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SHORT NOTES ON THE PROSOPOGRAPHY OF THE BYZANTINE THEME OF KOLONEIA (PART II)*

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Abstract: This paper presents the case study of Kallistos (reportedly a member of the Melissenos family), one of the Forty-two Byzantine officials captured by the Arabs in the aftermath of the siege of Amorion in 838. The person in question has been recorded in scholarly literature as a military officer active in Koloneia (or, according to other views, in the themes of the Anatolikoi or the Armeniakoi). A closer examination of extant evidence, however, may suggest that he never existed – or at least not as a military commander in Koloneia – and his mention in the sources was the result of a misunderstanding and/or fictional writing related to hagiography, politics, or family prestige.

KOLONEIA THEMASI BİZANS PROSOPOGRAFİSİ ÜZERİNE KISA NOTLAR (BÖLÜM II)

Öz: Bu makale 838 yılında Amorion kuşatmasının ardından Araplar tarafından ele geçirilen kırk iki Bizans yetkilisinden biri olan Kallistos'a (Melissenos ailesinin bir üyesi olduğu bildirilir) ilişkin örnek çalışmadır. Adı geçen kişi bilimsel literatürde Koloneia'da (diğer görüşlere göre Anatolikoi veya Armeniakoi Themalarında) aktif bir askeri subay olarak kayıtlıdır. Fakat mevcut kanıtlar daha yakından incelendiğinde onun hiç var olmadığı - ya da en azından Koloneia'da askeri bir subay olarak bulunmadığı - ve kaynaklarda kendisinden bahsedilmesinin hagiografi, politika ya da aile saygınlığı ile ilgili bir yanlış anlaşılmanın ve/veya kurgusal bir yazının sonucu olduğu belirtilebilir.

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In this second part¹ of the research dedicated to the prosopography of the Byzantine *theme* of Koloneia, I shall present the case study of Kallistos (reportedly a member of the Melissenos family), one of the Forty-two Byzantine officials captured by the Arabs in the aftermath of the siege of Amorion in 838. The person in question has been recorded in scholarly literature as a military officer active in Koloneia (or, according to other views, in the *themes* of the Anatolikoi or the Armeniakoi). A closer examination of extant evidence, however, may suggest that he never existed – or at least not as a military commander in Koloneia – and his mention in the sources was the result of a misunderstanding and/or fictional writing. The present work will bring to attention and analyse the hagiographic and historical sources related to Kallistos and attempt to offer a new perspective on the historical events which they describe.

1. Kallistos Melissenos, *doux* of Koloneia?

The Hagiographic Sources

On August 12, 838, after a long siege, the large Byzantine city of Amorion was taken by the Arabs. Among the captives were 42 Byzantine officials. The Arabs kept them imprisoned for many years, urging them to change their faith in order to save their lives. They all resisted and, as a result, were executed on March 6, 845. A major source for these events is the cluster of hagiographic texts that has come down to

us with the title *Passion of the Forty-two Martyrs of Amorion*.² Only very few names of these martyrs are known through textual evidence but no details about their ranks, area of service or background were recorded. There is a notable exception: a certain Kallistos (Melissenos?), supposedly *doux* of Koloneia,³ is mentioned in one among the several versions of this collective martyrdom. The many differences between this version (Γ – BHG 1213; see below) and all the other texts naturally lead to several questions. And since the origins of the *theme* of Koloneia have been associated with this person's name in scholarly literature, the question on the source's authenticity is naturally of great importance for the history of the area.

The information pertaining to a person named Kallistos Melissenos who served as *doux* of Koloneia does not appear in any source: one of the *Passion's* versions mentions a certain Kallistos, *doux* of Koloneia, and another – a Kallistos Melissenos, *spatharios*. This has led scholars to assume that there was one single person named Kallistos Melissenos (on the *Passion's* versions, see below). This issue is further complicated by the examination of non-hagiographic sources which mention a certain Melissenos, a Melissenos *strategos*, a Kallistos, *patrikios* and *strategos*, and a Kallistos, *tourmarches* (see below). Who

¹ This study is part of my Project on the prosopography of the Byzantine provinces in Northeastern Asia Minor. The Post-Doctoral Research under the title *Mobility of people and families in Byzantium's north-eastern frontier. A contribution to the prosopography of the military and political administration in the Armeniakoi area (7th-11th c.)* was conducted thanks to an IKY scholarship. This research is co-financed by Greece and the European Union (European Social Fund- ESF) through the Operational Programme «Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning» in the context of the project “Reinforcement of Postdoctoral Researchers” (MIS-5001552), implemented by the State Scholarships Foundation (IKY). The Project was carried out under the supervision of Dr. Olga Karagiorgou (Research Centre for Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art, Academy of Athens) from April 2017 to April 2019. I am grateful to both IKY and Dr. Karagiorgou, as well as to Professor

Stephanos Efthymiadis and Dr. Christos Malatras for providing me with relevant bibliography and discussing some issues related to the topic. The first part of my study on Koloneia was published in Charalampakis, 2016: 1-17.

² For a concise overview of the *Passion* see Efthymiadis, 2011: 113-114 and Kotzabasi, 1992: 111-128.

