

CITIES, CITIZENS AND SIEGES IN THE BALKANS, 976-1018¹

The last quarter of the tenth and the first decades of the eleventh century were marked by the long — and at times rather vicious — struggle between the Byzantine Empire under Basil II and the Bulgarians of Tsar Samuel and his successors.² Unlike previous wars between the First Bulgarian Empire and the Byzantines, the military operations that took place between 976 and 1018 were characterized by an absence of pitched battles (possible due to the reduced military capabilities of Samuel's army, especially when compared to the combat effectiveness of the armies of Khan Krum or Tsar Symeon)³ and an abundance of raids, ambushes and sieges.⁴ It is to the latter that we propose to focus our attention. The aim of this paper is to analyze the way in which the urban centers of Byzantium's Balkan provinces (particularly those to the west and south of Thessaloniki) fitted into the strategic plans of both Basil II and Samuel, as well as to examine the role of the inhabitants of those cities, both as participants to the war and as victims of it.

Our main narrative source for the period in question is John Skylitzes' *Σύνοψις ἱστοριῶν*, composed at the end of the eleventh century; included in it are a number of interpolations added to the text by Michael, bishop of Devol, in 1118.⁵ The so-called *Στρατηγικὸν* of Kekaumenos, written two or three decades before the *Synopsis Historion*, is particularly valuable to military historians, since the author's

¹ I would like to thank the organizers of the International Symposium NIS AND BYZANTIUM XIV, and in particular Ms Ana Mišić and Dr Miša Rakocija, for their cordial invitation and gracious hospitality.

² On the Byzantine-Bulgarian war of 976-1018 see the relevant chapters in P. Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier. A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900-1204*, Cambridge 2000, 58-79, and Catherine Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976-1025)*, Oxford 2005, 487-502.

³ Useful insights regarding the character of Samuel's state may be found in the monograph of S. Pirivatrić, *Самуилова држава. Обим и карактер*, Belgrade 1997.

⁴ P. M. Strässle, *Krieg und Kriegsführung in Byzanz. Die Kriege Kaiser Basileios' II. Gegen die Bulgaren (976-1019)*, Cologne 2006, is an invaluable study of the war between Basil II and Samuel from a military perspective.

⁵ John Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historion*, ed. I. Thurn, *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 5), Berlin – New York 1973. For an in-depth analysis of that part of Skylitzes' work which deals with the reign of Basil II, see Holmes, *Basil II*, 66-239.

grandfathers and other family members had served in the Byzantine-Bulgarian war — in fact, they had fought for both sides.⁶ Finally, a piece of military literature that includes instructions on withstanding enemy assaults against a city, known by the Latin title its first editors gave it: *De obsidione toleranda*. It is usually attributed to the literary circle of Constantine Porphyrogenitus; however, as I have endeavored to show elsewhere, internal evidence overlooked by most researchers point to a later date of composition, sometime during the last quarter of the tenth century. Therefore, references to Bulgarian enemies contained in the text are possibly based on personal observation, either by the author himself or by his informants.⁷

There is sufficient evidence in the sources to indicate that blockade was the main siege technique employed by Samuel's armies against the Byzantine cities of the Balkans. This is not to say that Bulgarian siegecraft at the end of the tenth century was technologically backward or that the Bulgarians were either unable or unwilling to assault enemy fortifications. Moses, Samuel's brother, was killed during the siege of Serres (probably in 976) by a stone thrown from the wall according to Skylitzes' main text or, as Michael of Devol would have it, during a skirmish with the Byzantine commander's troops; either version is compatible with a Bulgarian attack that had reached the city walls.⁸ In 1018, Ivan Vladislav (Samuel's nephew) lost his life in a similar skirmish under the walls of Dyrrhachion (modern Durrës).⁹ As for the use of complex siege engines by the Bulgarians, the narrative sources are silent on the matter, although both Skylitzes and Kekaumenos relate incidents which show that Samuel's troops were at least able to employ defensive counter-measures against Byzantine machines.¹⁰ Furthermore, a passage in the *De obsidi-*

⁶ Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, ed. G. G. Litavrin, *Советы и рассказы. Получение византийского полководца XI века*, Moscow 2003 (revised version of the 1972 edition). An online edition of the Greek text, with English translation and commentary by Charlotte Roueché, may be found in <http://www.ancientwisdoms.ac.uk/library/kekaumenos-consilia-et-narrationes>; the Introduction includes all available information on the author and his family.

