The first group of people whom she accuses of *ἀπονοία* are

the outrageous Western "barbarians." In her account of the false monk Raiktor, who claimed to be the deposed emperor Michael VII and sought to capture the Byzantine throne with the aid Robert Guiscard, Anna could not help but laugh at the pretensions and false intentions of these two men.[161] Aside from *ἀπονοία,* she derides them for their light-mindedness (*κουφότης*) and boastfulness (*ἀλαζονεία*). In the case of Tancred, the nephew of Bohemond who fails to deliver Antioch to Alexios Komnenos in accordance with the treaty signed between his uncle and the emperor, the charge of *ἀπονοία* is again loaded with reproach for the Frank's empty boasts and threats against the emperor.[162] Furthermore, in the third case, where Anna charges the Western rivals of her father with *ἀπονοία,* the denunciation goes along with a strong emphasis on the empty pride of the Franks.[163] She makes us feel her disdain for the letter full of "words of *ἀπονοία.*" which was sent by Hugh I, the Count of Vermandois and brother of the King of France, urging the emperor to prepare a deserving welcome for the Crusader figure who was about to set off on his holy march towards the Holy Sepulcher: "Ἴσθι ... ὦ βασιλεῦ, ὡς ἐγὼ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλέων καὶ ὁ μείζων τῶν ὑπ' οὐρανόν, καὶ καταλαμβάνοντά με ἤδη ἐνδέχεται ὑπαντῆσαί τε καὶ δέξασθαι μεγαλοπρεπῶς καὶ ἀξίως τῆς ἐμῆς εὐγενείας."[164] Likened to the notorious heretic Novatus in his pride, this example again gives us a Western figure censured for his haughtiness, which is closely associated with the charge of *ἀπονοία.*[165]

As already noted, Anna Komnene was not alone in imbuing "barbarians" with the accusation of *ἀπονοία.* Michael Attaleiates provides parallel examples that

[161] Komnene, *Alexias,* 50.
[162] Ibid., 429.
[163] Also see Kazhdan, "Latins and Franks in Byzantium," 83-100.
[164]Komnene, *Alexias,* 302: "O emperor, know that I am the emperor of the emperor and the greatest under the heavens; you shall meet and welcome me on my arrival befitting my magnificence and nobility."
[165] Ibid., 302.

make us think that *ἀπονοία* was a conception to be paired with being a barbarian. He makes use of the word with reference to the Norman mercenary leader Crépin, who was denounced for conspiring against the emperor Romanos IV Diogenes, the German soldiers, the so-called Nemitzoi, who also rose up against the same emperor, and finally the Turkish garrison of Manzikert.[166] Thus, can we assume that *ἀπονοία* was a notion that was easily associated with "barbarians"? In fact, the language of both authors seems to give us an answer to this question. In his account of the uprising of the German bodyguards of Romanos IV, Attaleiates connects their action to their desire to revenge their countrymen, who were reprimanded by the emperor for ruining the countryside to feed their animals. However, he also attributes the situation to their "barbaric *ἀπονοία*": "ἀλλ' οἵ γε θράσει καὶ θυμῷ ζέοντες καὶ ἀπονοίᾳ βαρβαρικῇ πρὸς ἐκδίκησιν τῶν ἰδίων ἰταμῶς διανέστησαν..."[167] A similar accusation is directed by Anna Komnene against John Italos, who was condemned for his heretical beliefs by Alexios Komnenos.[168] Italos is censured for his uneasy temper and vainglorious conviction that he even surpassed his teachers with his knowledge. Here, Anna's charge is further seasoned with the claims of Italos' boldness (*θράσος*) and "barbaric *ἀπονοία*."[169] The example of John Italos stands out as rather significant in the sense that it shows how Anna connects the Western-Italian origins of her target with boldness in a similar vein with the previous examples we have examined. Italos is also important for being condemned for his heterodox beliefs, which directs us to the second group that became the object of Anna's attack.

[166] Attaleiates, *The History*, 228, 268, 278.
[167] Ibid., 268: "But they rose up recklessly for the revenge of their own kind, seething with insolence, spirit and barbaric *ἀπονοία.*"
[168] Clucas, *The Trial of John Italos*; Jaworska-Wołoszyn, "John Italos Seen by Anna Komnene," 279-94.
[169] Komnene, *Alexias*, 162-63: "Τούτῳ γοῦν ὁ Ἰταλὸς προσομιλήσας ἐν ἀπαιδεύτῳ ἤθει καὶ βαρβαρικῷ οὐκ ἠδύνατο φιλοσοφίας εἰς βάθος ἐλθεῖν διδασκάλων ὅλως μηδ' ἐν τῷ μανθάνειν ἀνεχόμενος, θράσους ὢν μεστὸς καὶ ἀπονοίας βαρβαρικῆς πάντων τε καθυπερτερεῖν καὶ πρὸ τοῦ μαθεῖν οἰόμενος καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν τὸν Ψελλὸν ἐκ πρώτης ἀφετηρίας ἀντετάξατο."

Paulicians, also called Manichaeans by Anna Komnene in a classicizing manner, were regarded as a threat and abomination to the unity of the Christian society under the rule of the Byzantine Empire and thus became the target of Alexios I Komnenos' conversion campaign, which often meant persecution for the Paulician heretics.[170] With a ruse devised by the emperor himself, the Paulicians' leaders were captured and forced to convert to the Orthodox doctrine. In her account of the mostly successful religious mission initiated by her pious father, Anna does not hide her emotions regarding this heretical group and passes her judgment on their whole belief as mere *ἀπονοία.*[171] However, Paulicians were not the only religiously incongruous group Alexios Komnenos dealt with. In one of the most famous and rare examples of burning at the stake of heretics in the entire history of the Byzantine Empire, Basil the Bogomil was executed by this method.[172] According to Anna, this resilient heresiarch would neither dread the fire that was to receive him nor yield to the words of the emperor up until the very last moment of his life. She related the curious steadfastness of the heterodox religious leader either to the possibility that sheer *ἀπονοία* had taken over his senses or it was merely the work of Satan making him reactive to all arguments.[173] Whatever the case was, the words of Anna make it clear that it was the same rebellious set of mind, that is to say *ἀπονοία*, that rendered the senses of these men dull, whether they were arrogant Westerners or profane heretics.

[170] On the Paulicians, see Garsoïan, *The Paulician Heresy;* Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee;* Lemerle, "L'histoire des Pauliciens," 1-113; Conybeare, *A Manual of the Paulician Church of Armenia;* Ludwig, "The Paulicians and Ninth-Century Byzantine Thought," 23-36.
[171] Komnene, *Alexias*, 171.
[172] On Bogomilism, see Obolensky, *The Bogomils;* Hamilton, et al., *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World;* Gouillard, "L'hérésie dans l'empire byzantin des origines au XIIe siècle," 299-324; Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee;* Loos, *Dualist Heresy in the Middle Ages*; Angelov, *The Bogomil Movement*; Garsoïan, "Byzantine Heresy," 87-113.
[173] Komnene, *Alexias*, 492.

The last two cases to be mentioned from Anna's text might stand out as curious as to their integration into the Byzantine socio-political structure. Not necessarily derided as barbarians, the people in these two examples can give us an idea about the expression of otherness in Byzantium as a historiographical tool. In the first example, Anna tells us of her father's repentance for the sack of the city, which took place as a result of the capture of Constantinople by Alexios' troops. She might seem to admit her father's guilt by saying that "Even without stumbling once, the person, who has not failed with regard to his actions in any way, can be equally driven into *ἀπονοία*."[174] However, she would not go any further than that and hastily adds that the destruction caused by the plunder was actually the fault not of the emperor but of individual soldiers in the army and her father's remorse was undeserved.[175] She also emphasizes the fact that the army was indeed a composite mixture of native and foreign soldiers and that it was the latter who chiefly caused the whole turbulence.[176] Thus, by emphasizing the mixed nature of the army, Anna seems to pin the foreign elements for the whole destruction and outrage.

The last person Anna charges with *ἀπονοία* is Gregory Gabras, the duke of Trebizond, who was apprehended by Alexios I Komnenos for hatching a plot against him. Despite many conciliatory letters sent by the emperor himself, Gregory would not yield his submission to him and, as Anna describes the situation, he slipped into sheer *ἀπονοία* in his cell.[177] Up until now the use of *ἀπονοία* has shown us that the word came to mean more than a desperate folly or rebellion but had a strong discriminatory tone to it, which was colored by the contempt of foreignness and

[174] Ibid., 98: "τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἄπταιστον ἴσως καὶ εἰς ἀπόνοιαν ἄγει τὸν μηδ' ὁπωστιοῦν προσκεκρουκότα τοῖς πράγμασιν"
[175] Komnene, *Alexias*, 98-9.
[176] Ibid., 78.
[177] Ibid., 377.

religious heterodoxy. In this last case, we can also detect a similar attempt to antagonize a person as a threat to the imperial state for not truly belonging to the "correct" categorization. More than being an ingrate, Gregory Gabras also belonged to a family with foreign origins. Among other etymological theories that suggest a non-Greek root for the name of this family, the one that takes into account the sociopolitical realities of the border communities has come from Anthony Bryer.[178] It can quite acceptably be argued that it was natural for certain families from the peripheries of a multilingual medieval empire to produce prominent figures who were able make their way into the narratives of our authors. However, it seems equally prudent to consider such an argument that the use of this strong word, *ἀπονοία*, was far from random and had a certain discriminatory and judgmental side to it. So, Anna Komnene not only chose a highly sensitive word for a member of the Gabras family but she was also consistent in her usage in order to highlight the foreign origins of this family, which was mostly out of her father's grasp.

Anna Komnene definitely associated the term *ἀπονοία* with heretics and barbarians but a different pattern seems to be at work in the narrative of Michael Attaleiates. He also makes use of *ἀπονοία* with reference to the usurpation attempts by Byzantine individuals. In all of these cases, the respective persons are given in comparison with the protagonist of the author, Nikephoros Botaneiates. Even before his ascension to the imperial throne, the "legitimate" rivals of Botaneiates were to be

[178] Bryer, "A Byzantine Family," 165-66: "Putting aside a (very remote) chance that there is a Persian background to the name, two possibilities remain. First there is Fallmerayer's opinion that the name is derived from the common Aramaic and Syriac formula '*g-b-r'*, indicating 'hero' or, simply, 'man'. Amantos suggested that Gabras is a hypocoristicon of Gabriel (i.e. 'man of God'), which comes from the same root. A second explanation has not been put forward so for. It is that Gabras is derived from a series of terms which begins with the Arabic '*kafir'* ('unbeliever'), Persian '*gabrak'* (originally 'Zoroastrian'), Kurdish '*gebir'* or *'gavir'* ('Armenian' or 'Russian'), and ends with the modern Turkish '*gavur'* ('unbeliever', 'Christian'). The word has not always had its present pejorative overtone; it indicated a distinctive person (Armenian or Orthodox Christian, or *akritic* lord) in a Moslem environment. This fits in with what we know of the earliest Gabrades and seems the most plausible solution." On the Gabrades also see: Cahen, "Une famille byzantine au service des Seldjouqides d'Asie Mineure."

