



## Summary :

The rebellion of the *doukas* of Mesopotamia Bardas Skleros against Emperor Basil II took place in the area of Harput, in the theme of Mesopotamia, lasted three years and spilled over to the majority of the lands of Asia Minor. It begun late in spring of 976 and was finally suppressed on March 24, 979.

## Date

Spring of 976-March 24, 979

## Geographical Location

Harput, Mesopotamia

## 1. Historical context

When Emperor [John I Tzimiskes](#) died (January 10, 976), the two sons of Romanos II (959-963), [Basil II](#) (976-1025) and Constantine VIII (976-1028) came into power once more. The two scions of the [Macedonian dynasty](#) had been crowned co-emperors by their father, after whose death, as heirs in nonage, they had been placed under the regency of [Nikephoros II Phokas](#) and John Tzimiskes, members of the [military aristocracy](#). In January of 976, Basil, having had his 20th birthday, was finally in an age that allowed him to carry out his imperial duties. The young emperors had been sidelined for a long period of time and was politically weak, as a result the running of the state was essentially controlled fully by his uncle [Basil Lekapenos](#), an illegitimate son of Emperor [Romanos I Lekapenos](#), who held the office of [parakoimomenos](#) and had access to the administration of state affairs. Basil Lekapenos, aware of the widespread belief that the young kings were incapable of effectively running the empire and that power should return to the hands of a strong representative of the military aristocracy, wished to protect the status quo in which he held a leading role. Thus he took measures to curtail the power of the wannabe contender to the throne [Bardas Skleros](#), who was brother-in-law to John Tzimiskes and head of the prominent family of the [Skleroi](#). Bardas, who held the office of [domestikos ton scholontes Anatoles](#) (= of the East)<sup>1</sup> and was supreme commander of the [army](#), was during that time at Constantinople.<sup>2</sup> Basil Lekapenos appointed him [doukas](#) of Mesopotamia, wishing to keep him away from the capital and keep him busy facing with the Arab raids, while he also held his son hostage at Constantinople.

## 2. The rebellion of Bardas Skleros

### 2.1. The outbreak of the rebellion

Soon after his appointment as [doukas](#) of Mesopotamia (early 976), Bardas Skleros left Constantinople to assume his post. His first action was to secure the release of his son, Romanos, from the capital, which was carried out by his confidante Anthes Alyates. Skleros, very popular among the army, obtained the support of the troops of Mesopotamia, as well of the [tagma](#) of the army commanders, on which, apparently, he continued to exert significant influence.<sup>3</sup> Finally, late in the spring of 976<sup>4</sup> he was proclaimed emperor by his troops at the region of Harput. Many [Armenians](#) (who represented the majority of his army) participated in this venture from the start.<sup>5</sup> His most important Armenian allies were the rulers Taron Gregorios and Bagarat, the ruler of Moqk Zaphranik and the [patrikios](#) Romanos Taronites. The rebel's main concern was securing finances to organize his rebellion. For this reason he appropriated the taxes of the region under his control, as well as the money in the [Melitene](#)<sup>6</sup> royal treasury, which he stormed and captured, meeting no real resistance. He chose the fortress of Harput as his headquarters and staging grounds, where he amassed all the money he had acquired and installed a strong garrison. Then, he took care to establish the alliances that would allow him to freely move against Constantinople without having to worry about his rear. Thus he made a treaty with the Muslim rulers whose domains bordered his own, the Hamdanid [emir](#) of Mosul Abu Taglib and his liegeman, emir of Amida Abu Dulaf, securing financial and military support. The central government, on the other hand, continued to enjoy the support of the rest of the troops and the noble families of [Asia Minor](#).