⁷ The Greek text has been edited by Hilda van den Berg, *Anonymus de obsidione toleranda*, Leiden 1947; van den Berg's edition is republished, with English translation and commentary, in D. F. Sullivan, "A Byzantine Instructional Manual on Siege Defense: The *De Obsidione Toleranda*", in J. W. Nesbitt (ed.), *Byzantine Authors: Literary Activities and Preoccupations. Texts and Translations dedicated to the Memory of Nicolas Oikonomides* (The Medieval Mediterranean 49), Leiden – Boston 2003, 139-266. The text mentions (van den Berg 56, 68-69) the term *chiliarchia* (also known as *taxiarchia*), a thousand-man infantry brigade that appears in the 960s (E. McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century* [Dumbarton Oaks Studies 33], Washington, D.C. 1995, 203-204; J. F. Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine Worlds 565-1204*, London 1999, 115-117); it also seems to refer to Bulgarians as the empire's current enemies (52, 10; 62, 17). This indicates that the *De obsidione toleranda* was compiled not in the second quarter of the tenth century, as previous editors had proposed (cf. Sullivan, "Instructional Manual", 139-141), but most probably in the 990s: see Ch. G. Makrypoulias, "Η χρονολόγηση του *De obsidione toleranda*", in *Γ' Συνάντηση Βυζαντινολόγων Ελλάδος και Κύπρου*, Rethymnon 2002, 52-54.

⁸ Skylitzes, 329, 81-85 and cf. the *apparatus criticus* regarding ll. 81-82.

⁹ Skylitzes, 357, 54-60 (his death is described in ll. 57-59, yet another interpolation by Michael of Devol).

¹⁰ Skylitzes, 346, 47-48 (the Bulgarian commanders of the besieged fortress of Vidin are able to fight Greek Fire with the use of urine); Kekaumenos, 196, 31-198, 12 (the defend-

one toleranda referring to the inability of Byzantium's contemporary enemies to field little more than a handful of artillery pieces and one or two rams possibly had the late-tenth/early-eleventh century Bulgarian army in mind, an army that seemed to be technologically up to date, but apparently suffered from a lack of resources.¹¹ It was precisely for those reasons that starving a city into submission through a lengthy blockade became the Bulgarians' preferred siege technique.

As a matter of fact, in the tenth century the Byzantine army used similar tactics against the Muslim cities on the eastern frontier, the best-known instance of such a long-range siege being that of Antioch (968-969).¹² Unlike the Byzantines, however, the Bulgarians did not find it necessary to use another town or castle from which to harass the enemy city's supply lines. As they already controlled the mountainous regions of Western Macedonia, the armies of Tsar Samuel could easily use the latter as a base of operations, especially since most of their targets were situated nearby, at the edge of the plains of Thessaly and Thessaloniki. Taking advantage of the upheaval caused by the rebellions of Bardas Skleros and Bardas Phokas, Samuel and his local warlords were able to pick off the Greek cities of the region one by one. A typical example of how this tactic worked — and, thanks to Kekaumenos, one of the best-documented — is the blockade of Larissa: the Bulgarians allowed the citizens to go out and plant crops, but not to harvest them when the time came; as a result, after three or four years the citizens capitulated and were forced to relocate to the Prespai region.¹³

Another characteristic of this method was that the besiegers could take advantage of the weakened state of a city's defenders to attempt what modern strategists would call an "indirect approach", in other words a commando-style operation — in fact, that was exactly how the Byzantines captured Antioch in 969. Kekaumenos refers to the capture of Servia by his maternal grandfather: having unsuccessfully blockaded the city for a whole year, the Bulgarian general finally forced the garrison to surrender when he captured the Byzantine general and his infantry commanders while they were bathing outside the city walls.¹⁴ The anonymous compiler of the *De obsidione toleranda* reports another instance, that of the capture of Kitros: when the besiegers observed a local inhabitant going in and out of the fortified settlement by skirting the *brachiolion*,¹⁵ they simply swam their way into the city and took it.¹⁶

ers of the Bulgarian castle of Moreia manage to undermine Basil II's siege mount by setting fire to its timber supports).