³ *PmbZ* # 3606; Lebeniotis, 2007: 235; McGeer, Nesbitt, & Oikonomides, 2001: 125; Seibt & Wassiliou-Seibt, 2004: 224 all refer to Kallistos Melissenos, *imperial spatharios* and *doux* of Koloneia as a real person. Haldon, 1984: 330, with fn. 1018 and Haldon, 1999: 270-271, also accepts the historicity of a Kallistos, naming him *komes of the scholai, imperial spatharios*, commander of the *tagma of the Ethiopians*, and *tourmarches* of the Anatolikoi. See also Brubaker & Haldon, 2011: 609-610. Toynbee, 1973: 257, does not doubt Kallistos' existence, but is not inclined to accept his command over a *theme*.

was Kallistos, then, and who was Melissenos? Were these names of the same person and if so, what was his military rank indeed – *doux*, *strategos* or *tourmarches*?

The earliest recorded person bearing the name Melissenos was a certain Michael, appointed *strategos* during the reign of Konstantinos V.⁴ Recent research has shown that family names in Byzantium first appeared at that time, i.e. around the second half of the 8th and the very early 9th century.⁵ Although most of those names seem to be nicknames attributed to Iconoclasts by Iconophiles, Melissenos rather reveals an origin from a place called Melissa (Μέλισσα). Such toponyms, albeit rare, were known in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. If, then, one presumes that in the first decades of the 9th century the family name Melissenos existed, is it possible that Kallistos Melissenos was a real person, serving as military officer in Koloneia? The key to understand whether Kallistos (Melissenos?, *doux*?) really existed and if

so, what his role in Koloneia was, is to examine where and how he is mentioned in the *Passion's* various versions (recensions), as well as in other sources. To begin with, one should have an overall view of the recensions, the relations between them and their date.

On the basis of their content, internal structure, language and style, the *Passion's* recensions have been divided by scholars in two groups named A and B. Each recension has survived in one or numerous copies in various manuscripts and has been given two identification codes: one Greek letter and one unique number indicating the entry in the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca* (BHG). Group B is generally considered earlier than group A.⁶ Group B includes the following main recensions: B (BHG 1212), Γ (BHG 1213), P (BHG 1214c), Δ(E) (BHG 1209), and Δ1 (BHG 1210). Recensions B and Γ are closely related to each other, and the same applies to the other three, thus forming two sub-groups inside

	Group		Date	Reference to Kallistos / Melissenos (K. = Kallistos)
	A	B		
Idiomela [H, Θ]			before or after June 847	K. (H: title; 79-80, 82-83, 85-86; Θ: 88-90)
BHG [version]		1212 [B]	perhaps before Jan. 846; definitely before June 847; before the 1213 [Γ]	K. (title only)
		1214c [P]	perhaps before Jan. 846; definitely before June 847; before the 1213 [Γ]	K., <i>protospatharios</i> (159)
		1213 [Γ]	before June 847, or, perhaps, around 900; after the 1212 [B] and 1214c [P]	K., <i>doux</i> (title); K., <i>doux</i> of Koloneia (26, 29); K. (22, 24, 28, 30, 34-35); K., <i>komes of the tagma of the scholai</i> (23); K., <i>imperial spatharios epi ton oikeiakon</i> (25); K., <i>stratiarches</i> (sic, 33); <i>archon of the bandon of the Ethiopians</i> (27)
		1209 [Δ(E)]	between Aug. 847 and 856; perhaps after 858; the earliest ms. is from 890	K. (title); K. Melisseinos (sic), <i>spatharios</i> (50, 58)
		1210 [Δ1]	between Aug. 847 and 856, but also possibly before 847	K. (title); K., <i>spatharios</i> (15)
		1214 [Z]	between 867 and 886 or, perhaps, beginning of the 10 th c.	---
		1214b [K]	probably 10 th c.	--- unpublished, apart from the epilogue, but in general K is similar to Z
		1211 [A]	10 th c.	K. (title only)
	1214a [M]	between the 10 th and 12 th c., probably 12 th	---	

Table 1. The Hagiographic Sources on Kallistos

⁴ *PmbZ* # 5028.

⁵ Kountoura-Galaki, 2004: 247-253.

⁶ Kazhdan, 1986: 152-153, believes that there was a first recension which started with Euodios' text around the year 900, and a second one, developed by

Michael Synkellos around the same time, but probably after that of Euodios. In this paper I share Kotzabassi's view on the early dating of group B, which includes Synkellos' work (although this text was not the earliest one). See Kotzabasi, 1992: 111-128.

group B. The text mentioning Kallistos, *doux* of Koloneia, is Γ (BHG 1213), while that mentioning Kallistos Melissenos, *spatharios* is Δ (E) (BHG 1209). Group A includes the main recensions: Z (BHG 1214), K (BHG 1214b), A (BHG 1211) and M (BHG 1214a), in which the latter shows some differences from the rest, again forming two sub-groups.

recensions are presented in chronologic order, starting from the earliest. The indicated date is the earliest possible, but later dates suggested in scholarly literature have been included as well, whenever necessary.⁷ In the last column on the right I have collected all the references to Kallistos. The designation “K. (title)” means that his name is included in the title of the

work. Sometimes the name appears in the title only, without being mentioned at all in the *Passion* itself. In table 2 I have collected further details about the *Passion*’s versions and their modern editions.