stigmatized with *ἀπονοία*. The rule of Michael VII, against whom Botaneiates raised the banner of rebellion, was systematically calumniated for its alleged tyranny and illegitimacy throughout the text of Michael Attaleiates. In a nutshell, the emperor in Constantinople was an incompetent fellow surrounded by the counsel of equally despicable advisors, who dragged the empire off the edge of a cliff with their "tyrannical, unlawful and imprudent" management.[179] Botaneiates, on the other hand, being fully cognizant of the imperious situation and desperately having tried to advise and warn the emperor, finally donned the imperial purple ignoring "that deep *ἀπονοία* of the emperor."[180] However, the challenges facing our hero did not cease at this point. Despite being embraced by the people of Constantinople as the new emperor, Botaneiates had to deal with the rebellions of two other Nikephoroi: Bryennios and Basilakes. Yet again, the "rightful" emperor tried to handle these uprisings gently and magnanimously, a quite reasonable strategy only if we take into account the deplorable situation regarding the manpower and coffers of the empire. Aware of the imminent threat posed by the sizeable army under the command of the seasoned general Bryennios, Botaneiates offered overtures to his enemy by granting him and his fellows an amnesty for their outrage alongside with an assurance to keep their positions, and the rank of kaisar to Bryennios himself. Furthermore, it was not a one-time offer, and embassy after embassy would be sent to Bryennios to end this dangerous sedition. But Bryennios, succumbing to utter *ἀπονοία*, was overcome by rage and blind to any reconciliation.[181] Just like the barbarian rulers, Bryennios is portrayed as a man overrun by his pride but in fact he is worse than a barbarian in his way of treating the embassies. He utterly disrespects the sanctity of the ambassadors

[179] Attaleiates, *The History*, 390.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid., 520.

in a way which is not allowed even for true emperors.[182] This emphasis on the insolence and tyrannical conduct of Bryennios might be revealing more than mere propaganda. In this case, *ἀπονοία,* which took over Bryennios, is treated like a disease by Attaleiates. Also likening the sick mental situation of the rebel to that of "a madman and someone seized by Corybantic frenzy," Attaleiates compares the repeated diplomatic overtures of his master to the application of medicines: "*ἀκούσας δὲ περὶ τούτων ὁ βασιλεὺς τῆς ἀβουλίας αὐτὸν ἐταλάνιζε καὶ τοῦ πάθους ᾤκτειρε, καὶ ὡς μεμηνότι καὶ κορυβαντιῶντι σαφῶς φάρμακον ἐπῆγε τῆς νόσου ἀλεξητήριον.*"[183] This passage clearly reflects the thought of our author, who first accuses the rebel for *ἀπονοία* and then disparages his condition with cruder terms by turning it into a sickness that must be treated with special medicament and depicts it with pagan imagery. Furthermore by his comparison of the merits and lineage of the families of Botaneiates and Bryennios, Michael Attaleiates also displays either a sense of regionalism or a hidden distaste about the "real" origins of Bryennios. Clearly rejecting the idea that the deeds and nobility of Bryennios' family could not come even near to those of the emperor, Attaleiates calls the former "a low-born westerner" as opposed to his hero, who derived his origins from the nobility of the East.[184] Given the ideas that might arise from the observation of his name, Attaleiates was himself from the eastern parts of the empire though not with blue blood. Taking pride in the fact that his protagonist was a true "compatriot" of himself, Attaleiates might in fact be disparaging the foreign origins of the Bryennios family. The first Bryennios, who can safely be related to Nikephoros Bryennios here, was indeed the father and namesake of the rebel. The scanty information we have about the father of

[182] Ibid., 522.
[183] Ibid., 520: "Having heard these things, the emperor deemed the man unhappy for his thoughtlessness, pitied his situation and applied a protective medicine as though for a madman or someone seized by Corybantic frenzy."
[184] Ibid., 524.

Bryennios is that he served as an ethnarch, joined in a couple of rebellions, and winded up being blinded just like his son would be.[185] Other than sharing a similar fate with his son, this Bryennios stands out as significant with the title he held. The ethnarch (*ἐθνάρχης*), literally meaning a foreign nation leader, was also used as a title for the commander of the foreign troops in the Byzantine army in the eleventh century.[186] Despite the lack of information about this military title, ethnarchs were probably themselves foreigners. In fact, one of our three sources, Bryennios the Younger, provides such an example with Borilos, "either a Scythian or Mysian," who was sent by the emperor Botaneiates with the order of blinding the captive Bryennios the Elder.[187] While Anna Komnene would not betray any information about this title, Michael Attaleiates uses it on five occasions, none of which as a Byzantine military rank but as a foreign leader.[188] Yet, one of these cases, the very passage that contains the reference of Bryennios' disrespect for the ambassadors, reveals an uncanny coincidence: "... he [Bryennios] sent him [ambassador from Botaneiates] away disrespectfully, not the least in a way the law would allow for true emperors to treat the ambassador of the ethnarch of the most worthless people..."[189] Attaleiates clearly emphasizes the utter absurdity of the situation, in which a usurper dishonors the representative of the "true" emperor in a way even the barbarians would not deserve. The use of the word ethnarch does indeed seem like a deliberate choice and reference to the title held by the rebel's father. By highlighting and probably reminding the rank and fate of the father Nikephoros Bryennios, Attaleiates debases the rival of his hero to a status worse than barbarians. Although one can also speculate on the idea of

[185] Kazhdan, "Bryennios," 328-9.
[186] Bowman & Kazhdan, "Ethnarch," 734.
[187] Bryennios, *Historiarum,* 283.
[188] Attaleiates, *The History,* 78, 155, 429, 485.
[189] Ibid., 522: "ἀτίμως τοῦτον ἀπέπεμψεν, ὅπερ οὐδ' εἰς ἐθνάρχου τῶν εὐτελεστέρων πρέσβυν νόμος τοῖς ἀληθῶς βασιλεῦσι ποιεῖν".

the conscious denigration of the Bryennios family as foreigners unworthy of the imperial throne, it might as well be a good idea to examine the other examples.

Liquidating the serious challenge posed by Bryennios, the new emperor Botaneiates now faced the threat of the rebel Basilakes. With a similar move, he first sent dispatches with the decrees of amnesty and rewards for the rebel and his followers. However, just like his predecessor, Basilakes would not come to reason and opted for a military engagement, which eventually cost him his eyes. Basilakes, who did not accept the reconciliatory offers of the emperor, was also charged with *ἀπονοία* by Attaleiates.[190] Once again, it appears tempting to look for any other reason behind this accusation that may be connected with the ancestors of the rebel. In fact, Basilakes seems to derive his origins from the eastern parts of the empire, maybe too east to be appreciated by Attaleiates: Armenia. His earliest known ancestor could be the Armenian noble Vasilak, who fell in the Battle of Manzikert.[191] It is also presumed that the Basilakes family was either of Armenian or Paphlagonian origin. Given the strong connotations of the word *ἀπονοία* with being a barbarian, we can strongly argue for the first option that the family was of Armenian origin.

The last case in the context of which Attaleiates makes use of this word is another usurpation attempt against the emperor Botaneiates. This time, the young Konstantios Doukas, who appears to have more claim than anyone in the empire on the throne, is in the spotlight. Just before the imperial armies were being mustered for a campaign against the enemy in the East, Konstantios was accused of hatching a plot with the Immortals, a guard unit recruited during the reign of his father. Given their previous loyalty to the ex-emperor Michael VII, this band of guardsmen would

[190] Ibid., 544.
[191] Kazhdan, "Basilakes," 262.

have seemed like a threat to the security of Nikephoros Botaneiates. In an effort to send them away from the capital with the rest of the imperial army, he ordered them to gather in Chrysopolis. Meanwhile, the plot of Konstantios was discovered and it revealed the participation of many officers. The account of Attaleiates makes it clear that these officers were the commanders of the Immortals and they quickly admitted their mistake that amounted to *ἀπονοία* on their part.[192] On the other hand, the loss of reason in their judgment and the use of *ἀπονοία* to describe their mental situation do not seem to be random on Attaleiates' part. We have here a good case to consider the possibility that these officers and the soldiers they were commanding were in fact foreign mercenaries. The answer to the question of whether the Immortals were of barbarian origin or not is not definitive. Although it is not universally accepted, it is hard to rule out the fact that these soldiers were grouped with other foreign units of the imperial army in some chrysobulls of the end of the eleventh century.[193] Given the lack of evidence in Attaleiates' account to support the idea that the Immortals were in fact élite native soldiers and the recurrent association of *ἀπονοία* with barbarianism, we can entertain this argument as a proof to support the idea that the *Athanatoi* were indeed composed of foreign elements.

This chapter has been devoted both to the preparation of a practical commentary on the fundamental subversive vocabulary that is used in our three main primary sources and also applied throughout this study, and to the effort of answering the immediate questions that rose from a detailed reading and interpretation of the texts. As it has been noted, the Byzantine historiography would reveal a substantial amount of lexica with reference to rebellion. In the first part of

[192] Attaleiates, *The History*, 563: "οἱ δὲ τὴν ἄστατον παροινίαν αὐτῶν καὶ ἀδόκιμον γλωσσαλγίαν καὶ παρακεκινδυνευμένην ἀπόνοιαν ὁμολογήσαντες".
[193] Kazhdan, "Athanatoi," 221.

this chapter, we have tried to clarify the nuances of the terminology that comprise of the vocabulary of open and covert sedition in Byzantium. Although the glossary was limited to three works as the nature of this thesis requires, it has become clear that even the work of three authors was enough to provide us with a wealth of material to work on. In the second part, we have focused on the semantics of one word, *ἀπονοία,* which has effectively displayed the new insights that can be gained by the study of a hitherto ignored term associated with rebellion and resistance. Deriving its origin from the Greek word *νοῦς* (mind, sense), *ἀπονοία* comes with a hefty load of connotations ranging from barbarism to heresy, as our analysis of its use by Michael Attaleiates and Anna Komnene in the context of rebellions and usurpation attempts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries has shown. Limited in terms of both its chronological scope and the source materials used, the findings of this chapter provide us with clues about the possible results to be achieved through a comprehensive study of the terminology of subversion covering the entire Byzantine era.

3.3 Common themes or idiosyncracies?

Within the scope of the subversive discourse in Byzantium we have so far examined the ideology behind the methods of punishing the rebellious subjects and its significance in Byzantine politics, and the terminological aspect of developing a rhetoric statement in historical narrative. This examination is now supposed to be expanded into a full-fledged analysis of our three primary sources with the purpose of presenting a complete picture, in which we can clearly see the Byzantine historian

at work. In this chapter we will mainly ask what rebellion truly meant to our authors and how they coped with the conflicts their protagonists caused, being able to distinguish their heroes from ordinary rebels in order to create a new subversive image acceptable for their readers.

The idea of rebellion emerges as a concept difficult to idealize due to the strong influence of the Byzantine political ideology that acknowledged the imperial ruler as the earthly representative of Jesus Christ. The close accommodation of the humanly and divine realms led to the presumption that the Christian God was supposed to choose and support the emperor. Such strong belief was indeed reflected in the literature of the period in question by the Byzantine officer Kekaumenos in an effort to exhort his children to show unwavering support for their sovereign in the face of his enemies:

> For never was there a person who dared to create an uprising against the emperor and Romania, trying to destroy the peace, and he was not destroyed himself. Therefore, my beloved children given by God, I urge you to be on the side of the emperor and his service. For the emperor in Constantinople shall always prevail.[194]

No matter how loyal he was to his master, it is superfluous to say that Kekaumenos was being unrealistic in his admonition considering the hard fact that the Byzantium barely lacked successful usurpers in its long history. Nevertheless, most Byzantine writers turned out to be truer to the real picture and provided much fertile ground for the study of the topic. Although it may seem safe and simple to assume that the

[194] Kekaumenos, *Cecaumeni strategicon*, 73-4. (Translation is mine.) On the rhetoric and household of Kekaumenos, see Roueché, "The Rhetoric of Kekaumenos," 23-37; Inoue, "A Provincial Aristocratic *Oikos*," 545-69.

majority of the rebellions stemmed from lust for power, a more detailed analysis would reveal that the narratives were centered on certain *topoi* and symbolisms that help us to understand the structure of the subversive discourse(s).