¹¹ *De obsidione toleranda*, 98, 8-13: ἐπειδὴ δὲ, ὡς εἴρημεν, κατὰ πολὺν τὰ καθ' ἡμῶν ἐπλιζόμενα ἔθνη ἠλάττωται, ἢ καὶ οὕτε τοσοῦτον πολεμίων πλῆθος κατὰ τῶν ἡμετέρων πόλεων ἐκστρατεύει, ὥστε καὶ πρὸς ἔργα πλείστα καὶ μηχανὰς παρασκευάζεσθαι, ἑκατὸν τυχὸν πρὸς τὰ ἐξήκοντα μαργανικά ἢ καὶ κριοὺς εἰκοσι, ἢ ἀλλὰ πρὸς μαργανικά μὲν τὸ πλείστον δέκα, κριοὺς δὲ δύο ἢ καὶ τυχὸν ἓνα [...].

¹² Leo the Deacon, *Historia*, ed. C. B. Hase, *Leonis Diaconi Caloënsis Historiae libri decem*, Bonn 1828, 81, 13-82, 22; cf. Skylitzes, 271, 73-273, 31.

¹³ Kekaumenos, 266, 11-268, 16; cf. Skylitzes, 330, 2-9.

¹⁴ Kekaumenos, 190, 18-192, 7.

¹⁵ Also known as *brachialion*, a stretch of masonry projecting into the sea at the point where land and maritime walls meet: Sullivan, "Instructional Manual", 163, n. 64.

¹⁶ *De obsidione toleranda*, 52, 8-11. The capture of Kitros cannot be dated with any kind of precision and ultimately depends on the chronology of the text. Hence, most scholars

A feature of this strategy of attrition that should never be underestimated (especially when we are dealing with siege warfare, which is the type of military operations that has the most noticeable impact on civilians) is that it might lead to many cities being taken not by force, but with the help of a fifth column. Watching their families die of starvation (in Larissa there were even cases of people resorting to cannibalism) might convince local citizens to assist the besiegers in taking the city, thus sparing the inhabitants from further suffering. Ethnic or religious minorities could be counted upon to render assistance to the enemy. This trait was particularly pronounced in border areas, such as those in the Byzantine-Arab frontier.¹⁷

One might argue that the region to the west of Thessaloniki could also be considered a border area during the Byzantine-Bulgarian war of 976-1018; however, although there is some evidence to indicate that inhabitants of local urban centers were often willing to reach some sort of understanding with the Bulgarians,¹⁸ the ethnic composition of the cities in question was not the key factor. Apart from ordinary citizens trying to survive, another reason was the apparent hostility of ruling elites towards Basil II, probably due to the measures he took against the “powerful”, the landed aristocracy from which both Bardas Phokas and Bardas Skleros had originated. Nikolitzas and his family in Larissa, who went from Byzantine officials to Bulgarian warlords almost overnight, and the Chryselioi of Dyrrachion, local dignitaries who not only negotiated with Samuel on equal terms, but also formed a marriage alliance with him, are two characteristic examples.¹⁹

who believe that it was written by someone working for Constantine Porphyrogenitus prefer to attribute the city's capture to the forces of Tsar Symeon during the period 913-924: see Sullivan, “Instructional Manual”, 140, 165; cf. H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, II, Munich 1978, 335, and Strässle, *Krieg*, 42. However, if my view of the *De obsidione toleranda* as a teaching manual composed for the benefit of Basil II is correct, it seems more plausible to date the capture of Kitros to the last quarter of the tenth century, perhaps after the fall of Larissa (986 at the latest) or during Samuel's 996 campaign. Kitros was still in Byzantine hands after neighboring Kolindros had fallen to the Bulgarians, if we are to believe the tale told in the *Life of St Phantinos the Younger* (ed. Enrica Follieri, *La Vita di San Fantino il Giovane* [Subsidia Hagiographica 77], Brussels 1993, 61) of a young slave who was captured by the Bulgarians and taken to Kolindros, then managed to escape on foot to Kitros and from there by boat to Thessaloniki; P. A. Yannopoulos, “La Grèce dans la Vie de S. Fantin”, *Byzantion* 65 (1995) 475-494, here 489, 492-493, dates this episode to 989-991.

¹⁷ G. Dagrón, “Minorités ethniques et religieuses dans l'orient byzantin à la fin du Xe et au XIe siècle: L'immigration syrienne”, *Travaux et Mémoires* 6 (1976) 177-216, here 177-186; E. McGeer, “Byzantine Siege Warfare in Theory and Practice”, in Ivy A. Corfis – M. Wolfe (eds.), *The Medieval City under Siege*, Woodbridge – Rochester 1995, 123-129, here 127.