Most of the hagiographic sources’ authors are unknown. Only a few names have survived, such as Michael Synkellos the monk (probably the younger),⁸ author of Γ = BHG 1213; Sophronios (of Cyprus?), author of Δ(E) = BHG 1209; and Euodios the monk, author of Z = BHG 1214. Euodios’ text was later re-worked by Symeon Metaphrastes.

After this brief presentation of the *Passion*’s versions, it is apparent that there are several questions directly related to the problem of Kallistos Melissenos’ historicity, i.e. how old the version Γ is, and the relation of Γ to the earlier versions B and P or to the version Δ, where the name Melissenos is attested.

The two *idiomela* (H and Θ) were dated by Vasiljevskij and Nikitin’ around June 847 or a little later, while Kotzabassi dated them in June 847 the latest.⁹ Be that as it may, they are both among the earliest

BHG	Version	Author/Text	Codex/-ices	Edition
1209	Δ(E)	Sophronios of Cyprus?	D: Vat. Palat. gr. 4; E: Paris. gr. 1447; F: Slavica Macarii Menaeis; G: Paris. gr. 1476; I: Suprasliensis	Vasil’evskij & Nikitin’, 1905: 38-57, 58-60
1210	Δ1		H: Paris. gr. 1534	Vasil’ev’, 1898: 9-17
1211	A	Imperial menologion A	Mosquensis Synod. 183	Vasil’evskij & Nikitin’, 1905: 1-7
1212	B		Mosquensis Synod. 173	Vasil’evskij & Nikitin’, 1905: 8-21
1213	Γ	Michael Synkellos	Mosquensis Synod. 162	Vasil’evskij & Nikitin’, 1905: 22-36
1214	Z	Euodios / Symeon Metaphrastes	numerous manuscripts	Vasil’evskij & Nikitin’, 1905: 61-78; Greek translation: Efthymiadis, 1989
1214a	M		Athens NLG 996	Kotzabasi, 1992: 129-151
1214b	K	Imperial menologion B	Koutloumousiou 23	Kotzabasi, 1992: 151-153
1214c	P		Patmos 736	Halkin, 1986: 153-161

Table 2. The *Passion*’s Versions and their Modern Editions

In table 1 are presented all hagiographic sources related to the Forty-two Martyrs of Amorion. For the *Passion*, apart from the groups A and B, also the sub-groups are indicated in the form of columns. In the first group, for instance, Z, K and A demonstrate a closer similarity to each other than to M. After the *synaxaria*, the *Passion*’s various

⁷ In general, scholars have expressed very contradictory suggestions about the date of the versions. For example, unlike Kotzabassi, Halkin believes that P (BHG 1214c) was based on Δ(E) (BHG 1209) and not vice versa. See Halkin, 1986: 152.

⁸ Most likely the younger Synkellos. See: Efthymiadis, 2011: 114, fn. 53; PBE: Michael 50 (<http://www.pbe.kcl.ac.uk/data/D55/F16.htm>). Cunningham, 1991: 35-37 and Kazhdan, 1986: 152-153

also seem to support this. About the attribution of the work to the elder Michael Synkellos, see: Kolia-Dermizaki, 2009a: 627-628; Kotzabasi, 1992: 120-124 (despite supporting the theory about the elder, she does not reject the option of the younger).

⁹ Vasil’evskij & Nikitin’, 1905: 272; Kotzabasi, 1992: 121-124.

known sources on the Forty-two Martyrs. Euodios' version (Z) was probably written within the first two or three decades after the martyrdom,¹⁰ though Symeon Metaphrastes re-worked it later. Sophronios' version could be dated slightly earlier than that of Euodios; no matter whether it was composed before 856 or after 858, the earliest surviving manuscript is from the year 890.¹¹ It is only Euodios' text, however, that reflects the very popular collective martyrdom, which has been replaced by a single protagonist in the other versions (see below).¹² If so, one may assume that either Euodios' text and source(s) is (are) earlier than those of the other authors, or that the latter (or their sources) modified the original plot in order to praise one of the martyrs instead of the whole group.

According to the prevailing academic opinion (see above), two of the surviving versions – Γ and Δ(E), both from Group B – link the given name Kallistos to the family name Melissenos. From these, only Γ ascribes to him a list of titles and offices and praises him as the main hero of the story, above all the other martyrs mentioned in the *Passion*. There should be no doubt that a certain Kallistos was indeed among the Forty-two Martyrs, for his name appears in all early versions (except for B which is, however, among the earliest – if not the earliest – known; in this version the name appears only in the title, not within the text itself) as well as in the two *synaxaria* (including *stichera*, *idiomela*, etc.). Kallistos must have been among the forty-two Byzantine officials captured by the Arabs in Amorion and he did not join the other forty-one – as the version Γ puts it – in captivity later. In fact, while all other sources report the number forty-two, the *Passion's* version Γ remains the only one to account for forty-one captives from Amorion.