As we have credited our authors with a more realistic understanding of the power struggles in Byzantium, it is reasonable to start the survey with the factual reasons of the rebellions as given by the sources. A strong theme to prevail throughout the narratives is the negligence of the emperors towards their deserving subjects, which was perceived as a source of injustice causing the members of military aristocracy to revolt. The magnanimity, a highly valued virtue expected from a ruler, constitutes one of the most important tenets of the theme of the ideal emperor as well. The imperial indifference - especially towards the successful generals - was utilized as a source of justification not only for the actions of the usurper-protagonists of our accounts but also for the dissidence of several other actors. Michael Attaleiates presents such grievance as the chief cause of the rebellion that placed Isaac Komnenos on the imperial throne. Michael VI, nicknamed the Old Man, handpicked by the court officials for his easy nature as the successor of the empress Theodora, was readily manipulated by the close court circle and quite indifferent towards the leading military. His "pointless arrogance and vain conceit" created much indignation among the generals that they incited Isaac Komnenos, who was also "offended at this slight and insulted when he was shoved aside," to rebellion.[195] Michael VI, apparently without any legitimacy by deed or blood, grew haughty with the imperial diadem on his brow only to be deposed by the persons who held the real power in their hands. Similar examples are found in the narratives of Anna Komnene and Nikephoros Bryennios, and they all demonstrate that the lack of imperial

[195] Attaleiates, *The History,* 97.

generosity was one of the causes or rather pretexts of rising up in revolt. Furthermore, Anna Komnene provides the definition of "true liberality," a virtue she associates with her father even before he became emperor, and explains how it helped him to rally support for his bid:

> ... but they also loved him because he was exceptionally generous and very ready to give, although he had not a great abundance of money. For he was not of those who plunder and open their mouths wide for riches. True liberality is not as a rule judged by the quantity of money supplied, but is weighed by the spirit of the giver. In some cases a man of few possessions who pays in proportion to his income, may justly be termed "liberal," whereas another who has much wealth and hides it in a hole in the earth, or does not give to the needy in proportion to his wealth, would rightly be styled "a second Croesus," or "a Midas mad for gold," or "niggardly and penurious" or a "cummin-splitter"! That Alexius was graced with all the virtues, the men I have mentioned had known for a long time already, and for these reasons they eagerly desired his elevation to the throne.[196]

The imperial munificence could be a deciding feature in checking the effectiveness of the dissident thoughts but it was not enough to secure peace within the empire on its own. Alongside with the negligence of the imperial masters, the ingratitude of the subjects appears to be another common theme in the sources. Being furious against an emperor who would not acknowledge one's selfless labors for the sake of the country and religion could be understood, however paying back one's benefactor with sheer betrayal was to be universally condemned. The extant narration of Nikephoros Bryennios starts with such an accusation directed against Nikephoros Botaneiates. The usurper is censured for revolting against the very man who had put him at the head of the troops in Anatolia and thus providing a "malicious exchange"

[196] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 52; eadem, *Alexias,* 65.

(*ἀμοιβήν πονηράν*).[197] Although Attaleiates does not give this detail in his own account, he hardly fails to make use of the same *topos* in favor of the emperor Botaneiates. Attaleiates depicts the usurper-emperor as a benevolent master, who recalled the exiled brother of the deposed emperor Michael VII, Constantios Doukas, only to dispel his bad faith even though the youth was "an obvious competitor and enemy, just then reaching the peak of his youth and full of irrational urges."[198] Attaleiates acknowledges the grudge the Doukai would hold against the man who deposed their family from imperial throne though he does not hesitate to blame Constantios himself for ingratitude let alone justifying any bad thoughts:

> Governed by his ingratitude, he thought that the emperor's benefactions were an act of malice, and it never entered his mind that, while the could and even *should have utterly destroyed him* [emphasis is mine] as an enemy and competitor, he had instead not even contemplated such a thing, and had granted him a comfortable life and a lifestyle as happy and rich as in the past. His inner being was venomous and he harbored a grudge against the man who had cared for him in a compassionate and parental way. Nevertheless, while nurturing this grudge, he did no harm to him as he would have liked, though still he brought defilement upon the whole world and suffered the wages of an ingrate, even if less harshly than he deserved because of the emperor's clemency.[199]

However, Constantios' inertia was not long-lasting for he was looking for an opportunity to rise in revolt, which he eventually did. Yet the mutiny he caused among the soldiery was a short-lived one and he ended up being tonsured and exiled to an island. Constantios was a bad investment but treacherous ingratitude was even worse when it came from someone really cared for. Nikephoros Diogenes, a son of

[197] Bryennios, *Historiarum*, 55.
[198] Attaleiates, *The History*, 557.
[199] Ibid., 557-9.

the emperor Romanos IV Diogenes, was a controversial figure who plotted a major conspiracy against the emperor Alexios I Komnenos. Although his plot was eventually foiled after various warnings and he ended up being blinded, decisively unable to seize the throne now, Nikephoros nevertheless continued his subversive activities against the Komnenoi. According to Anna Komnene, he was not an ordinary ambitious man but a dear protégé of Alexios alongside with his brother Leo:

> In any case he [Romanos IV Diogenes] died when his sons Leo and Nicephorus were still children; and from the beginning of his own reign, Alexius took them over as private persons instead of princes (for at his accession to the throne Michael [VII Doukas], although he was their own brother, had taken away their red sandals and their diadem and condemned them to banishment in the monastery Cyperoudes with their mother, the Empress Eudocia). Alexius deemed the young men worthy of much consideration, partly because he pitied them for their misfortunes, and partly because he saw they surpassed others in their physical beauty and strength.[200]

Nikephoros was so much cared by Alexios I Komnenos - he was even given Crete to rule as his own property - that he refused to take any action against the young man even though he was not only coveting the throne but personally threatening the life of the emperor. In the end, the danger was to be averted when the emperor consented to the interrogation of Nikephoros, who confessed to the plot under the threat of torture. Let us end the discussion of ingratitude with a quote from Attaleiates, who deemed all thankless wretches worthy of the darkness of blinding that fell upon the emperor Michael V Kalaphates and his uncle at the hands of an angry mob for imprisoning the Macedonian empress Zoe: "Let their dismal tale be remembered by

[200] Komnene, *The Alexiad*, 224; eadem, *Alexias*, 270-71.

posterity and may it set upon a better path anyone who intends to be ungrateful to his benefactors."[201]

Every attempt on the imperial throne was prepared through some secret planning and in fact the success of this plan heavily depended on the degree of secrecy, keeping the inner circle tight. However, there were different methods to seize the empire and open rebellion was only one of them. Even though shedding the blood of countless Christians by causing a civil war may sound more sacrilegious than murdering solely the person who held the imperial scepters or forcing him to abdicate from the throne, the clandestine methods in acquiring power were in fact less preferable than all-out warfare. That is to say, in an era when the military virtues of the leaders were more and more applauded the insidious plots against the person of the emperor were regarded even more treacherous than blatantly defying his supremacy. The hints of such thought can be seen in the accounts of several conspiracies in our sources. For instance, the narration of the conspiracy (*βουλή*) planned by certain officials in Constantinople, simultaneous with the rebellion of Isaac Komnenos, is carefully constructed with the carefully chosen verbiage of Michael Attaleiates to create an image of treachery in the minds of the readers. While he acknowledged the evils caused by the civil war brought upon Byzantium by Isaac Komnenos, Attaleiates nevertheless was more concerned about the actions of the officials, more prominently the patriarch, who were supposed to support the emperor Michael VI in this dire time:

> But before he [Isaac Komnenos] reached the coast opposite the City, a plot was hatched [βουλῆ ... ἠρτύετο] by certain officials

[201] Attaleiates, *The History*, 29.

> against the emperor in Constantinople. It is unclear and remains obscure whether the supreme archpriest, the patriarch Michael Kerularios, was part of the plot or not. .... When the plot, until now planned through intrigue, erupted [τῆς τυρευομένης βουλῆς ἐκραγείσης]...[202]

The verb *ἠρτύετο*, coming from *ἀρτύω* that means to prepare with cunning, is aptly translated here as hatching a plot. However, a more culinary meaning of the word refers to seasoning - for instance meat. Similarly, *τυρευομένης* coming from the verb *τυρεύω* is correctly given as planning through intrigue, yet we have seen the more fundamental sense of the word previously as making cheese - remember the Greek word for cheese, *τυρός.* Throughout this passage the *βουλῆ* of Constantinopolitan officials, probably including the patriarch himself, is supplemented with verbs closely associated with cuisine to create such stealthy imagery. One may even recognize the metaphorical use of the word *ἐκραγείσης* coming from the passive use of the verb *ἐκρήγνυμι,* which refers to the foul burst of an abscess or ulcer, providing even stronger vividness for the readers of dramatic imagination. Furthermore, the medical symbolism of subversion was not restricted to this phrase only and rebellion was considered some purulence to be carefully treated. The verb *φλεγμαίνω,* meaning to cause swelling, and its derivatives were extensively used by Michael Attaleiates in the context of rebellion and uprising. For instance, *τὸ φλεγμαῖνον τοῦ πάθους* (the swelling excitement) was used for the initial disturbance caused by Constantinopolitans when they first heard the exile of their beloved empress Zoe by the emperor Michael V Kalaphates.[203] Very much the same phrase constructed with *τὸ πάθος* was again put to use for the pro-Bryennios uprising in Rhaidestos, the city where we can confirm the existence of considerable property belonging to Attaleiates

[202] Ibid., 100-103.
[203] Ibid., 20.

himself. Talking about the rebellions throughout the empire in general, Attaleiates makes use of *φλεγμαινούσης ἀποστασίας* (swelling or even better festering rebellion), which clearly shows us that the use of this term was not a random choice.[204] A more direct reference to an uprising is attested in the account of the plot against Constantine X Doukas: "The *eparchos* of the City also came out -*after the worst of the storm had passed*, as the saying goes -and he too suppressed the uprising [*τὸ φλεγμαῖνον*]."[205] However, the meaning of the word was not just an ordinary action of swelling but it had strong medical connotations, for which we can find examples in Attaleiates who aptly makes use of this word. In a metaphorical yet medical sense, he refers to the miserable state of Romanos IV Diogenes at the hands of his imperial enemies as *φλεγμαίνοντι τῆς λύπης* (swelling up of his grief).[206] In a similar fashion the dire situation in the eastern provinces of the empire were likened to a sort of injury caused by the Turkish incursions and Attaleiates regarded the valor of men like Crépin as the only solution to these festering wounds (*τοῖς φλεγμαίνουσι κακοῖς*).[207] In the text of Anna Komnene, who uses this word only once in the last chapter of her history dedicated to the final sufferings of her father due to his severe gout, we find a purely medical sense of the word, "his palate was inflamed [*φλεγμαινούσης*] and his tongue too and his larynx."[208] These examples show that the basic meaning of the verb *φλεγμαίνω* was extended to include the inflammation of the wounds, which was metaphorically applied to the rebellions and various problems faced by the empire during the period. The image of a sore wound naturally requires an expert doctor, a position that could suit only to the men of high caliber like Attaleiates' champion Nikephoros Botaneiates. Botaneiates, who had just seized

[204] Ibid., 514.
[205] Ibid., 135-6.
[206] Ibid., 320.
[207] Ibid., 376.
[208] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 424; eadem, *Alexias,* 500.

the imperial throne from Michael VII, had to solidify his position as the new emperor and justify his rule by defeating the ongoing rebellions and proving himself as the true savior of his people. Considering the depleted sources of the imperial fisc and the few soldiers he had at hand, he reasonably decided to come to terms with his first adversary Nikephoros Bryennios by dispatching delegates one after another to the rebel. He was apparently in a truly desperate position that he sent exactly three embassies promising high honors and positions both for Bryennios and his entourage. His action may be regarded as a delay tactic or a genuine compromise in the face of grave danger; for Attaleiates it was not a sign of weakness but a patient and careful treatment applied to a really insane person:[209]

> Hearing about this, the emperor deemed him unhappy for his lack of judgment, pitied his wrath, and applied a protective remedy [*φάρμακον ... ἀλεξητήριον*] as if he were dealing with a deranged maniac in corybantic frenzy. What was that? A third embassy to halt the onset of war.[210]

This passage is a very good example for clearly demonstrating the strong imagery of Attaleiates at full force. He not only likens the rebel Bryennios to a "deranged maniac" but also makes use of strong paganic connotations of the Corybants, who were ecstatic worshippers of the Phrygian goddess Cybele. However, the inventory of paganic allegory was not necessarily corybantic and Attaleiates utilizes ancient Greek themes for madness with reference to the episode when Bryennios' brother John put the mansions and churches outside Constantinople to fire upon his failure to capture the city:

[209] For the importance of intelligence and delay strategy in Byzantine diplomacy, see Shepard, "Information, Disinformation and Delay," 233-93.
[210] Attaleiates, *The History*, 520-1.