¹⁸ According to Kekaumenos, 266, 14-31, his namesake grandfather who was the local military commander at Larissa pretended to come to terms with Samuel so that the inhabitants could sow their fields, reap the grain and bring the harvest inside the city. He wrote to Basil II to explain his actions and the emperor seemed to sanction them, although three years later he transferred Kekaumenos to another command and the city fell to the Bulgarians after a long blockade that perhaps lasted into the early 980s. At about the same time (perhaps as early as 976, according to Pirivatrić, *Самуилова држава*, 82-83) the city of Dyrrachion, Byzantium's most important outpost on the Adriatic, was drawn into Samuel's sphere of influence after the latter married the daughter of John Chryselios, the city's unofficial ruler (Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, 61).

¹⁹ On the Chryselios family of Dyrrachion during and after the war of 976-1018 see

We have very little information regarding the early measures taken by the Byzantine government in order to counter the military successes of Samuel. A passage in the *De obsidione toleranda* referring to the distinct possibility that “no *chiliarchiai* are present to garrison the city”²⁰ might be an indication that during the first 15 years of the war, when Basil II was busy trying to retain his throne (not to mention his head), the cities of Byzantine Greece were left to their own devices or to what little assistance local troops (probably including citizens drafted into service)²¹ could provide.

After Basil II managed to weather the rebellions of Bardas Phokas and Bardas Skleros, he turned his attention to the Balkans, campaigning in person there; when he returned to Constantinople in 994, he left behind in Thessaloniki his associate Gregory Taronites with a number of reinforcements from Asia Minor.²² Thessaloniki was not only the base of the forces of the local *doux*, but also the main target of the Bulgarian offensive strategy. A look at a map of the region will show that the cities captured by Samuel’s warlords during the last decades of the tenth century (Larissa, Veroia, Servia, Kitros, Kolindros, Vodena), along with those the Bulgarians either raided or attacked but failed to take (Serres, Hierissos), form a cordon around the outer edge of the plain of Thessaloniki.²³ Apparently Samuel’s strategic goal was to isolate Thessaloniki or at least to neutralize the forces of its *doux*, so that he could have a free hand in the region. Although the troops under the command of Gregory Taronites were probably too strong for the Bulgarians to face in open battle, Samuel managed to decapitate them by using his favorite method, that of “indirect approach”. In 994 or 995 he ambushed and killed Gregory Taronites, taking his son Ashot prisoner; he then went on to capture Taronites’ suc-

Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, 61, 67, 134. Other local aristocrats who were accused (rightly or wrongly) of collaborating with Samuel are mentioned in Skylitzes, 343, 68-76; they included *magistros* Paul Bobos of Thessaloniki, *protospatharios* (John) Malakenos (probably of Sparta), Vatatzes and Basil Glabas (both of Adrianople). On Skylitzes’ passage see Holmes, *Basil II*, 107-109. For a general treatment of political elites during Basil II’s reign see eadem, “Political Elites in the Reign of Basil II”, in P. Magdalino (ed.), *Byzantium in the Year 1000* (The Medieval Mediterranean 45), Leiden – Boston 2003, 35-69.

²⁰ *De obsidione toleranda*, 56, 67-69: καὶ ἡ ἀρχηγὸς ἕκαστα τάγματα ἡ καθιστᾶν κατὰ τὸν τύπον τῶν χιλιαρχῶν, εἴπερ μὴ εὔρισαν εἰς φυλακὴν τοῦ κάστρου χιλιαρχίαι [...].

²¹ It should be borne in mind, however, that the Eastern Roman Empire’s stance towards armed citizens was nothing if not ambivalent: see Ch. G. Makrypoulas, “Civilians as Combatants in Byzantium: Ideological versus Practical Considerations”, in J. Koder – I. Stouraitis (eds.), *Byzantine War Ideology between Roman Imperial Concept and Christian Religion* (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Denkschriften 452), Vienna 2012, 109-120.

²² On the significance of the military command of Thessaloniki during the war against Samuel and his successors see Bojana Krsmanović, *The Byzantine Province in Change (On the Threshold Between the 10th and the 11th Century)*, Belgrade – Athens 2008, 148-156; cf. Holmes, *Basil II*, 403-409.

