



Summary :

The rebellion of the *patrikios* Elpidios Brachamios against Emperor Michael IV the Paphlagonian broke out in Antioch late in the winter or early in the spring of 1034, when the inhabitants of the city murdered a tax-collector. The people banded together under the leadership of Elpidios and did not allow the newly-appointed *doukas* of Antioch Niketas to enter the city. In the summer of the same year Niketas managed to suppress the rebellion, which apparently did not pose any serious threat to the established order.

Date

spring - summer of 1034

Geographical Location

Antioch on the Orontes

1. Historical context

The full abandonment of [Basil II's](#) (976-1025) fiscal policy had already been completed during the reign of Romanos III Argyros (1028-1034), predecessor of [Michael IV](#) the Paphlagonian. This change signalled the cancellation of the burdensome taxes that had been imposed on the *dynatoi* (= the powerful) and the concomitant increase of the taxes owed by [small landowners](#). Romanos III, an eminent member of the political [aristocracy of Constantinople](#), wished to please his compeers and mitigate their differences with the countryside nobility, abolishing laws that protected small landownership. The conditions were compounded for the general population during the reign of Michael IV, who increased demands for the paying on taxes in currency and the provision of forced labour. A result of this financial policy was the creation of a climate of general discontent which led to numerous local uprisings in the mid-11th century, one of which was the rebellion of Elpidios Brachamios¹ in 1034 at [Antioch](#).

To understand the climate that prevailed in the city during that period we should take into consideration, apart from the general feeling of disgruntlement for the burdensome taxation, the popularity of [Constantine Dalassenos](#), who in the period of 1024-1025 held the title of *katepano* of Antioch² and was vocal against the ascension of a man of low birth, such as Michael IV the Paphlagonian, to the imperial throne. This made him also very popular in Constantinople, while in the eyes of the emperor's associates it instantly made him the most likely avenger of the former emperor. [John Orphanotrophos](#), Michael IV's brother and the real administrator of the state's affairs, called Dalassenos to leave his estates in the [theme of Armeniakon](#) (where he would not be able to control him in case he planned to overturn Michael) and come to Constantinople, where he was placed in confinement. The population of Antioch, displeased over the emperor's policies, recognized in the face of their former governor a worthy contender to the throne.

2. The rebellion of Elpidios Brachamios

Following the coronation of Michael IV (April 11, 1034), John Orphanotrophos appointed his brother [Niketas](#) to the post of *doukas* of [Antioch](#). Niketas arrived at Antioch only to face the dogged refusal of its inhabitants to allow him into the city, because the Antiochenes were wary of the punishment awaiting them for recently (late in the winter or early in the spring of 1034) they had rebelled and killed a tax-collector named Salibas. Niketas negotiated with the rebels and managed to convince them to admit him into the city by giving an oath that no punishment was to be inflicted for this murder. Following the restoration of law and order in Antioch (summer of 1034), Niketas broke his promise and had one hundred citizens executed, while he apprehended the protagonists of the rebellion, eleven members of the city's aristocracy, its leader, the *patrikios* Elpidios, among them. He then sent the persons arrested to Constantinople, informing John Orphanotrophos that the people of Antioch did not allow him into their city not because of their fear of punishment over the murder of the tax-collector, but because they were loyal to Constantine Dalassenos.

3. Consequences



The consequences of the rebellion were mainly limited to the persons that participated in it, the citizens of Antioch that were executed and the nobles that were arrested. Whatever the goals of the rebels (removal of the financial demands of Constantinople or a support offer to Constantine Dalassenos), they were not met. Furthermore, the rebellion brought about the immediate banishment of Dalassenos, for following the suppression of the rebellion, suspicions that he intended to claim the throne arose. On August 11, 1034 Constantine Dalassenos was banished to the monastery of the Forty Martyrs of [Sebasteia](#) on the island Plate of the Princes' Islands.

1. John Skylitzes, *Σύνοψις Ιστοριών*, Thurn, I. (ed.), *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum* (CFHB 5, Berlin-New York 1973), p. 395, speaks of a certain *patrikios* Elpidios, without providing any further details on his identity. Cheynet, J.-C. - Vannier, J. R., *Études prosopographiques* (Byzantina Sorbonensia 5, Paris 1986), pp. 59-60, tentatively identify him with Elpidios Brachamios, who was a *taxiarchos* (commander of a large infantry unit) during the reign of Basil II.
2. The *patrikios* Constantine Dalassenos originated from a noble family of Asia Minor which had links with Antioch: his father Damianos Dalassenos was *doukas* of Antioch (996-998). In 1028 Constantine was one of the candidates to succeed Constantine VIII and when the rebellion broke out he had retreated to his estates in the Armeniakon theme. See Cheynet, J.-C.—Vannier, J. F., *Études prosopographiques* (Byzantina Sorbonensia 5, Paris 1986), pp. 80-81.