## 2.2. Submission of south Asia Minor to Bardas Skleros

By the summer of 976, Bardas Skleros in Mesopotamia was ready to launch his campaign against Constantinople. Basil Lekapenos realized the threat and made a double defensive move. He sent Stephanos, [synkellos](#) of Haghia Sophia and [metropolitan of Nicomedia](#), to convince Skleros to surrender, and at the same time he ordered the [stratopedarches](#) of the East Petros, the doukas of [Antioch](#), [Michael Bourtzes](#) and the [strategos](#) of [Tarsus](#) Eustathios [Maleinos](#) to assemble their troops at [Caesarea](#) of [Cappadocia](#) in order to check Skleros' advance. Stephanos' embassy failed, and the first engagement took place in the fall of 976 at the narrow pass named Koukou Lithos.<sup>7</sup> A vanguard of Skleros, led by Anthes Alyates, faced a contingent of the imperial army under Eustathios Maleinos.<sup>8</sup> The imperial forces were victorious and Alyates fell in the battlefield. The forces loyal to the emperors then blockaded all the major passes. Skleros' forces, led by the Armenian strategos Sachakios Brachamios, who defected to the rebel's camp,<sup>9</sup> advanced to Lapara or Lycandus. There they clashed with the imperial army, achieving an important victory which placed Skleros at a great advantage. After this turn of events, the rebel moved against the city of Tzamandos, which surrendered without offering resistance. These successes attracted the doukas of Antioch, Michael Bourtzes, doukas Andronikos Lydos and his two sons, Christophoros Epeiktos and Bardas Moungos joining the rebel's camp. At the same time, the soldiers of the [theme of Kibyrrhaiotai](#) rebelled against their commander and placed the fleet of [Attaleia](#) at the rebel's disposal, who sent Michael Kourtikios to assume its command. By the late 976, Skleros had managed to place under his control the larger part of southern Asia Minor.

## 2.3. March to Constantinople

Basil Lekapenos, seeing Skleros advance, dispatched early in 977 the [protovestiaros](#) Leo and the patrikios Ioannes to Asia Minor. Leo had been fully authorized to act in the name of the emperors and aimed at luring away the supporters of the rebel by offering gifts and offices. The two men travelled to [Kotyaion](#), where they met the stratopedarches of the East Petros with the imperial army. The protovestiaros' main goal was to move east and manoeuvre his army to the rebel's rear, in order to wrench part of the supporters that had not entered in the rebellion willingly, but at sword-point. Skleros realized this danger and sent against him a contingent under Michael Bourtzes and Romanos Taronites. Against their orders, the two commanders clashed with the imperial army (probably in the summer of 977) in the area of Oxylithos and were defeated. This forced Skleros to hasten his attack on the imperial forces. In a battle in the area of Rageai in the fall of 977 the rebel won an important victory. Petros and patrikios Ioannes fell on the battlefield, while protovestiaros Leo was taken prisoner. Skleros was now the master of most of Asia Minor; with the imperial army weakened, he was marching towards Constantinople. Basil Lekapenos, wishing to redeem the situation, appointed Theodors Karatenos [droungarios tou ploimou](#) and sent him against Michael Kourtikios, commander of the rebel fleet, who had been pillaging the Aegean islands and was preparing to lay siege to [Abydos](#). By land he sent the patrikios Michael Erotikos to defend [Nicaea](#). Notwithstanding the heroic defence of its garrison, the city was captured following a siege by Skleros early in 978. The imperial fleet defeated that of the rebels at [Phokaia](#) (possibly late in 978) thus stopping Skleros from laying a complete siege to the capital.