> But it was evident that he was only beating against the air, like an ass puffing himself up before rational beings marshaled by a superior reason, his soul burned with anger and wrath and his mind was overcome by a bacchic and Silenic frenzy, so he set fire to the houses in the vicinity from Saint Panteleëmon all the way to the Anaplous region of the straits.[211]

Attaleiates' detestation for the Bryennios brothers was not a secret and he made it quite clear with references to such mythological figures as Bacchus and Silenus. One may consider these allegories generic for any act done without reason but our sources present a clear association between their application and subversion. Yet in another example of civil strife, the battle between the troops of Isaac Komnenos and the imperial forces is depicted as a bacchic mania. This passage is also a dramatic narration of civil war that regularly claimed the lives of many at the hands of their loved ones:

> Many men fell on both sides, but most were cut down while they were in flight. And the father and son, as if forgetting their natural bonds, showed no compunction in eagerly slaughtering each other. Hands of sons were stained with the blood of fathers; brother struck down brother; and there was no pity or distinction made for close relations or common blood. When this rage and manic frenzy [*βακχικῆς μανίας*] subsided, they understood the extent of the tragedy and raised their laments to the heavens.[212]

Therefore, the depiction of the civil war as a sort of madness was a common theme even without any references to antiquity. The turmoil caused before the walls of Constantinople by Leo Tornikios' rebellion is again noted for lack of any reason:

[211] Ibid., 459.
[212] Ibid., 99-101.

> They ravaged all that they encountered, looted at will, and made civil war no less ruinous than war with foreign enemies. Almost everyone in the Reigning City manned the walls and sought protection there, while the emperor sat upon the acropolis at Blachernai, deploring the rabid madness that had seized his own domain and watching as it plunged into ultimate destruction.[213]

The captured rebel Nikephoros Bryennios was similarly reprimanded for his foolishness by his captor: "Bryennios was led captive before the one whom the emperor had entrusted with command of the war [Alexios Komnenos], and was thoroughly condemned for his evil plans and foolishness [*ἀνοία*] because of which he had lost all sense of proportion in his actions."[214] Bryennios was further censured by the emperor himself upon his return to Constantinople for he had "rabidly raged" against the will of God, the divinely appointed emperor, and the Reigning City at the same time.[215] An analogous rhetoric can be read through the lines dedicated to the conspiracy of Konstantios Doukas against the emperor Botaneiates:

> They [co-conspirators of Konstantios Doukas] admitted that they had been unreliable and deranged, that they had used improper words and veered dangerously away from reason [*παρακεκινδυνευμένην ἀπόνοιαν*], and they asked to receive forgiveness, absolution from their offensive behavior, and guarantees that they would be treated mercifully.[216]

In this passage we can see that Attaleiates makes use of a much powerful word, *ἀπόνοια,* to deride the attempt of Doukas. The connotation of this word with barbarians has already been analyzed in the chapter dedicated to the subversive

[213] Ibid., 41.
[214] Ibid., 530-31.
[215] Ibid., 535.
[216] Ibid., 562-63.

terminology and one can realize that these references only support the idea of a strong link between rebellion, madness, and being a barbarian. The loss of reason that causes the subversive actions of the persons of foreign origins also appears to be a common theme in the history of Anna Komnene. Robert Guiscard, one of the archenemies of the rule of Anna's father, was often associated with a tyrannical disposition and bad temper. His efforts to muster a greater force than ever to march upon Byzantium were likened to the actions of a madman:

> He was at all times a man of tyrannical and very sharp temper, and now he imitated the madness of Herod. Not being satisfied with the soldiers who had followed his fortune from the beginning, and were experienced in war, he recruited and equipped a new army, without any distinction of age. But he collected all, under age and over age, from all over Lombardy and Apulia, and pressed them into his service. There you could see children and boys, and pitiable old men, who had never, even in their dreams, seen a weapon; but were now clad in breastplates, carrying shields and drawing their bows most unskilfully and clumsily, and usually falling on their faces when ordered to march. These requisitions were naturally the cause of unending trouble throughout the country of Lombardy; everywhere were heard the lamentations of men and the weeping of women who shared the misfortunes of their kinsfolk.[217]

The biblical figure of Herod, who gained renown as the insane ruler of Judaea thanks to his deeds like the murder of his own family and the Massacre of the Innocents, plays the key part in this analogy for the irrational desire that brought misery upon the young and old among Robert's subjects apparently reminded Anna of the ancient Jewish tyrant. Furthermore, Robert was not the only Norman ruler to let the madness get hold of him. His son Bohemond, after his final defeat by Alexios I Komnenos, was compelled to sign a peace treaty acknowledging the supremacy of the Byzantine

[217] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 36-7; eadem, *Alexias,* 47.

emperor. Known as the Treaty of Devol, Anna Komnene includes the whole text of the document in her history where Bohemond pledges allegiance to Alexios I and promises never to plot against the emperor unless some madness would seize him again:

> And I shall make them swear by the heavenly powers and the insufferable wrath of God that, if I should ever conspire against your Majesties, which God forbid! O Saviour, and O Justice of God, forbid it! they would first endeavour by every possible means throughout a period of forty days to bring me back from my self-exaltation to the fidelity due to your Majesties. This would happen, if indeed it were allowed to happen, when downright madness and frenzy had seized me, or if I had clearly taken leave of my senses. And if I am insensible and unmoved by their advice and madness rushes violently upon my mind, then at last they shall renounce me and utterly reject me and shall be transferred to your Empire and hand and judgment, and the countries which they hold by my right, they shall snatch away from my power and surrender them to you and your portion.[218]

This passage is so deftly constructed that it not only associates any subversive action against the Byzantine emperor as a result of some sort of madness and unreason, but also obliges the subjects of Bohemond himself to submit to the emperor in case of disobedience by their suzerain. Although Bohemond did not live long enough to have a chance to conspire against the emperor Alexios again, his nephew Tancred did not delay in replacing his uncle as the next crazy Norman leader.[219] Rejecting to hand over the rule of Antioch to the Byzantines upon the death of his uncle as the Treaty of Devol stipulated, Tancred sent the Byzantine ambassadors empty-handed boasting himself as invincible:

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[218] Komnene, *The Alexiad*, 352; eadem, *Alexias*, 417-18. On the significance of the oath of fidelity to the Byzantine emperor, see Svoronos, "Le serment de fidélité," 106-42.
[219] On the principality of Antioch, see Asbridge, *The Creation of the Principality of Antioch, 1098-1130.*

> When the Emperor's ambassadors brought this message, that mad and demented barbarian would not listen, even with the tips of his ears, to the truth of their words and the free speech of the ambassadors, but acted like the men of his race and being puffed up with vanity boasted that he would place his throne above the stars and threatened to bore a hole through the walls of Babylon with the tip of his spear, and sang the praise of his power for being undaunted and irresistible in onslaught, and reiterated that, no matter what happened, he would never give up Antioch, not even if the soldiers set to fight against him had hands of fire. He further likened himself to Ninus, the great king of Assyria, and said he was a big, irresistible giant, a dead weight standing upon the earth, and he considered all the Romans ants and the weakest of all creatures. The ambassadors left him and returned and after they related the Frank's mad talk, the Emperor became filled with rage and could hardly be restrained but wanted to start for Antioch on the spot.[220]

The combination of the "hereditary" madness running in the Norman family and the Frankish arrogance made Tancred a dangerous enemy not to be taken slightly and provided Anna some common themes to play with. The accusation of madness was apparently a handy *topos* in the narrations of rebellion and enabled our authors to construct strong and elaborate rhetoric based upon it. Unreason and foolishness, seasoned with the analogies from mythological and biblical times or not, enriched the symbolism and imagery of the anti-subversive discourse.

"But he who envies all good things incited yet another civil war using the following pretext."[221] It is not difficult to understand to whom Michael Attaleiates refers at the beginning of the chapter dedicated to the narration of Leo Tornikios' rebellion. Satan, the archenemy of Christians, was often associated with the catastrophes that fell upon the Byzantine people and it does not strike us as unusual. His role as a mischievous nuisance-maker is acknowledged by all of our authors. Nikephoros Bryennios refers to the demon [*δαιμόνιον*] as the chief cause for the

[220] Komnene, *The Alexiad*, 363; eadem, *Alexias*, 429.
[221] Attaleiates, *The History*, 37.

failure of his predecessor's rebellion for it was the demon, who turned the alleged sympathy of the Constantinopolitans felt for the rebel Bryennios into hatred by causing John Bryennios to burn the neighborhood on the outskirts of the capital.[222] But what is more significant in Attaleiates' passage is the implication that it was through envy and grudge [*βασκαίνων*] that Satan worked. This reference is not to be taken lightly for it takes us to the next *topos* in our examination. Envy [*φθόνος*] was a very strong word for the Byzantine mind and it was almost equated to Satan in a personified manner. The evils that envy caused were closely associated to the bidding of Satan. For instance, in the account of the uprising instigated by the Antiochian patriarch and the archons of Antioch against the *doux* of the city, Isaac Komnenos, Nikephoros Bryennios connects the uprising to the envious sentiment provoked by the "ancient enemy of the Christians": "Mais il était impossible que l'antique ennemi des chrétiens demeurât en paix ; aussi, pour une raison futile, relançat-il les émeutiers. D'aucuns parmi les nouveaux parvenus, échauffés par la jalousie [*φθόνος*], armèrent le peuple contre les magistrats et le duc."[223]

Unlike some other themes, the idea of envy causing dissidence and rebellion is shared by all of the sources in this study. Attaleiates gives *φθόνος* as the main reason why the Byzantines lost the control of Sicily through slanders directed against George Maniakes:

> And had Georgios Maniakes, who had been entrusted with the overall military command, not been slandered that he was seeking to usurp the throne and removed from his position, and had the war

[222] Bryennios, *Historiarum*, 232 : "Les habitants de la capitale, qui étaient montés contre le souverain et instruits de la vaillance et de la fermeté de Bryennios, manifestaient déjà la bienveillance qu'ils lui vouainet en leur for intérieur, mais le démon, remarquant cette complaisance universelle, la transforma vite en animosité à cause d'un événement fortuit que nous allons raconter."
[223] Ibid., 205.