If Kallistos (Melissenos?), *doux* of Koloneia and victim of the heretic Paulicians was indeed a hero invented by Michael Synkellos or another person, one still needs to explain why that confection was necessary. In my opinion, there are several reasons involved, a case of a concurrence. A. Kazhdan has already noticed that the second half of the 9th century marks the end of a long tradition in hagiography: the collective *martyria* were replaced by individuals as protagonists of their own *passion*.¹³ Of course, this new trend had appeared before the incidents in Amorion and it seems that the *Passion* of the Forty-two Martyrs is one of the last examples of a collective martyrdom.¹⁴ It is not surprising, thus, that the person who modified the text (be that Michael Synkellos the younger, or the elder, or even someone else) was inspired by this new tendency and created a hero who distinguishes himself among the large group of his co-martyrs. Other elements common to hagiography at that time – what can be even labeled as tropes – also point to a fictional story (for example, Kallistos' noble parents, his good education etc.).

Another detail which causes skepticism about the authenticity of Kallistos' career and adventures is the fact that although the *Passion's* version Γ is related to the earlier version B as well as to the other recensions of the group B (i.e. P, Δ(E) and Δ1), none of the other texts mentions Kallistos' story. It is only logical to expect that at least one more recension should include this information or at least part of it. To the contrary, none of the earlier texts shows that the author of Γ might have copied from them, and none of the later texts has drawn details regarding Kallistos from Γ. Additionally, there are other elements which differentiate Γ from the other recensions: Vasoos' speech in B, P, Δ(E) and Δ1, which only in Γ has been substituted with

¹⁰ Vasil'evskij & Nikitin', 1905: 273; Efthymiadis, 1989: 12. Cf. Kazhdan, 1986: 152, 154-155.

¹¹ Kazhdan, 1986: 153. See also above, footnote 6.

¹² See also Kazhdan, 1986: 159.

¹³ Kazhdan, 1986: 150-160.

¹⁴ The last example is probably the *Passion* of the 13 Martyrs of Kantara, on Cyprus. See Schabel, 2010: 1-33.

Kallistos' speech. This may lead to the conclusion that, perhaps, Michael Synkellos' version was not only fictional but also far from popular, for reasons unknown. Moreover, it has survived – to my knowledge – in only one manuscript (Mosquensis Synod. 162), unlike other long and important versions, for example that of Sophronios (Δ(E), *BHG* 1209, group B) and Euodios (Z, *BHG* 1214, group A) known through numerous manuscripts.

If, therefore, recension Γ is so much different from the others, what were Synkellos' sources? It is very likely that the author relied primarily on written rather than oral sources and complemented his work with local – orally preserved – evidence as well as some fictional elements. He refers to older texts which he allegedly consulted, though without going into details about their nature or origin. Kazhdan suggests that Synkellos was carelessly copying some older text and, according to Kotzabassi, he had seen the recension B.¹⁵ It is worth noting that Synkellos emphasized that he would make special reference to Kallistos, implying that this figure had already appeared in his sources. As mentioned above, the surviving evidence does not support this, unless one wants to build an *argumentum ex silentio*. The overall number of the forty-two martyrs remained unchanged, but in order to fit Kallistos' story, Michael Synkellos, author of the so-called recension Γ, had to limit the number of the Amorion martyrs to forty-one (Kallistos being the forty-second). When one of those forty-one turned out to be a traitor, Kallistos, according to Synkellos, called one of his subordinate officers (assumably also caught by the Paulicians) who again raised the total number of the martyrs to forty-two.

Kallistos' personal story must be related to the actual conditions in Central Eastern Asia Minor and the hostilities from the

Paulicians' side at the time when the author was active.¹⁶ The Paulicians became aggressive as a response to the imperial policy against them during Theophilos' reign and the clash between the State and these heretics culminated in the second half of the 9th century. The fact that the author of the recension Γ ascribes a great role to the Paulicians and especially to their leader Karbeas means – in my opinion – that, perhaps, he was writing before (or the latest in) 872-873, when the Byzantines managed to subdue the Paulicians through two large military expeditions; that he was familiar with the local history and Karbeas' name, either through written sources or through official information or even oral accounts; and, last, that he was interested in the area of Koloneia for some reason. However, no matter whether the author was Michael Synkellos the younger (more likely) or the elder, I have not been able to find any connection to Koloneia. Perhaps the author was aiming to present a story against both the Iconoclast emperor Theophilos and the heretic Paulicians who were engaged in hostile activities towards the Orthodox population in the 9th century, hence he placed Kallistos in Koloneia, where the number of heretics was very high, and invented the incident with Karbeas. The early date (before June 847) suggested by Kotzabassi is, of course, possible, because Karbeas was active on the Paulicians' side since 843/4. It is worth to consider whether Synkellos was indeed able to consult other written versions of the *Pasion* by June 847. In my opinion, he worked on his version after 847¹⁷ and, most probably, before 872-873, but surviving evidence does not allow a more precise date.

Kallistos Melissenos, *spatharios*, is mentioned only once, in the version Δ (E) (*BHG* 1209), by Sophronios (of Cyprus?), which may be more or less contemporary to Γ. Despite Δ (E) being known through several

¹⁵ Vasil'evskij & Nikitin', 1905: 23, ll. 1-7; Kazhdan, 1986: 157-158; Kotzabasi, 1992: 124-125.

¹⁶ A comprehensive account on the Paulicians with references to relevant bibliography in Charalampakis, 2011: 49-66.