Bibliography :

	Ιωάννης Σκυλίτζης , <i>Σύνοψις Ιστοριών</i> , Thurn, I. (ed.), <i>Ioannis Skylitzae Synopsis Historiarum</i> , Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 5, Berlin – New York 1973
	Ostrogorsky G. , <i>Ιστορία του Βυζαντινού Κράτους</i> , 1-3, Αθήνα 1989, Παναγόπουλος, Ι. (μτφρ.)
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Glossary :

	doukas (lat. dux) Antiquity: Roman military commander who, in some provinces, combined military and civil functions. Buzantium: a higher military officer. From the second half of the 10th c. the title indicates the military commander of a larger district. After the 12th c., doukes were called the governors of small themes.
	katepano (from "epano", "above") Governor of a katepania. Title that from the end of the 10th century characterized the commanders of large provinces as Italy or Mesopotamia and from the 11th century, it was used also in the regions of Bulgaria, Antioch etc.
	patrikios (from lat. <i>patricius</i>) Higher title of honour, placed, according to the " <i>Tactika</i> " of the 9th and the 10th centuries, between <i>anthypatos</i> and <i>protospatharios</i> . It was given to the most important governors and generals. Gradually, however, it fell into disuse and from the 12th



century did not exist any more.

Sources

Thurn, I. (ed.), *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 5, Berlin-New York 1973), pp. 395.95 - 396.18.

Quotations

John Scylitzes's account of the rebellion of Elpidios Brachamios

Μιχαήλ δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς ὑπὸ τε τῆς δαμονίου νόσου εἰργόμενος, καὶ ἄλλως πρὸς μεταχείρησιν πραγμάτων νωθρός τις ὢν καὶ ἀμβλὺς, σχῆμα μὲν εἶχε τῆς βασιλείας καὶ ὄνομα, ἢ δὲ τῶν πραγμάτων ἐνέργεια ἅπασα πολιτικῶν τε καὶ στρατιωτικῶν ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν ἦν τοῦ Ἰωάννου. εὐθὺς οὖν προχειρίζεται Νικήταν τὸν ἑαυτοῦ ἀδελφὸν δοῦκα Ἀντιοχείας, ὃν ἀπελθόντα εἰσελθεῖν ἐν τῇ πόλει οὐ συνεχώρησαν οἱ Ἀντιοχεῖς. πρὸ μικροῦ γὰρ φορολόγος τις, Σαλίβας τὴν προσηγορίαν, τὰ κατ' αὐτοὺς ἐπιτετραμμένος καὶ βαρέως τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐπενηνεγμένος κτείνεται παρὰ τοῦ δήμου τῶν Ἀντιοχέων. διὰ οὖν τὸν τούτου φόνον, ἵνα μὴ τι καὶ ἀνήκεστον πάθωσι δεδιότες οἱ Ἀντιοχεῖς, ἀπέκλεισαν τῷ Νικήτῃ τὴν εἴσοδον. ὄρκους δὲ τούτου πιστωσαμένου, ὡς ἀμνηστία κακῶν αὐτοῖς ἔσεται, καὶ οὐδὲν οὐδεὶς πείσεται ἄχαρι διὰ τὸν τοῦ Σαλίβα φόνον, συγχωροῦσι τὴν εἴσοδον. ὁ δὲ τῆς πόλεως ἐπιλημμένος καὶ κύριος τῶν πραγμάτων γενόμενος, ὀλίγα ἢ οὐδὲν τῶν ὄρκων φροντίσας, ἀμφὶ μὲν τοὺς ἑκατὸν ἄνδρας ἀπέκτεινεν ἀποτεμῶν τε καὶ ἀνασκολοπίσας, ἕνδεκα δὲ τοὺς προὔχοντας ζαμπλοῦτους ἄνδρας καὶ γένει περιφανεῖς δεσμεύσας, ὢν κορυφαῖος ἦν ὁ πατρῷκος Ἐλπίδιος, δεσμίους ἐκπέμπει πρὸς τὸ Βυζάντιον, γράψας τῷ ἀδελφῷ Ἰωάννῃ, μὴ διὰ τὸν τοῦ Σαλίβα φόνον κωλυθῆναι αὐτῷ τὴν εἰς τὴν πόλιν εἴσοδον, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν εἰς τὸν Δαλασσηνὸν εὐνοίαν.

Thurn, I. (ed.), *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum* (CFHB 5, Berlin - New York 1973), pp. 395.95 - 396.18.

Chronological Table

Late winter - early spring of 1034: Rebellion of Elpidios Brachamios

April 11, 1034: Coronation of Michael IV the Paphlagonian

April 1034: Niketas, the emperor's brother, is appointed *doukas* of Antioch

Summer of 1034: End of Elpidios Brachamios' rebellion

August 11, 1034: Constantine Dalassenos is exiled to the island of Plate (Princes' Islands)