> not been assigned to others, that island would now be under Roman rule, a place so large, famous, endowed with the greatest cities along its coasts, and lacking in no resource. As it was, however, envious resentment [*φθόνος*] brought down the man, his accomplishments, and that great enterprise.[224]

Then again it was "envious resentment and an unjust decision" that prevented the appointment of Nikephoros Botaneiates as the emperor when the empress Eudokia decided to take Romanos Diogenes as her husband and emperor.[225] Bulgarian nation had also rose up in rebellion denying their servile position under the Roman rule, all due to their grudging leader, "whose envious resentment [*φθόνος*] had maliciously devised every part of the disaster."[226] But Attaleiates also linked envy to certain gender roles and strongly associated it with eunuchs when he was referring to the same Bulgarian governor, Basil, who was a eunuch "already conquered by envious resentment [*φθόνος*] and deceit - for it is said that most eunuchs are especially afflicted by this vice, along with the others."[227] A more prominent and notorious eunuch in Attaleiates' history was surely the chief minister of the emperor Michael VII, Nikephoritzes, who was denounced for his envy a couple of times among other things. First we see him slandering one of his colleagues with adultery:

> For there was a certain eunuch by the name of Nikephoros, whose family was from the Boukellarioi *thema* and who was most capable at devising and tailoring affairs and bringing about great commotion in any situation. While serving Michael's father, Konstantinos Doukas, as an imperial secretary, he showed himself to be a sinister plotter and ingenious author of evils. He even

[224] Attaleiates, *The History,* 11-13.
[225] Ibid., 177.
[226] Ibid., 69.
[227] Ibid., 67. For eunuchs in Byzantium, see Ringrose, *The Perfect Servant*; Tougher, *The Eunuch in Byzantine History and Society*; idem, "Byzantine Eunuchs," 168-84. For the unique contemporary text by Theophylact of Ohrid in defense of eunuchs, see Gautier, *Théophylacte d'Achrida,* 287-331.

> whispered into the emperor's ear an accusation of adultery against the empress out of sheer jealous hatred [*φθόνος*] for his fellow secretary and collaborator, Michael of Nikomedeia.[228]

The envious malice of the eunuch Nikephoritzes was later directed against a certain Nestor and he managed to alienate the man so much so that the latter eventually revolted with the Pechenegs against the rule of Michael VII under the control of Nikephoritzes:

> Nikephoros did this out of malice as he disliked Nestor, for his envy [*φθόνος*] and wicked nature did not allow him to discern and prefer what was advantageous and so he recklessly punished the guardian of the frontiers [Nestor] even though affairs were in such a confused state.[229]

We see envy at work when some sycophants at the court slandered Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder of conspiring against the emperor and alienated the man who would rise up in revolt later, this time for real.[230] Yet another reference in Bryennios' account, which we deem worthy of translating and quoting here in full, ably shows us how differently certain events could be interpreted:

> For the people who rose in rebellion with him [Nikephoros Botaneiates] were no more than three hundred men and they arrived unharmed by divine providence passing through traps for they clearly had many foes awaiting them in ambushes. Therefore,

[228] Attaleiates, *The History*, 329.
[229] Ibid., 375.
[230] Bryennios, *Historiarum*, 214 : "Telles furent ses actions, qui méritaient honneurs et récompenses, mais l'envie [*φθόνος*] ne souffrit pas de pareils exploits d'un homme éminent : elle excita la langue des sycophantes qui parlent de paix avec leur prochain, comme s'exprime le divin David, mais méditent le mal dans leur coeur. Abusant donc de la légèreté du basileus, ils calomniaient l'homme en cachette, l'accusant de fomenter une rébellion."

> God demonstrated that if He wills the envy [*φθόνος*] prevails but if not it is in vain.[231]

The rebellion of Botaneiates, acknowledged as the will of God himself by Attaleiates as we shall investigate in more detail later on, was regarded here as the culmination of malice and envy, which nevertheless achieved success through divine consent.

Anna Komnene also utilized the theme of the jaundiced evil throughout her narrative as a threat against her father's reign. On several occasions she tells us about the grudge held by two "slaves" of the emperor Botaneiates, Borilos and Germanos, which allegedly forced the young and successful general Alexios Komnenos to escape the capital and revolt against the emperor with his brother Isaac. The Komnenos brothers had already received considerable attention before they came into Botaneiates' service after his rebellion. Serving under his brother Isaac in the east and playing a pivotal role in the capture of Roussel of Bailleul, Alexios Komnenos was enjoying favorable treatment by the emperor, only to displease Botaneiates' entourage:

> He took the two brothers to his heart and looked upon them with joy, sometimes even inviting them to share his table. This enkindled the envy [*φθόνος*] of others against them and most especially that of the two aforementioned Slavonic barbarians, Borilus and Germanus. For seeing the Emperor's goodwill towards the brothers and that the latter remained unharmed by the darts that malice hurled at them, they were consumed with wrath.[232]

[231] Ibid., 243.
[232] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 44; eadem, *Alexias,* 55.

But that was only the beginning because the emperor appointed Alexios the commander of the West and honored him with rank of *proedros*, which only "fanned the flames of their envy [*φθόνος* of the slaves]."[233] Although "the burning envy of others [the slaves] was now growing into a mighty fire," the Komnenos brothers were able to anticipate the schemes of their enemies through Empress Maria, whom they had begun to approach and please for they knew she was also anxious about the future of his son Constantine at the hand of Botaneiates.[234] It is also necessary to remind the reader that one of the purposes of putting all these references together is to show Anna's imagery of envy as a fire consuming everything it touches and growing even greater whenever something favorable happens to one's enemy. Moreover, the envy of the slaves repeatedly appears as a source of argumentation and legitimization for the rebellion of the Komnenoi. Alexios tried to persuade Gregory Pakourianos to support his revolt by showing as a reason the "anger and envy" of the slaves who were now actively trying to blind Alexios and Isaac.[235] When she took refuge with her household in Hagia Sophia, Anna Dalassene likewise justified the disobedience of her sons as a result of "the jealousy felt by others" who could not stand the favorable disposition of Botaneiates for the Komnenoi.[236] Anna's whole discourse on envy and clearly show that it was considered as a feeling so dangerous that it could bring the destruction of anyone and was to be avoided at all costs. It was often referred to as some immaterial and demonic power controlling the conscience of people to the detriment of their adversaries. Anna similarly depicts Alexios Komnenos' ungrateful protégé Nikephoros Diogenes and his brother as the

[233] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 45; eadem, *Alexias,* 56.
[234] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 47; eadem, *Alexias,* 59. On Empress Maria, see Skoulatos, *Les personnages byzantins de I'Alexiade,* 188-92; Garland and Rapp, "Mary 'of Alania'," 91-124; Mullett, "The 'Disgrace' of the Ex-Basilissa Maria," 202-11.
[235] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 51; eadem, *Alexias,* 63.
[236] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 54; eadem, *Alexias,* 66.

victims of envy: "Was there any kind word or deed he [Alexios Komnenos] did not give them? or did he ever neglect their future? and yet envy [*φθόνος*] cast its arrows at them and would not let them rest."[237]

We can finally end the discussion of the envy with a couple of proverbs by Michael Attaleiates, who skillfully places them in his account with reference to the Bulgarian rebel leader Basil:

> It did not occur to him that he was, as the saying has it, "turning a sword against himself," proving that the proverb is true which says that "envious resentment [*φθόνος*] doesn't even know its own good." For in trying to deprive another man of victory, with lack of foresight he took no thought for his own safety." .... "Thus, at the very end he learned that envious resentment [*φθόνος*] is always cut short, as the proverb has it, and it genders the destruction either of the one who has engendered it or of those who accompanied him.[238]

We have so far tried to understand what rebellion really meant to our authors by examining certain *topoi* that stood out as good examples of their points of view on subversion. Therefore, we have seen that even though negligence on the side of the emperors could be a strong motive for indignant subjects, raising the banner of rebellion necessitated a more valid justification rather than the whims of an underappreciated general. On the other hand, depicting the rebel as an ungrateful upstart was another common theme to play with, making it even harder for the readers to identify themselves with the cause of the rebellion. Moreover, rebellion per se was malicious enough but the idea of a pernicious plot to get rid of an emperor through a personal attack could not be appreciated by anyone. That is to say, even

[237] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 225; eadem, *Alexias,* 271.
[238] Attaleiates, *The History,* 67-69.

overthrowing a sovereign had its own -more or less acceptable -ways and denying your opponent the chance to put up a fair fight was far from being chivalric. Yet, no matter how fair you were, rebellion was closely associated with Satan, the chief enemy of the Christians, and his *envious* eye upon the wellbeing of whole humanity. Civil wars, the notorious offspring of rebellions, were thus abominable actions in theory though our histories clearly show that the ideological implications of the concept were far from being able to deter the ambitious from rising up the banner of rebellion. Therefore, this fact leads us to the next main question: how did our authors justify the subversive actions of their heroes in their histories?

The legitimization of rebellions centered upon such important factors as the propagated purpose of the actions, the character traits of the actors, and the metaphysical signs of assent concerning the ultimate goal as well as the popular support. Considering the strong propaganda purpose in the preparation of a historical narrative, it is only natural to observe that the authors did their best to distance the rebels from any accusation of lust for power. For instance, even though he reserves his highest praises for Nikephoros Botaneiates, Michael Attaleiates is also known for his sympathetic portrayal of the emperor Romanos IV Diogenes. Diogenes, even before his ascension to the throne, had caught attention of the imperial circles due to his plans for a rebellion about which we hear from Attaleiates who claims to listen to the details of this attempt from Diogenes himself. Although this confession even included an alliance with the enemies of Rome - "Sauromatai" in this case - Attaleiates approved his bid for the young general was only rightly concerned about the incompetence of the Byzantine rulers:

> Indignant at this and saddened, he [Diogenes] was seriously thinking of rebellion, not, as was later claimed, because he had a passion for power and wanted to enjoy its advantages, but in order to raise up the fallen fortunes of the Romans, for the state was not being governed rationally.[239]

Accused of treason and duly tried, Diogenes was sentenced to death for his plotting. However, this verdict proved to be quite unpopular, because Diogenes was beloved for "his youthful spirit and his nobility," and it was not only his character but physical beauty that forced the Senate to pardon him.[240] Moreover, Attaleiates emphasized that Diogenes' intention was not mere usurpation but demonstration of his love for the salvation of the Christians:

> For this reason everyone prayed that he might rise above this disgrace and be favored with the sovereignty of the Romans. Given, moreover, that the man's goal was not love of self but solely love of his brothers and love of true religion, as we have said, distressed as he was on behalf of the Orthodox who were suffering terribly, the prayers of the people who wished this were answered.[241]

When story focuses on his main hero's ascent, Attaleiates' history turns into a purely black-and-white portrait, a struggle between the good and the evil. Michael VII's reign is depicted as a true dystopia, which is marked by irrationality and tyranny causing only suffering for the people. The passage, aptly placed right before the chapter dedicated to the narration of the rise and origins of Botaneiates, aims at completely alienating the reader from Michael VII and his entourage:

[239] Ibid., 177. On rationality and the imperial ideal, see Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in the Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,* 163-66.
[240] Attaleiates, *The History*, 181.
[241] Ibid.