¹⁷ See also the comments by Kazhdan, 1986: 153.

manuscripts, this combination of names (Kallistos and Melissenos) does not appear in any other version. If the name Kallistos was familiar to the authors of these texts, i.e. Michael Synkellos and Sophronios, then it is surprising that the name Melissenos is missing from Γ. Synkellos would have copied it from Sophronios, in order to give more prestige to his main protagonist Kallistos. On the other hand, Sophronios would have copied at least part of the long story of Kallistos narrated by Synkellos. Apparently neither of these events happened and at the current stage of research it seems rather challenging to provide answers to any of these issues. What can be said with certainty, however, is that Synkellos and Sophronios very likely created their texts independently from each other, after having consulted different recensions of the *Passion* or having listened to different versions of the events and the persons involved. Regarding Kallistos or Kallistos Melissenos' story, there is very little – if any – connection of these two versions to the rest of the *corpus*.

Regarding emperor Theophilos' role in the *Passion*, it is striking to observe in version Γ that the “evil Iconoclast” emperor not only leaves Kallistos unpunished for not carrying out his tasks as officer, but, on the contrary, promotes him.¹⁸ Apart from this obvious contradiction, one may notice that Synkellos must have diminished Theophilos' importance, for in the other versions – especially the older ones – this emperor not only is not accused of being an “evil Iconoclast”, but is presented as a good ruler, praised for his actions and victories over the Arabs.¹⁹

Last but not least, the absence of Kallistos' name from almost all the recensions of group A is worth pointing out. It appears

only in the title of version A, which may mean that it was added later by the scribe. This absence of Kallistos' name from group A perhaps indicates that the name was not included in the prototype(s) on which the later versions of this group relied. This creates a problem, because in general group A is considered later than group B and the *synaxaria* groups H and Θ. If the name does not appear in group A, it means that either the name originally existed, but was later removed (as being unimportant or for the sake of brevity), or that originally it did not exist at all and it was added only in the prototype(s) (or the oral tradition?) on which group B and the *synaxaria* relied.²⁰

No matter whether a person named Kallistos really existed, participated the events in Amorion and suffered martyrdom or not, it is most likely that he was neither a Melissenos, nor a *doux* of Koloneia. Kallistos' heroic deeds were probably invented by Michael Synkellos for the reasons discussed above: propaganda against the Iconoclast emperor and the heretic Paulicians and adaptation to the new trend of promoting one single martyr, the collective martyrdom having already been abandoned by hagiographers. Synkellos' tampering with an already existing tradition would hardly seem surprising, for it was not uncommon at that time to alter the content of a hagiographic text in order to make it more presentable, always according to the author's priorities, preferences and ideas. Symeon Metaphrastes is, perhaps, the most famous person to have altered dozens of *Lives* of saints and it is very likely that other hagiographers were following clichés like those described in Menander Rhetor's manual for encomium writing.²¹

¹⁸ On this contradiction, see Kazhdan, 1986: 156.

¹⁹ See e.g. B: Vasil'evskij & Nikitin', 1905: 8, ll. 4-5 and 11, ll. 23-25; P: Halkin, 1986: 154 (also 160); Δ(E): Vasil'evskij & Nikitin', 1905: 40, ll. 24ff. See also Kolia-Dermitzaki, 2009b: 637 and Kazhdan, 1986: 154.

²⁰ It is important to note that other names do appear in group A: Z: Basoes (p. 70), Konstantinos (p. 72), Theodoros Krateros (p. 75-76); K: unpublished, apart

from the epilogue, but in general similar to Z, so the name must be missing; A: Kallistos (title only), Konstantinos (p. 5), Theodoros Krateros (p. 6); M: Konstantinos (p. 147), Theodoros Krateros (p. 147). The other person included in group B but missing from group A is Theophilos.

²¹ Mango, 2002: 291-295. The text in Spengel, 1856: 213 ff.

The Non-Hagiographic Sources

Regarding the non-hagiographic sources, Kallistos is mentioned in only six texts which can be divided in two groups. The first group consists of a) Skylitzes²² (11th century) and b) Zonaras²³ (12th century). Skylitzes had consulted Theophanes Continuatus' work but did not rely on it for the description of the siege of Amorion and the officials' martyrdom. Zonaras had read several sources such as "Leon Grammatikos", Theophanes Continuatus and Skylitzes but copied only from the latter, without considering the information provided by the other texts. The second group consists of a) Georgios Monachos Continuatus - ed. Bekker²⁴ (960's), b) Symeon Magistros²⁵ (second half of the 10th century), who drew on the previous work, c) the chronicle known under the name of "Leon Grammatikos"²⁶ (early 11th century) and d) Pseudo-Symeon²⁷ (10th century), who copied from Symeon, Georgios Monachos Continuatus and Theophanes Continuatus.

Comparison of the non-hagiographic sources is not an easy task either and it may be as complicated as that of the *Passion's* versions. According to scholarly literature, for example, Theophanes Continuatus and Pseudo-Symeon had consulted Euodios' version (Z) on the events of Amorion's capture and the officials' martyrdom.²⁸ This, however, is not supported by the texts, because Euodios mentions neither the names Kallistos Melissenos, Theophilos and Aetios, nor the offices of *tourmarches* and *droungarios* which are attested in Symeon (and Pseudo-Symeon)

Magistros. Theophanes Continuatus also mentions Theodoros Krateros, Theophilos, Aetios, as well as the name Baboutzikos.²⁹ Therefore, it is safe to state that these authors did not rely on the *Passion's* recension Z (by Euodios).