²³ See the map in Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, 68; cf. Holmes, *Basil II*, 398, commenting on the strategic significance of the fortified sites of Vodena and Veroia. For the capture of Larissa, Servia, Kolindros (cf. Skylitzes, 344, 95-3) and Kitros, as well as the failed attempt against Serres, see above, nn. 8, 13-14, 16. For repeated Bulgarian raids in the vicinity of Hierissos see Stephenson, *Balkan Frontier*, 60. Veroia fell in 989 (Leo the Deacon, 175, 6-11), while Vodena remained in Bulgarian hands until recaptured by Basil II in 1001 (Skylitzes, 345, 20-26).

cessor, John Chaldos, sometime between 995 and 996.²⁴ Only when Basil II sent Nikephoros Ouranos, newly-promoted to the position of domestic of the Schools of the West, to Thessaloniki did the tide begin to turn in favor of the Byzantines.²⁵

In addition to gathering a central strike force in Thessaloniki, the Byzantine high command also dispatched numerous infantry brigades as garrisons to the various cities under threat. We have already mentioned the fate of the commanders of two such units that had been stationed at Servia. These *taxiarchiai* (or *chiliarchiai*), each comprising 500 light troops (archers, slingers and javelin throwers) and an equal number of heavy infantry, were originally used as field troops in support of cavalry during offensive operations.²⁶ A comparison between the so-called *Praecepta Militaria*, a military manual attributed to Nikephoros Phokas,²⁷ and the *Περὶ καταστάσεως ἀπλήκτου*, a text dating from the last years of the tenth century that contains information on military operations against the Bulgarians,²⁸ may hint at the gradual transformation of the *taxiarchiai* into garrison troops during the Byzantine-Bulgarian war. Whereas the earlier text states that the line infantry in each *taxiarchia* should consist of 400 *hoplitai* or *skoutatoi* (shield-bearing foot soldiers carrying spears) and 100 *menavlatoi* (armed with the *menavlion*, a heavy pike they were trained to employ against enemy armored cavalry),²⁹ the *Peri katas-*

²⁴ Skylitzes, 341, 13-22; 347, 81-82. Chaldos spent 22 years in captivity until released in 1018; Skylitzes, 357, 72-75; cf. Holmes, *Basil II*, 404. It has never been adequately explained how Samuel managed to ambush two successive *doukes* of Thessaloniki so close to their seat of power, on flat terrain that was ideally suitable for Byzantine heavy cavalry and lacked any feature (such as woods or mountains) which the Bulgarians could use to their advantage. A passage in Kekaumenos might provide the answer to that question: in it (286, 27-288, 2) the author advises the Byzantine commander to be on his guard against ambushes that make use of pits in the ground large enough to conceal 300-500 enemy horsemen; those pits, Kekaumenos explains, were dug by “the ancients” so that the earth could be used to erect a mound. Interestingly enough, the compiler of the *De obsidione toleranda*, 62, 13-17, also warns against similar practices on the part of those besieging a Byzantine city, noting that it is “something the Bulgarians customarily do” (Sullivan, “Instructional Manual”, 185). Given all that, and the fact that prehistoric mounds abound in the plain of Thessaloniki (cf. A. J. B. Wace, “The Mounds of Macedonia”, *Annual of the British School at Athens* 20 [1914] 123-132), one is led to the conclusion that both Kekaumenos and the author of the *De obsidione toleranda* had Samuel’s tactics in mind, and that the Bulgarian ruler made skilful use of the terrain around Thessaloniki to strike directly at the head of the Byzantine high command in Thessaloniki.

²⁵ Skylitzes 341, 22-24. The question of whether Nikephoros Ouranos simultaneously held the position of *doux* of Thessaloniki is discussed in *Krsmanović, Byzantine Province*, 52-55; see also Holmes, *Basil II*, 409-410.

²⁶ McGeer, *Byzantine Warfare*, 202-211, 257-280; cf. idem, “Infantry versus Cavalry: The Byzantine Response”, *Revue des Études Byzantines* 46 (1988) 135-145.

²⁷ Edited with English translation and commentary in McGeer, *Byzantine Warfare*, 1-78.

²⁸ The work is edited (as “Campaign Organization and Tactics”) in G. T. Dennis, *Three Byzantine Military Treatises* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 25), Washington, D.C. 1985, 241-335.