> 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 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 livelihoods and their resources for living.[242]

The situation was depicted to be so desperate that any action against this unjust rule would be justified and people were in fact daily praying to God for a savior who "would be able to topple the tyrants on the one hand and on the other to return the fortunes of the Romans to a happier state."[243] It is not difficult to guess to whom Attaleiates was referring. Even Botaneiates' appropriation of the imperial insignia by the suggestion of his advisers was "a mighty example of his magnanimity and submission to the public good," implying that the rebel was doing a generous favor to the Byzantines by threatening the state with a civil war.[244] The idea of rising up in rebellion against the tyrants was also utilized by Anna Komnene regarding her father's usurpation of the imperial throne. The plan of the two powerful servants of Botaneiates, Borilos and Germanos, to blind Alexios Komnenos is referred to as a "tyrannous act" and "revolution."[245] The young general was left with no other option than rebelling against the emperor, who was persuaded to get rid of the Komnenos brothers by blinding them. Bryennios further blames Botaneiates for repeatedly sending Alexios into deliberately dangerous missions, wishing that he would die in action or refuse to obey his command, therefore presenting a pretext for

[242] Ibid., 387.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Ibid., 393.
[245] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 41; eadem, *Alexias,* 52.

punishment.[246] These accounts make us acknowledge that Anna's rhetoric composition was strongly marked by force majeure rather than the argument of serving to a higher purpose. That is to say, even though Alexios Komnenos was hailed also as a savior of the Roman people, the overrunning theme in the *Alexiad* regarding Alexios' purpose of rebellion was a genuine concern for the security of his own family. Moreover, Bryennios makes use of the legitimate preoccupation for one's safety against the threats coming from the all-powerful emperor not only for his father-in-law but also for his namesake ancestor. Bryennios is the source informing us about the Varangian guard sent by the eunuch Nikephoritzes to murder Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder. The would-be assassin was foiled in his attempt and lost his nose as a punishment by the order of John Bryennios, the seditious brother of the rebel.[247] Although the disgruntled John Bryennios played the chief role in forcing his brother to revolt against Michael VII, the case in favor of this rebellion was also supported by security measures. Before the attempt on his life, Bryennios had already been accused of plotting rebellion by the sycophants in the palace, who persuaded the emperor to send Eustathios Kappadokes to investigate the charges against the man. The narration of the events leading to the rebellion is meant to convince the reader that Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder was inevitably pushed to act like a rebel under great duress concerning his own safety and the insistence of his brother. Similarly the reluctance of the protagonists to take up arms against the emperor in Constantinople is again used as a theme in the account of Alexios Komnenos' rebellion in Bryennios. Also alerted against the threats concerning his family and himself, Alexios Komnenos was forced by his whole entourage to usurp

[246] Bryennios, *Historiarum,* 61.
[247] Ibid., 217-19.

the throne, which legitimately belonged to him by his right through his uncle the emperor Isaac I Komnenos.[248]

The divine support enjoyed by our protagonists and displayed through various miraculous events, visions, prophecies, omens, and oracles was another significant element in the creation of a favorable subversive rhetoric. Anna Komnene carefully places several mysterious events throughout her narrative to prove that his father was especially protected by some divine power. For instance, one of Nikephoros Diogenes' attempts on emperor's life was supposedly foiled by such an occurrence:

> For while the Emperor slept, the doors were not bolted nor did a guard keep watch outside-so much for the Emperor's habits. On his side Nicephorus was at that moment checked in his undertaking by some divine power. For he saw a maid fanning their Majesties to drive away the mosquitoes from their faces, and 'was seized with a sudden tremor in all his limbs, while pallor overspread his cheeks,' as the poet says, and he suspended the murder till another day.[249]

As we already know Diogenes did not defer from his attempts until he was forced to confess his intentions and blinded, an event again attributed to the protection by "the invincible hand of the Highest" working his plans through miracles.[250] Similarly, the revelation of the Anemas conspiracy was another such episode: "This [murder of Alexios Komnenos] indeed is what those guilty men purposed against him who had done them no wrong. But God wrecked their plans. For somebody revealed the plan

[248] Ibid,, 65: "Constatant que l'armée rassemblée dans cette ville est dans sa majorité au gouvernement de Botaniate, attachée en revanche à sa personne, décidée à le choisir comme basileus, parce que, sous son commandement, elle avait accompli maintes actions d'éclat, que, dans son ensemble, elle le force, malgré qu'il en ait, à se laisser proclamer, il accepte le choix des soldats et revendique l'héritage de son oncle auquel il avait droit."
[249] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 223; eadem, *Alexias,* 269.
[250] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 232; eadem, *Alexias,* 279.

to the Emperor..."[251] These examples might seem like nothing more than zealous exclamations of a religiously minded daughter but Anna Komnene also seemed to truly believe that God had a higher purpose for his beloved subject for the sake of Rome. After his victory against the rebel Bryennios, the young Alexios Komnenos let his vanquished enemy to rest under a nearby tree without even putting any shackles on the bitter man. Quickly falling asleep, Alexios exposed himself as an easy target for Bryennios, who saw a chance to murder his victor with the sword dangling from the tree but was foiled for "God was guarding the Comnenus, like a precious object, for a greater dignity [i.e. emperorship], intending by means of him to restore the fortune of the Romans."[252] Alexios Komnenos' bid on the throne was further established by certain prophecies and visions. In an effort to convince his brother to put on the imperial insignia instead of himself, Isaac Komnenos reminds his brother of the mysterious old man who had prophesized Alexios' emperorship:

> Then Isaac rose and taking the red buskin tried to put it on to his brother's foot; but the latter refused several times until Isaac cried, 'Let me do it, for through you God wishes to restore the dignity of our family.' He also reminded Alexius of the prophecy once addressed to him by a man who appeared to them somewhere near Carpianum as they were returning home from the palace. For they had reached that spot when a man suddenly met them, perhaps belonging to a race higher than mortal, but in any case gifted with very clear insight into the future. From his appearance he seemed to be a priest, with his bare head, grey hair and shaggy beard; he took hold of Alexius' leg and being on foot himself, he dragged down Alexius, who was on horseback, by the car and recited to him this line of David's psalm: 'In thy majesty ride on prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness,' and addressed him by the title 'Emperor Alexius!' With these words which sounded like a prophecy he vanished. .... Now in discussing this openly with his brother he [Alexios] treated the words and incident as a fraud and deception, but in his private meditations upon this man in priestly

[251] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 313; eadem, *Alexias,* 374.
[252] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 20; eadem, *Alexias,* 27.

> garb who had appeared to him, he likened him to the theologian, the Son of Thunder.[253]

This story was provided by Anna as an argument to establish the legitimacy of her father's right on the throne vis-à-vis his brother Isaac, who had also enjoyed considerable support among his partisans. Even after he became emperor, Alexios was not also protected by God but he was also heralded victory against his foes. During another battle against his Norman enemies, it was one of the most venerated saints who proclaimed victory for Alexios:

> At sunset, the Emperor, who had toiled all day long, betook himself to sleep and a vision appeared to him. He seemed to be standing in the church of the Protomartyr Demetrius and heard a voice say 'Do not grieve nor groan, to-morrow you shall conquer.' He thought the voice fell upon his ears from an icon suspended in the temple on which the martyr Demetrius was painted.[254]

As opposed to his wife's religious embellishments Bryennios' drier account was shy from making use of such stories, nevertheless he was a man of his age and provided scarce references of divine support for his characters. For instance, he gave the reason for Alexios' salvation through strong winds of the Sea of Marmara as a result of his prayers to Mary.[255] Alongside with Anna Komnene, Michael Attaleiates also cherished his narrative with metaphysical implications. As Botaneiates was about to advance towards the capital with his rebel forces, an immaterial fire appeared in the sky, which was interpreted as a harbinger of,

[253] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 60; eadem, *Alexias,* 74-5.
[254] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 127; eadem, *Alexias,* 155-56.
[255] Bryennios, *Historiarum,* 199-201.

> a luminous light-bringer from the area of Lampe, who would bring light, mirth, and unspeakable joy to the virtuous and those who were favorably disposed toward him, while himself becoming the flame of a true fire that would utterly burn and consume those who plotted and took a stand against him. In this symbolic interpretation they were not wrong, as the account will show.[256]

While this phenomenon was interpreted as such by the experts of these matters, Attaleiates provided his own interpretations of the events as well. For him, the timing of Bryennios' rebellion was carefully chosen by God in order to ease the way of Botaneiates against his enemies: "If we were to tell the truth, however, the All-Seeing Eye was directing the imperial office to a different person, one worthy of it, through the struggles and confrontations of other people."[257] The same conviction was repeated upon Roussel's victory over John Bryennios as well: "Rouselios fought with the army of Bryennios' brother and routed it decisively, the timing of the event surely testified that even this victory was offered to Botaneiates by God."[258] As a result, the imperial forces and resources were so diminished due to their struggle against Bryennios' forces that Botaneiates would not need to fight a battle to seize the throne. Bryennios, one of the chief antagonists in Attaleiates' history, also witnessed omens and mysterious happenings, quite understandably of malignant nature. The collapse of his tent, caused by "invisible hands", was quickly "interpreted by those with insight as a sure sign of his demise."[259] What is more, this omen was preceded by a lunar eclipse, which was also a clear sign of his downfall, for "the moon reveals the fate of rebels and that changes in its condition announce changes in the rebel's fate."[260] Attaleiates claimed to hear this statement from the astronomers and experts

[256] Attaleiates, *The History*, 441.
[257] Ibid., 445.
[258] Ibid., 491.
[259] Ibid., 523.
[260] Ibid.

of these matters, and in fact he did not come up with this idea himself. The association of the moon and its movements with the fate of rebels was the part of astrological knowledge handed down through generations. We can find the same information in a treatise of the eighth-century astrologer Theophilos of Edessa dedicated to decisions concerning war and sovereignty by interpreting the positions of heavenly bodies. Likening the challenged sovereign to Sun and the would-be usurper to Moon, Theophilos establishes a strong connection between the strength of Moon's light and the power possessed by the rebel.[261] Aside from including these omens into his account, Attaleiates also presented a passage, which showed that Botaneiates himself was aware of similar prophesies and in fact professed belief in them. In a long monologue purportedly addressed by the emperor Botaneiates to the captured rebel leader Bryennios, he reproaches his adversary for misinterpreting the prophetic verses on the issue of the imperial succession: "O this insanity of yours, you did not even understand this simple thing, that those study these matters know that the letter *n* in the verses is single and not double."[262] This was a reference to a prophecy that the name of the future emperor shall include only one letter N as in Botaneiates unlike the name of Bryennios.