When comparing the names and titles only, without paying attention to the ideological context or the general style of each work, it is difficult - almost impossible - to link any of the historical sources to the hagiographic ones. For instance, Skylitzes and Zonaras mention Kallistos, Konstantinos and Theodoros Krateros. This combination of names matches some of the early *Passion's* versions. The difference is that in these two historical sources all three protagonists are labelled as *strategoï* (generals), an information which does not exist in any version of the *Passion*, for any person. The closest match would be the mention of the captured *strategoï* to which Kallistos was later added, as well as the term *stratiarchai* (στρατιάρχαι) attributed to Kallistos in his speech towards his co-martyrs, in version Γ.³⁰ These terms, though, are questionable: even though in these sentences they might have the meaning of the generals of the Christian, i.e. the Byzantine army (Byzantines vs. Arabs), earlier in that same text,³¹ the author used the word *stratiarches* for Theodoros in a different context, under the meaning of 'general of Christ's army', which does not refer to the Byzantine army but rather holds a religious connotation (Christianity vs. Islam). Again, in version Γ, the martyrs altogether are called *strategoï* of the Christian front line (Christianity vs. Islam).³² It becomes

²² Skylitzes: 78. On Skylitzes see Karpozilos, 2009: 239-258, especially 245.

²³ Zonaras: 377, 379. On Zonaras see Karpozilos, 2009: 465-489.

²⁴ Georgios Monachos Continuatus: 805. On Georgios Monachos Continuatus see Karpozilos, 2002: 449-450.

²⁵ Symeon: 227. On Symeon Magistros see Karpozilos, 2002: 391-410, 450-451.

²⁶ "Leon Grammatikos": 224.

²⁷ Pseudo-Symeon: 639. On Pseudo-Symeon see Karpozilos, 2002: 391-410, 449.

²⁸ Métivier, 2018: 189; Καρπόζηλος, 2002: 455; Kazhdan, 1986: 151-152.

²⁹ Theophanes Continuatus: 180, 182.

³⁰ Vasil'evskij & Nikitin', 1905: 29, ll. 35-36 (καὶ συναριθμείται τοῖς τῶν Χριστιανῶν στρατηγοῖς ὁ κατὰ Χριστὸν χρηματίσας δοῦξ Κολωνείας); 33, l. 7 (οἱ τῆς τῶν Χριστιανῶν βασιλείας ἐξοχώτατοι στρατιάρχαι).

³¹ Vasil'evskij & Nikitin', 1905: 31, l. 30 (τὸν ἀήτητον στρατιάρχην τῆς Χριστοῦ παρεμβολῆς).

³² Vasil'evskij & Nikitin', 1905: 31, ll. 19-20 (οἱ γενναϊόφρονες στρατηγοὶ καὶ τῆς τῶν Χριστιανῶν παρατάξεως πρόβουλοι). Also: 19, l. 10 (Χριστοῦ ἐχημάτισε στρατιώτης).

clear, then, that the terms *strategos* and *strat(i)arches* are used in the hagiographic text not literally (meaning the army commander) but in a religious context (meaning the champion of Christianity).

The next version with reference to a *strategos* is the *Passion's* version M, in which the anonymous commanders of seven *themes* are mentioned to have been captured by the Arabs.³³ In this case the term bears its original meaning of an army commander. If true, an incident of such great importance, involving so many generals, i.e. the highest commanders of the Byzantine provincial administration, would have been reflected in historical sources. Yet, these remain silent, the only general having certainly participated the siege being Aetios, *strategos* of the Anatolikoi, based in Amorion.³⁴ It is very likely that the author of M – one of the *Passion's* latest recensions – misinterpreted his source(s), i.e. earlier version(s) of that hagiographic text and miscalculated. Hence, the *strategoi* of Christianity became *strategoi* of the *themes* (Byzantine military-political administrative districts). As for the number seven, it can be explained if one thinks of the actual number of named martyrs known through the sources. Those were only five in the hagiographic texts (Kallistos, Konstantinos, Theodoros, Theophilos, and Vasoës), but they could increase up to seven because of the way they were presented. For example, in versions Z and A there are two references to Konstantinos, one as *notarios* and one as *patrikios*, as well as to a Theodoros Krateros, but also to a Krateros *patrikios*. If these names were interpreted as different individuals, then the number could rise to seven.

Another similar sign of distortion has been detected in relation to the non-hagiographic sources: provided that Kallistos and Melissenos were two different persons, the non-hagiographic sources indeed name seven officials – not all of them being *strategoi* – who were killed by the Arabs either during the siege or later (Aetios, Kallistos, Konstantinos, Melissenos, Theodoros Krateros, Theophilos, Vasoës).³⁵ Could these be the seven *strategoi* mentioned in version M? If yes, then the seven officials, *strategoi* (i.e. champions) of Christianity were transformed into seven *thematic strategoi* (i.e. army and *theme* commanders). To add one more example of possible confusion, in version A we encounter seven names, of which one (Kallistos) is mentioned only in the title and another (Voodes) was the traitor. But a copyist would easily consider seven names and not six (they are six if one excludes Kallistos, for his name does not appear in the main text).