²⁹ *Praecepta Militaria*, ch. 1, 75-76 (*hoplitai*); Nikephoros Ouranos, *Taktika* (ed. McGeer, *Byzantine Warfare*, 79-167), ch. 56, 78-79 (*skoutatoi*). On the *menavlatoi*, their armament and tactics, see E. McGeer, “Μενάυλιον - Μεναυλάτοι”, *Δίπτυχα* 4 (1986-1987) 53-57; cf. idem, *Byzantine Warfare*, 209-211, 267-270. For the types of spears used by Byzantine soldiers see T. G. Kolias, *Byzantinische Waffen. Ein Beitrag zur byzantinischen Waffenkunde*

taseos aplektou describes all 500 heavy infantrymen as *hoplitai*,³⁰ while eleventh- and twelfth-century sources use the term *kontaratoi* (“spearmen”) to collectively denote soldiers in the line infantry serving as garrison troops.³¹ Apparently, by the end of the tenth century the use of specialized troops in mobile field operations had taken second place to the need for static garrisons in the beleaguered cities of the Balkan Peninsula.

What is of interest to us here is that many of these infantry units were composed of Armenians — in fact, one of the reasons we assume that thousands of infantrymen were sent as garrison troops in Byzantine Greece is that in 1018 Basil II found numerous prisoners-of-war that had been settled on Bulgarian territory and many of them were Armenian.³² Clashes between Armenian soldiers and local Greek-speakers — either civilians or other servicemen, such as sailors — are documented in contemporary sources;³³ it is only natural to assume that such clashes would have taken place in the Byzantine cities of the Balkans as well. One such indication is the comment of Michael of Devol in an interpolation that refers to the recapture of Vodena (modern Edessa) by Basil II in 1015: he writes that the emperor deported the city’s population and Bulgarian garrison, replacing them with “the so-called Kontaratoi, beastly murderous people, a group of merciless highwaymen”.³⁴ This less-than-favorable attitude towards the region’s imperial defenders could not have been an isolated event.

von den Anfängen bis zur lateinischen Eroberung (Byzantina Vindobonensia 17), Vienna 1988, 191-213 (especially 193-195 on the *menavlion*).

³⁰ *Peri katastaseos aplektou*, ch. 1, 11-12.

³¹ *De obsidione toleranda*, 50, 1-3; 62, 20-21; Kekaumenos, 186, 20-21; 192, 22-23; N. Oikonomidès, *Fiscalité et exemption fiscale à Byzance (IXe-XIe s.)*, Athens 1996, 114-115, 258, 288, 302; A. P. Via, “Byzantine Economic Oppression in Pre-Norman Italy”, in G. G. Steckler – L. D. Davis (eds.), *Studies in Mediaevalia and Americana: Studies in Honor of William Lyle Davis, S.J.*, Spokane 1973, 35-50, here 37. See also the passage cited below, n. 34 (an interpolation by Michael of Devol).

³² Skylitzes, 368, 54-55: *καὶ τῶν ἀλόντων ποτὲ στρατιωτῶν ἦσαν γὰρ πολλοὶ ἔκ τε Ῥωμαίων καὶ Ἀρμενίων ἐν τε Πελαγονίᾳ καὶ Πρέσπᾳ καὶ τῇ Ἀχρίδι ὑπὸ Σαμουήλ κατακισσάμενοι [...].* On the recruitment of Armenians into the ranks of the heavy infantry see McGeer, *Byzantine Warfare*, 183-184, 199-200, 202.

³³ Skylitzes, 275, 88-91 (Easter 967: a clash takes place in Constantinople between Armenians and sailors of the imperial fleet, during which many people die and Sissinios, the City prefect, is almost killed); Leo the Deacon, 64, 22-65, 1 (late spring 967, forty days after the previous incident: in the course of a religious procession, a fight erupts between Armenian soldiers and Constantinopolitans, resulting in the death of many civilians); Skylitzes, 321, 58-61 (977: after doing battle against a division of Bardas Skleros’ rebel army, the victorious imperial troops execute all the Armenian prisoners); *Life of St Lazaros of Mt Galesion*, ed. H. Delehayé, *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, 3, Brussels 1910, 513-514 (early 990s: a band of Armenian soldiers passing through the region of Antioch abduct a peasant girl and it is only when the saint threatens to denounce them to the Byzantine commander that they are persuaded to release her). The Byzantines’ poor opinion of the Armenians serving as guards on the eastern frontier zone is attested to in *Περὶ παραδρομῆς πολέμου*, a military treatise dating from the first years of Basil II’s reign (ed. under the title “Skirmishing” in Dennis, *Military Treatises*, 137-249, here ch. 2, 11-21). On the widespread tensions between Byzantines and Armenians during this period see S. Vryonis, Jr, “Byzantium: The Social Basis of Decline in the Eleventh Century”, *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 2 (1959) 159-175, here 169-175.