Although reinforcing one's claim on the throne by enlisting the support of Providence was apparently a significant rhetorical tool, the realization of a usurpation project basically depended on the support one could muster among earthly subjects. More specifically the person aspiring for the imperial throne had to ensure the backing of the aristocracy and soldiery. However, common people often shared arguably an equal role in the process leading to the proclamation of a new ruler and no other population than that of the Reigning City played a more decisive part at the

[261] Zuretti, *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum,* vol. 11.1, 255-9.
[262] Attaleiates, *The History,* 535.

end of the day. Although the elitist disdain felt toward common people by most of the Byzantine writers was no secret at all, the popular support for a usurper could also be employed as a thematic argument. Prominent features attributed to common people were that they were easy to manipulate, prone to change their minds, and predisposed to violent acts during turbulent events. For instance, Anna Komnene expresses her predicament about the fickleness of the Amaseians in their dealings with Alexios Komnenos regarding the handover of the rebel Roussel but the young general proves himself to be quite resourceful by pretending to blind the Norman commander, for he was "well aware that a crowd is wont to change its mind in a twinkling, especially if urged on by malicious men..."[263] Anna also provides a more enlightening description of the common people when she refers to the crowd gathered around the rebel Basilakes:

> Besides other admirable qualities, this man [Basilakes] had that fine physique, strength of arm, and dignified appearance by which rustics and soldiers are most attracted. For they do not look through to the soul, nor have a keen eye for virtue, but they stop at the outward excellencies of the body, and admire daring, and strength, speed in running, and size, and consider these as fit qualifications for the purple robe and diadem.[264]

This passage stands out as a good example to get some insight into appreciating the idealization of common people for a woman hailing from the highest aristocracy. By these words, though she acknowledged the importance of physical qualifications, Anna Komnene clearly expressed her dislike for the superficial "rustics" and soldiers, who were unable to detect the real virtues of a man but supported troublesome rebels

[263] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 11; eadem, *Alexias,* 16.
[264] Komnene, *The Alexiad,* 21; eadem, *Alexias,* 28.

causing considerable problems for the empire. Nevertheless, no matter how much she despised them, Anna did not refrain from including in her history the song, which was sung in colloquial language by the Constantinopolitans for Alexios Komnenos:

> Hence it was that the populace, who approved of Alexius' spirit and shrewdness, wove a little song to him about these occurrences, composed in their own popular dialect, and it very cleverly strikes up the prelude of the affair and accentuates his prescience of the plot against him and his consequent actions. In its original words the song ran thus:
> "τὸ σάββατον τῆς τυρινῆς χαρεῖς Ἀλέξιε ἐννόησές το
> καὶ τὴν δεθτέραν τὸ πρωϊ ὕπα καλῶς γεράκιν μου"
>
> The meaning of that popular song is roughly this, 'On the Saturday named after cheese, bravo to you for your shrewdness, Alexius! But on the Monday after the Sunday you flew away like a high-flying hawk, out of the nets of the barbarians.'[265]

The tendency of the crowds for supporting uprisings in an effort to take advantage of the opportunities presented during and after a regime change also finds clear statement in Bryennios' account of Botaneiates' rise to power in Constantinople.[266] On the other hand, Attaleiates interprets the popular support enjoyed by Botaneiates as an opportunity for legitimization. Although even Bryennios implied that Botaneiates received the backing of the Constantinopolitans facilitating his acclamation, Attaleiates did not miss any chance to emphasize this situation. One could understand the support of an ill-pleased populace but Attaleiates' account often lost its credibility due to his claims that even the enemies of the empire submitted to the rebel. According to his eulogizer, stationed in the East Botaneiates took immediate action against the invading Turks right after his coronation by his

[265] Komnene, *The Alexiad*, 52; eadem, *Alexias*, 65.
[266] Bryennios, *Historiarum*, 55: "Le mal en effet a toujours coutume chez les hommes de triompher plutôt que le bien, et d'ailleurs la foule aussi est encline à se réjouir de telles révolutions."

supporters: "First, he stunned all the Huns who overrunning the east, filling them with shock and awe, so that throngs of Turks started flocking to him in the humble obedience of servants."[267] Furthermore, having heard his coronation the Constantinopolitans began to escape the capital to find succor under Botaneiates, even though all the roads leading to the rebel base were controlled by Turks. But then, another miraculous event seems to help the partisans of Botaneiates:

> And the greatest and most inexplicable event - at any rate, it was utterly unforeseen - was that the Turks, who had by then conquered the entire east, did not hinder the City residents and the farmers who were defecting to him. Some escaped the notice of the enemy with the help of an invisible power, while most did come upon them, but when the Turks heard that they were rushing toward the one who was now emperor, they let them pass unharmed, for they were, against all human expectation, reverently and fondly disposed toward his rule and name.[268]

As much as Attaleiates fantasized about his hero's dealings with Turks, Bryennios provides us with a totally different picture. According to his account, the emperor was quick to strike a deal with the Seljuk ruler Suleiman as soon as he heard about Botaneiates' rebellion. Making his way through Turkish blockade in stealth, Botaneiates was only able to reach Nicaea with a few hundred men thanks to the bribe paid to his pursuers.[269] Let alone enjoying flocks of supporters defecting from the city, Botaneiates barely saved his own life and could not move outside Nicaea until after Michael VII was toppled by the uprising in Constantinople. However, Attaleiates was persistent in his own account even though he was well aware of the

[267] Attaleiates, *The History,* 393.
[268] Ibid., 437.
[269] Bryennios, *Historiarum,* 241.

punishments awaiting defectors and the normal course of action most people pursued during such circumstances:

> For setting aside all fear of the emperor who then reigned in Byzantion, the punishments that would be paid in blood and property, and the reprisals against their closest relatives, fearing neither the travails of the journey nor the multitude of Turks who held the rural areas and watched the roads, many people defected to him on a daily basis, a thing that people would not believed before it actually happened. For no one had ever seen someone leaving the capital for the provinces to join a rebel, even in the days when the enemy was not in control of the entire countryside, setting ambushes on all the roads. Rather it was from the rebels that many usually defected to those holding power in the Imperial City.[270]

Constantinopolitans were facing multiple rebellions on both sides as Bryennios was based with his army in the West and Botaneiates took refuge in Nicaea with his entourage. Separated by the invading Turks by the Sea of Marmara and unhindered by the imperial army, Bryennios' forces had the advantage of showing up before the gates of Constantinople under his brother John in order to force the citizens into surrender. We have already seen that this episode ended with the withdrawal of the rebel forces as they further antagonized the citizens by burning the houses outside the city. In Attaleiates' account, this part finds a different interpretation for he states that the rebel army failed, "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."[271] While Attaleiates likened the coronation and pretensions of Bryennios to "the impetuousness and immaturity of monkeys and cranes," Botaneiates' arrival to the

[270] Attaleiates, *The History*, 435.
[271] Ibid., 459.

city would be regarded as the Second Coming.[272] The pro-Botaneiates conspiracy in the city that forced the emperor Michael VII to abdicate also received unusual comments from Attaleiates. He vividly described the events leading to the proclamation of his protagonist as he portrayed the unwavering and unconditional support enjoyed by the future emperor:

> While the emperor [Michael VII] was at the Blachernai palace on Sunday, presiding and holding court with the entire Senate in attendance, those who were attending services in the great 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 Botaneiates emperor. .... 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.[273]

It was indeed almost an obligatory action for a rebel to send letters promising honors, ranks and money in order to secure the support of the people. Attaleiates further stated that both Michael VII and Nikephoros Bryennios resorted to this strategy only to be fiercely rejected by the citizenry. The cynical would find it difficult to believe that Botaneiates was able to muster such strong affection among the Constantinopolitans even though he was simply isolated by Turks in Nicaea without an army in his command and was not endeavoring in any way to secure the loyalty of the citizens even then. Attaleiates explains the popular support as an inspiration from God thanks to the virtues of the rebel: "Wherever, then, the divine displayed its approval of a man's virtue and honesty, there also the inclination and desire of all

[272] Ibid., 453.
[273] Ibid., 467-9.

people were directed, as they had reliable signs of the man's nature and deeds."[274] Aside from the common people, the narrative also tries to ensure the reader that the support in favor of the man was universal among all ranks of the society and not a product of despair and haste:

> The archpriests assembled and consulted as was appropriate with their archshepherd, the patriach Kosmas, regarding what was happening, but they also added their deciding vote in favor of Botaneiates, that he should rule as emperor. They did not do this in a flagrant or hasty fashion, out of fear of the emperor [Botaneiates, already addressed as such], but rather they were led to one and the same conclusion by reasoned consideration, rational debate, and a proper mindset, which converged in their proclaimed decision.[275]

The emphasis here on the rationality concerning the process of decision-making is self-explanatory enough, yet mere proclamation was not adequate itself and decisive action was needed which materialized soon afterwards. Probably following the news of Roussel's victory over John Bryennios' forces, an uprising broke out as "the leading men in the City and all who belonged to the Roman race divided themselves into political subunits as though marshaled by the heavenly hand of God, and spontaneously appointed their regimental commanders."[276] Attaleiates informs us that it was Botaneiates' soldiers, who had managed to cross from Asia, infiltrated the city, and deposed Michael VII neutralizing his guards. Although our author claims that the whole operation was accomplished without even a nosebleed - again a sign of divine approval for him, - he nevertheless provides the information that the partisans of Botaneiates caused some tumult in the capital. As is the case often, it is

[274] Ibid., 469.
[275] Ibid., 471.
[276] Ibid., 493.

quite difficult to take Attaleiates' words for granted in this matter, considering the high probability of violence such social incidents might engender. We also learn that upon the capture of the palace immediate measures were taken considering the guards, markets and fleet, reinforcing the idea that the things were likely to get out of control, probably resulting in massive looting and bloodshed unlike Attaleiates' claims of a smooth transition of power.[277] Moreover, the arrival of Botaneiates took at least three days as the citizens were sending letters "in submissive terms" to the man without a proper army, a truly unusual denouement after all:

> This was considered by everyone most extraordinary, nor did anyone know of such a thing happening in the past or of any history book that recorded it, namely that the Reigning City would be bereaved of its ruler and deem no one worthy of rule but one coming from the outside who was advancing with imperial confidence.[278]

So much for the acclamation of Nikephoros Botaneiates, who was "chosen emperor by the entire assembly of the Senate, the synod, and the people," only to be toppled by a much younger and vigorous general shortly after.[279] One last *topos* to be mentioned concerning the propaganda of legitimacy is the ancestral rights enjoyed by the rebels in order to justify their subversive actions. A person could be a paragon of virtue thanks to his bravery, magnanimity, valor, piety, military prowess and skills but there was something impossible to change or acquire unless he had a crafty genealogist at hand: his lineage. Possessing an illustrious surname or boasting a few emperors among the ancestors could be of great help in one's claim to the throne or at

[277] Ibid.
[278] Ibid., 495.
[279] Ibid., 543.

least provide some pompous writing material for the encomiasts.[280] Our sources proved to be no exception in this matter either. Although his account was also meant to serve as justification for his predecessor's rebellion, Nikephoros Bryennios could come up with prominent names only on his wife's side. Anna Komnene's great-uncle Isaac I Komnenos was the first emperor to rise from the Komnenoi as a result of a successful rebellion but he bequeathed the throne to his co-conspirator Constantine Doukas, whose line ended with Botaneiates' uprising. When Alexios Komnenos rose in rebellion this time, the emperor Botaneiates had neither manpower nor resources to resist the young rebel and capitulated without much ordeal. This situation was given as a sign of Botaneiates' acknowledgment of Alexios' right on the throne through his uncle Isaac.[281] Furthermore, Alexios Komnenos' ties with the Doukas family through his marriage to Irene Doukaina was also utilized as a source of legitimization, for the Doukai were supposedly an ancient family sharing blood with Constantine the Great and boasting the first dux of Constantinople in their lineage, hence their eponymous family name.[282] Botaneiates was thus eliminated by comparison of ancestry but Michael Attaleiates came up with a more glorious version of his family tree highlighting the significance of lineage as a factor in legitimacy. The family of Botaneiates was claimed to have originated from the house of Phokades, which prospered for ninety-two generations and produced such prominent figures as the tenth-century emperor Nikephoros II Phokas. Fully aware of the importance of establishing a link with the founders of the Reigning City, Attaleiates not only associated the Phokades with Constantine the Great but also

[280] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, 102-104.
[281] Bryennios, *Historiarum*, 67: "Au contraire, celui-ci [Botaneiates] aussi, reconnaissant le droit à l'empire que le Comnène avait hérité de sa famille, dépose le pouvoir sans le lui disputer. Il ne voulait point prendre les armes ni combattre pour le garder, parce que sa coscience, depuis le début, le tourmentait et l'accablait pour deux raisons : il n'avait aucune attache avec le pouvoir, tandis qu'Alexis Comnène y prétendait par son lignage."
[282] Ibid.

claimed a share from the ancient Roman history by making the ancestors of Botaneiates the descendants of the famous patrician family Fabii.[283] Our author also did not fail to remind his readers that another glorious Roman family, the Scipiones, stemmed from the Fabii; altogether these families boasted such figures as Scipio Africanus, the victor over the invincible Carthaginian general Hannibal, Scipio Asiaticus, the conqueror of Asia Minor, and Aemilius Paulus, the conqueror of Macedonia ruled by the descendants of Alexander the Great himself.[284] Attaleiates also dedicated pages for the accomplishments of Nikephoros II Phokas against the enemies of the empire, most notably the conquest of Crete in 961, and the less illustrious deeds of Botaneiates' father and grandfather.