The above-mentioned authors not only did not rely on the hagiographic sources, but also provide different versions of the account. This does not apply to Kallistos exclusively: the other main participant in the story, acclaimed mostly by Sophronios, was Theodoros Krateros (or, perhaps, simply Krateros?). There is no doubt that by the term *strat(i)arches* the sources at that time meant a military general. On the other hand, the fact that Theodoros Krateros is also described in the sources as *stratarches* brings up the question whether this person is identified to Krateros, *strategos* of the Thrakesianoï, the Anatolikoi and, later, the Kibyrraiotai, who was allegedly captured and executed by the Arabs in 834.³⁶

³³ Kotzabasi, 1992: 135, ll. 38-44.

³⁴ On this Aetios, see *TAKTIKON* PN_1001.

³⁵ Treadgold, 1979: 185, probably considered Kallistos and Melissenos to be one person.

³⁶ On this Krateros, see *TAKTIKON* PN_1059. On Theodoros Krateros, see *PmbZ* # 7679 (the identification is unlikely, but cannot be ruled out either). Since the three *strategoi* (of the Anatolikoi, the Kibyrraiotai and

the Thrakesioi) named Krateros are most likely to be identified as one person, this would leave us with only two Krateroi – this one and Theodoros –, both active as *strategoi* in the same period and executed by the Arabs. On the interpretation of the name Krateros following the given name Theodoros, see also Cheynet, 2008: 585. See also Messis, 2014: 131-141, 332 with fn. 61.

It is not impossible that historians, chroniclers and hagiographers might have confused the information provided by written and oral sources and thus invented characters that never existed – or at least not exactly as they presented them. Although the case of Krateros should be discussed in a separate study, I may simply express the thought that, perhaps, the historical figure of Krateros, the strategos who was executed by the Arabs, was somehow incorporated into the story about the captives and martyrs from Amorion, despite the fact that this person died four years before the fall of the city. The fact that he was once general of the Anatolikoi and, therefore, he was stationed in Amorion, probably played a role in the process. In a similar way, a certain Kallistos, about whose career nothing is certain – a spatharios, patrikios, tourmarches, doux, strategos or even none of these – but very probably one of the captives, was transformed into a figure representing the ideal hero and martyr before the eyes of a devoted hagiographer. The name Melissenos, which appears in the *Passion's* version Δ(E) as Kallistos' family name, as well as in Georgios Monachos Continuatus, Symeon and Pseudo-Symeon Magistros as a different person, could indicate an individual martyr other than Kallistos, the two names mixed up as the story was passing from mouth to mouth and/or from copy to copy.

only in the *Passion's* version Γ. According to this text, after his enrolment in the army, Kallistos was promoted to an officer. His career followed the scheme: 1) *komes* of the *tagma* of the *scholai*;³⁷ 2) *imperial spatharios* of the *oikeiakoi*;³⁸ 3) commander (*archon* in the text) of the *bandon* of the Ethiopians;³⁹ 4) *doux* of Koloneia. Despite the fact that this scheme would make sense in other circumstances, this does not apply to Kallistos' case, mainly for two reasons already mentioned above: first, because this information does not appear in any other source, hagiographic or historical and, second, because of the inconsistency regarding the events described in version Γ: although Kallistos does not fulfil his duties as an officer, does not follow orders and supports the Iconophiles, he is continuously promoted by the Iconoclast emperor Theophilos.

Some scholars have accepted the above scheme as the career of an existing person. As I have already argued, the historicity of a captured officer named Kallistos most probably should not be contested. What seems unlikely, though, is the career ascribed to this person in the sources and in particular the *Passion's* version Γ.

	Author	Date	Reference to Kallistos / Melissenos
Group A	Group B		
Skylitzes		11 th c.	K., <i>patrikios</i> and <i>strategos</i> (78)
Zonaras		12 th c.	K., <i>patrikios</i> and <i>strategos</i> (Buttner-Wobst III, 379)
	Georgios Monachos Continuatus (Bekker)	960's	Melissenos; K. <i>tourmarches</i> (p. 805)
	Symeon Magistros	2 nd half of the 10 th c.	Melissenos <i>strategos</i> ; Kallistos <i>tourmarches</i> (639)
	Pseudo-Symeon	10 th c.	Melissenos <i>strategos</i> ; Kallistos <i>tourmarches</i> (227)
	"Leon Grammatikos"	early 11 th c.	Melissenos <i>strategos</i> ; Kallistos <i>tourmarches</i> (224)

Table 3. The Historical Sources on Kallistos/Melissenos

2. Who was Kallistos?

As mentioned above (see tables 1, 3), Kallistos' name appears in several sources. His *cursus honorum*, though, is described

It has been suggested that Kallistos really existed and held the three posts described above. As for the fourth career stage, the office of *tourmarches* of the Anatolikoi has been suggested for Kallistos, but later this

³⁷ This office in the *Taktikon Uspensky*: Oikonomidès, 1972: 61 (l. 25).

³⁸ This office in the *Taktikon Uspensky*: Oikonomidès, 1972: 57 (l. 22).