³⁴ Skylitzes, 352, 17-19: *ἐξ ἐφόδου ἐλθὼν παρέλαβε τὰ Βοδηνὰ καὶ τοὺς οἰκήτορας*

One final piece of information that might point to tensions between local civilians and Byzantine troops brought from other parts of the empire also relates to the recapture of Vodena in 1015. It would seem that the new garrison was not quartered inside the city walls, where it might be overrun yet again by a rebellious mob; instead, Basil II built two castles in the mountain passes around Vodena, one called Kardia, the other Hagios Elias.³⁵ Interestingly enough, when the emperor finally captured Ohrid, the heart of Samuel's realm, in 1018, and pulled down its fortifications, he took the additional measure of building two castles, called Vasilis and Konstantios, in the vicinity.³⁶ They were clearly meant as tokens of Byzantine rule, and they were taken as such: as soon as Peter Deljan assumed sole leadership of the Bulgarian uprising of 1040, his first act was to order the walls of Vasilis to be demolished.³⁷ The castle was a symbol of imperial dominion and, in a way, so were the cities of the entire region and their citizens: the power that held them, both the walls and the hearts and minds of those who dwelt within them, ruled the Balkans.

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ГРАДОВИ, ГРАЂАНИ И ОПСАДЕ НА БАЛКАНУ, 976-1018

Последња деценија десетог века и прве деценије једанаестог века обележени су борбама између византијског Царства и Бугара. Циљ овог рада је да анализира на који начин су се урбани центри Византије уклапали у стратешке планове Василија II и Самуила. Циљ рада је такође испитивање улоге становника ових градова. Самуилове трупе биле су сасвим солидне, будући да су Бугари преферирали технику опсаде на тај начин да су изгладњивали становнике блокадом града. Пошто су контролисали планинске регионе Западне Македоније релативно лако су могли контролисати и градове.

У изворима су сачувани описи освајања Водена од стране Василија II 1015. године, где се такође помињу зверска убијања, освајања зицина Водена, али и изградња нових резиденција близу фортификација. Када је Василије II најзад освојио Охрид, срце Самуилове државе, 1018. године поново је дошло до градитељских активности. Када је Петар Дељан успоставио владавину, почев од 1040. године било је активности на успостављању нових фортификација. Могло би се закључити да су објекти резиденцијалне намене у једанаестом столећу били симбол царске доминације на Балкану.

ταύτης εἰς τὸ Βολερὸν μετόκησεν, Ῥωμαίους δ' ἀντ' αὐτῶν τῇ πόλει οἰκίτορας ἐναφῆκε τοὺς καλουμένους Κονταράτους, θηριώδεις ἀνθρώπους καὶ φονικούς, ἀνελεήμονάς τε καὶ ὀδοστάτας.

³⁵ Skylitzes, 352, 13-15 and 20-21.

³⁶ Skylitzes, 359, 39-42: *ἄρας δ' ἐξ Ἀχρίδος ἔρχεται εἰς τὴν λίμνην τὴν λεγομένην Πρέσπαν, ἐν τῷ διίεναι τὸ μεταξὺ ὄρος φρούριον οἰκοδομήσας ἀνωθεν τούτου καὶ Βασιλίδα ἐπονομάσας, καὶ ἕτερον ἐν τῇ λεχθείσῃ λίμνῃ τῇ βραχυτέρᾳ, ὃ καὶ αὐτὸ Κωνσταντίον ἐπωνόμασεν* (references to Konstantios' name and location are contained in an interpolation added by Michael of Devol). Basil II's castle-building activities in the region are studied in N. K. Moutsopoulos, "Ο Αυτοκράτορας Βασίλειος στη Δεάβολη και την Πρέσπα", in *ΙΔ' Πανελληνιο Ιστορικό Συνέδριο (28-30 Μαΐου 1993). Πρακτικά*, Thessaloniki 1994, 43-61.

³⁷ Skylitzes, 411, 38.