In the first part of this chapter, we have tried to understand the connotations and implications of rebellion for our three authors by analyzing the various *topoi* utilized throughout their narratives. Then, the second part was dedicated to the investigation of the literary strategies put to use in order to legitimize certain acts of subversion. Although the authors seemed to share certain tenets and arguments in building up their rhetorical structures, some dissimilarities and distinct preferences also stood out. We can argue that the most important factor in justifying a rebellion was a rightful purpose. For instance, Michael Attaleiates applauded the conspiracy of his lesser hero Romanos Diogenes before his accession to the imperial throne in the name of the glory of Christian religion and Rome. On the other hand, the story of his chief protagonist Nikephoros Botaneiates was portrayed as a struggle between pure good and evil, in which Botaneiates was hailed as some divine savior for the Byzantine people against the dreadful tyranny of those ruling in the imperial city. In both cases, the subversive thoughts were for the sake of greater good and altruistic

[283] Attaleiates, *The History*, 395-99.
[284] Ibid., 399-401.

purposes as they would be rightfully justified.[285] On the other hand, a different tendency dominated the narrations of Anna Komnene and Nikephoros Bryennios. Although Anna implied in a singular passage that her father's rule was meant as a salvation for the empire by God, she and her husband rather highlighted the compelling circumstances leading to the rebellions of their heroes. The cases of both Alexios Komnenos and Nikephoros Bryennios the Elder were constructed upon the importance of personal safety against the threats originating from the imperial palace. The characters were portrayed as the victims of capricious emperors and their malicious advisers and left with no other choice than rebelling against the tyrannical conspiracies aimed at their destruction. However, a rightful purpose was supposed to be supported by signs of divine approval. In this case, Attaleiates and Anna Komnene stood out as skilful users of this argumentation by their endeavors to establish an image that their heroes were chosen, guided and protected by God and his holy agents during their struggles in capturing the imperial throne. Another source of support for the rebel, an even more tangible one, was the blessing of common people. While Anna Komnene and Nikephoros Bryennios, members of the imperial aristocracy as opposed to Michael Attaleiates, not only ignored to enlist the argument of popular support in their narrations but also did not shun from displaying their disdain for the population; Attaleiates went to great lengths to build an image of universal acceptance inspired by divine assent and enjoyed by Botaneiates. He was also the most elaborate when it came to making use of pedigree in support of the claims on the throne. Although Bryennios' history also contained such justifications in praise of Anna Komnene's both paternal and maternal ancestors, Attaleiates stood out by dedicating pages to the deeds of the glorious predecessors of Botaneiates

[285] Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic*, 88: "And not only of the *populus*, rebels too could appeal to the higher law of the common good of the republic when they set aside the laws of treason and their own oaths of loyalty."

reaching far back into the antiquity of the Roman Republic. As a conclusion, we can observe some common themes favored by our authors even though by differing popularity. While Bryennios' account might strike the reader as the driest and plainest among the three, we have seen in fine detail that he and Anna Komnene nevertheless betrayed their aristocratic prejudices even in their rhetorical argumentation of rebellions. On the other hand, Michael Attaleiates proved himself to be by far the most resourceful and diligent writer in our study by putting into use every bit of support in structuring his narration and further elaborating it by vivid imagery and verbiage.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Rebellion, especially with the purpose of overthrowing the imperial head of state, was considered within the relatively broad notion of treason, an exceptionally heinous crime in Roman legislation, and this conception survived for many centuries leaving a strong impact on Byzantine political ideology. The *Basilika,* the monumental legal code initiated by the order of the Macedonian emperor Basil I on the basis of the sixth-century Justinianic *Corpus Juris Civilis,* specifically dealt with the plots conspired against the emperors and prescribed the most severe punishments of death and confiscation for the offenders. Moreover, the guilt of the conspirators was supposed to taint the dignity and cripple the livelihood of their successors by depriving them of their rightful inheritance and compelling them to vindicate the name of their predecessors if necessary. The charge of treason and the motive to bring any conspiracy were matters of such tremendous importance that even certain members of the society like slaves, freedmen, soldiers, and women -otherwise debarred from the right of bringing accusation of treason before courts- were allowed to do so concerning this particular issue.

Even the more concise and straightforward legal code from the eighth century, the *Ecloga,* prepared by the order of the emperor Leo III with the promise of mollifying the severity of the ancient laws for the sake of Christian philanthropy, kept the death penalty intact for conspirators against the emperor, highlighting the crime as an assault on the Christian state itself. However, the analysis of the application of these very laws in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a most turbulent period when the Byzantine rulers would be expected to resort to more drastic

measures against the increasing number of usurpers, revealed a fundamentally different picture. First of all, it is already well known that by the eleventh and twelfth centuries the capital punishment for treason had mostly been replaced by mutilation, specifically by blinding, exile, and confiscation in Byzantium. Even though the use of mutilation could be abused to be fatal in some cases, the practice was generally aimed to effectively deny the blinded person any chance to sit on the throne and urge the likeminded people to take a lesson from this miserable state. Although the concept of imperial oikonomia, discussed in this study as the underlying tenet of thought encouraging the emperors to be lenient toward the wayward subjects, was heavily influenced by Christian philosophy, the love of philanthropy on the part of imperial rulers could not be singled out as the sole reason for a change in penal practices. As it has been argued, unless they posed a life-threatening danger, the emperors tended to shun from delivering irreversible penalties to the offenders, considering the fact that the authors of rebellions overwhelmingly belonged to the aristocracy. Therefore, diplomatic measures were often put to use through dispensation of amnesties or even rewards and honors with the purpose of avoiding the further alienation of the strong families already disgruntled at the imperial majesty. It has also been noted that our authors often preferred to keep silent, point their fingers at someone else rather than their protagonists or go to great lengths for justification when a decree was inevitably pronounced for the blinding of the captured rebels. Therefore, the imperial oikonomia must be understood not merely as a show of mercy by the emperor against defeated enemies but the careful administration of the powerful subjects very likely to turn into a threat if treated indignantly.

Promoting the image of a merciful and magnanimous ruler was an important subject for imperial propaganda; however, the real pursue of clemency could be more practical than emanating a lofty image. The emperors often needed every able man and available resource against the abundance of their internal and external enemies, and this required the conciliation of former plotters and rebels -mostly capable generals and aristocrats of respectable means- by the succeeding rulers. Recalling prominent offenders from exile with extra honors and rewards had become almost a requirement for the new emperors to bolster their fragile positions on the throne, though this policy could sometimes backfire for maintaining the fluent loyalties of the ambitious and humiliated subjects was a delicate issue. Nonetheless, the relevant discussion has put weight on the argument that the Byzantine rulers displayed the tendency to take this risk to reintegrate their subversive subjects, providing themselves with extra manpower and morale during hard times as well as contributing to their image as benevolent rulers.

The discussion of the subversive terminology encountered in the three primary sources analyzed in this study revealed a wide range of lexical items with reference to open and covert forms of sedition in Byzantine literature. Discussed with regard to the methods, purposes, and actors of the events, the manipulation of the semantic nuances of these specific terms proved to play a major part in constructing an effective propaganda. While some of them contributed more to our understanding of the Byzantine religio-political ideology, the examination of other terms helped to create an awareness of certain discrepancies between Greek words and their seemingly synonymous modern translations. However, the detailed examination of one term, *ἀπονοία*, by far the most potent and ambivalent word with stronger connotations than the rest of the vocabulary, revealed the close association of the

word with barbarians and heretics. Preferably translated as "rebellious folly" and differentiated from bare madness or foolishness, this particular word enabled the authors to mix a judgmental and even a religious tone to their narrative and stood out as the perfect term to define a seditious action originating from a mindset of arrogance and unreason.

The idea of rebellion was a concept difficult to idealize due to the strong influence of the Byzantine political ideology that acknowledged the imperial ruler as the earthly representative of Jesus Christ. This only made it necessary to understand the exact connotations of rebellion for our authors before laying out their strategies in coping with the challenge of justifying certain subversive actions in their histories. A prevailing cause for rebellion was the negligence of the emperors towards their deserving subjects, which was perceived as a source of injustice pushing the members of aristocracy into rebellion. However, what might strike the reader as intriguing was the fact that the clandestine methods in seizing the imperial power were less preferable than all-out warfare. Understandably, in an era when the military virtues of the leaders were more and more applauded, the insidious plots against the person of the emperor were regarded even more treacherous than blatantly defying his supremacy.

The concept of subversion was also subject to colorful literary devices and our authors were quite capable in establishing strong associations between rebellion and mental sickness that must be treated carefully by the rightful ruler. The medical connotations were also extended into analogies from mythological and biblical times, enriching the symbolism and imagery of the anti-subversive discourse. However, arguably the most prevalent figure to be associated with rebellion and troubles in general was Satan, the archenemy of the Christians, who was perceived as the chief

cause of discord among the believers and identified with the personification of a very powerful notion in Byzantine ideology: envy (*φθόνος*).

When it came to the justification of rebellion itself, the righteousness of the purpose of the rebellious persons' actions was the prominent theme among our historians. One could and should only raise the banner of rebellion for the sake of the Roman state and the Christian religion. To highlight this idea, the authors often endeavored to portray the opponents of their heroes as tyrants oppressing their subjects and thus deserving their demise. The actions of such tyrannous rulers, especially against the members of Byzantine aristocracy, engendered legitimate preoccupations for safety, that is to say, endorsement for rebellion. An indispensible argument to rally support for such a cause was enlisting the support of God by seasoning the narrative with various miraculous events, visions, prophecies, omens, and oracles. However, the popular support inspired by divine assent thanks to the virtues of the rebel could practically be the necessary force behind any uprising against the emperor in Constantinople, even though the common people were widely disdained by the aristocrats for their alleged inclination for manipulation and violence. On the other hand, the pedigree of the aristocratic competitors for the throne could play a substantial role in establishing a claim on the throne, even more so if they could come up with a link stretching back to the founders of the imperial city.

Even though this study has denied any claim of comprehensiveness with regard to time and material at the beginning, we have seen in the end that the careful selection of three primary sources has yielded a wealth of information and insight to work with. Differing much in their styles and richness, our authors yet proved their resourcefulness in dealing with such a controversial issue as rebellion through their

endeavors to fence off the claims of usurpation against their heroes. Therefore, it is clear that no matter how prevalent and popular it may be, the discussion of subversion in Byzantium still promises to be a fertile ground for the ones willing to look at the issue from different perspectives.

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