³⁹ No such unit has been explicitly registered in the *taktika* and there is no firm or direct evidence in the sources. For a hypothesis related to the creation and disband of such a unit during Theophilos' reign, see Haldon, 1984: 297, 330, 518-519, fn. 681.

opinion was revised in favour of *doux* of Koloneia, taking into consideration that there was another Kallistos *tourmarches* of the Anatolikoi, captured at the fall of Amorion.⁴⁰ There is no evidence in the sources to indicate that there have been two homonymi involved in the story of the execution by the Arabs. It is most likely that there was only one Kallistos, whose name was associated with various titles, offices and deeds, depending on the source. Furthermore, there is no evidence to support the suggestion that Kallistos (or any other person related to the fall of Amorion and the execution by the Arabs) was a *tourmarches* of the Anatolikoi. The sources simply mention a certain Kallistos *tourmarches*, without providing further details or implying any connection to the *theme* of the Anatolikoi (whose capital was Amorion). This *tourmarches* may or may not have served in the Anatolikoi. It is equally possible that he had come from a neighbouring *theme* to assist the city during the siege.⁴¹

The only plausible connection of Kallistos to some title and/or office mentioned in the sources would be that of *spatharios* or *protospatharios* (see versions P, Δ(E) and Δ1) and *tourmarches* (see Georgios Monachos Continuatus, “Leon Grammatikos”, Symeon and Pseudo-Symeon Magistros). The combination of these two would be possible in the first half / around the mid-9th c. Still, the problem remains that no *tourmarches* is mentioned in any hagiographic source.

Epilogue

To sum up: there is no definite answer as to who Kallistos was, only suggestions

based on the available evidence and juxtaposition of all available sources. It is most likely that a certain Kallistos was among the captives in Amorion, though it cannot be confirmed whether he was a *spatharios*, *protospatharios* or *tourmarches*. It seems that he was neither *doux* of Koloneia nor *tourmarches* of the Anatolikoi and that his life as presented by Michael Synkellos in the *Passion's* version Γ does not reflect real events. Kallistos was not a Melissenos. If a person called Melissenos (i.e. a member of the Melissenos family) was included among the martyrs (see *Passion's* version Δ(E), Georgios Monachos Continuatus, “Leon Grammatikos”, Symeon and Pseudo-Symeon Magistros), he is not to be identified with Kallistos. A certain Melissenos could have participated in the events in Amorion⁴² and that would explain why this name appears in both hagiographic and historical texts. On the other hand, the fact that he is known only through version Δ(E) among the *Passion's* recensions could mean that his name was added later, in a version seen by Sophronios, author of Δ(E), as well as by the author of the text used as a source by Georgios Monachos Continuatus and Symeon Magistros.⁴³ The other family name known through the sources is beyond any dispute: Theodoros Krateros is mentioned, directly or indirectly, by his family name in all hagiographic sources but the *Passion's* version K, as well as in most historical sources (the possible identification of Theodoros Krateros to the *strategos* Krateros will be investigated separately on another occasion). The reasons behind the creation of a fictional character by Synkellos or some-

⁴⁰ Brubaker & Haldon, 2011: 609-610.

⁴¹ Toynbee, 1973: 257, suggests that, perhaps, Kallistos oversaw a lesser military-administrative district – a *tourma* – within the *theme* of the Armeniakoi. This is equally possible but again cannot be proven, due to insufficient evidence. In Βλυσίδου & al., 1998: 486, he is labelled as *spatharios*, *tourmarches* and *doux* of Koloneia. It is not clear whether the editors mean that he was also *tourmarches* of Koloneia – in any case he is not included in their lists of *tourmarchai*.

⁴² PBE Melissenos 1

(<http://www.pbe.kcl.ac.uk/data/D54/F37.htm>).

⁴³ The possibility that the name Melissenos was added later cannot be ruled out. Besides, aristocratic families were promoting the sanctification of their members in order to raise their social status and prestige. See e.g. Métivier, 2012: 95-112, esp. 96, 98, 103, 106-109 and Métivier, 2018: 180-184. Métivier accepts that Kallistos and Melissenos were the same person and explains the absence of evidence about him in other sources through a – supposedly – unsuccessful effort by the Melissenos family to promote their member as a saint and martyr.

one else remain unclear. It could be a misunderstanding, or an intentional action related to hagiography, politics, or family prestige.

The existence or not of a real person under the names Kallistos or Kallistos Melissenos bearing the office of *doux* of Koloneia is not simply a matter of prosopography. This issue may shed different light on the history of the Byzantine administration in the Pontos area, because this official was supposedly a *doux* of Koloneia long before the first attested *strategos* in that area. Kallistos, in his capacity as *doux*, was reportedly in command of the *theme* of Koloneia in 838 or 842.⁴⁴ Other scholars (see here, note 41) – not being convinced about the *doux* but still looking for a connection to Koloneia – suggested that he might have been a *tourmarches* within the theme of the Armeniakoi. This information too, if true, is important for the study of the administration in the Pontos area in general and more specifically in Koloneia.⁴⁵

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⁴⁴ See above, note 3.

⁴⁵ The origins of the *theme* of Koloneia will be studied in a next essay.

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