## 2.4. The end of the rebellion

In the first months of 978 Basil Lekapenos had recalled [Bardas Phokas](#) to the capital (he had been banished after his defeat by Bardas Skleros in 969-970, when he had rebelled against John I Tzimiskes). Phokas received the title of [magistros](#) and the office of domestikos ton scholon, and was dispatched to face the rebel. Initially he headed for Caesarea of Cappadocia, aiming to rally all the forces still loyal to the central government. There he found Eustathios Maleinos; Michael Bourtzes, who abandoned the rebel, joined forces with them. With this army, Phokas moved west, towards [Amorion](#), in order to strike at the enemy's rear. Leaving Nicaea, Skleros also moved towards Amorion, and on June 19, 978 he defeated Phokas in a battle close to Pangaleia. Phokas retreated to the theme of Charsianon, and rebuilt his army. In the fall of 978 Phokas was defeated in battle by Skleros for the second time in the area Basilika Therma. The central government, seeing its successive defeats, sent an embassy led by the Athonite Georgian monk [Tornikios](#) to the Georgian prince David of Tayk asking for reinforcements.<sup>10</sup> The Byzantines finally received a contingent of 12,000 Georgian horsemen, under the orders of Ioannes Tornikios and the Georgian lord Djodjik. This army joined the army of Phokas at the theme of Charsianon and, in the spring of 979, Phokas launched a surprise attack against the rebel, whose army had been severely weakened: some of his Arab allies had left while many of his Armenian troops had returned to their homeland during the winter. On March 24, 979 Skleros suffered a crushing defeat in the theme of Charsianon.<sup>11</sup> The rebel's army fell apart, and Skleros himself



originally fled to Martyropolis, and very soon after, to the court of the caliph of Baghdad. Some of his supporters remained in the Byzantine lands and barricaded themselves in [fortresses](#) in the [theme of Thrakesion](#) refusing to submit to the imperial authorities until the fall or winter of the same year.

### 3. Consequences

The failure of Bardas Skleros' rebellion did not signal any substantial change in the political landscape of Byzantium. The two young emperors, Basil II and Constantine VIII, remained on the throne, but they continued to be under the control of Basil Lekapenos and could essentially not rule independently or take any initiatives. On the contrary, the *parakoimomenos* reinforced his position further, as he was now the sole and undisputed administrator of imperial power, next to the two emperors. Bardas Phokas was also strengthened, as his recall from exile and his active participation in the suppression of the rebellion signalled his return to the political fore allowing him the right to claim a share in power. The rebellion, however, had dire consequences for the Balkan Peninsula. As the central administration was completely occupied with the efforts to face Bardas Skleros it allowed the insurgency of the Kometopouloi, the four sons of a Bulgarian official who had rebelled early in 976, to grow developing into a protracted war between the Byzantines and the Bulgarians. Finally, the suppression of the rebellion heralded the end of the feuds between powerful nobles over the guardianship of the young emperors and the control of power. This particular feud had begun with the [rebellion of Bardas Phokas](#) against John I Tzimiskes in 969 and was continued with the rebellion of Bardas Skleros in 976-979. Until Skleros' [next rebellion](#) (987), the political landscape had been altered drastically, as Lekapenos' guardianship came to an end in 985, when Basil II removed him from power, assuming his imperial duties. From now on the emperor himself will face the claims of powerful aristocratic families of Asia Minor, which continued to seek a part of the imperial power.

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1. Seibt, W., *Die Skleroi: Eine prosopographisch-sigillographische Studie* (Byzantina Vindobonensia 9, Wien 1976), p. 37.
  2. Forsyth, J., *The Byzantine-Arab Chronicle (938-1034) of Yahya b. Sa'id Al-Antaki* (Ann Arbor 1977), p. 375, relying on the *Chronicle* of Yahya b. Sa'id, argues that Bardas Skleros was not in the capital during this period.
  3. Seibt, W., *Die Skleroi: Eine prosopographisch-sigillographische Studie* (Byzantina Vindobonensia 9, Wien 1976), p. 37.
  4. Kamer, S., *Emperors and Aristocrats in Byzantium 976-1081* (Ann Arbor 1983), p. 32; Forsyth, J., *The Byzantine-Arab Chronicle (938-1034) of Yahya b. Sa'id Al-Antaki* (Ann Arbor 1977), p. 376.
  5. On the massive participation of Armenians in the rebellion of Skleros see Adontz, N., *Etudes armeno-byzantines* (Lisbon 1965), p. 150, and Honigmann E., *Die Ostgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches von 363 bis 1071* (Bruxelles 1935), pp. 149-150.
  6. The money the rebel received from the financial official of Melitene is estimated to 40,000 golden coins. Forsyth, J., *The Byzantine-Arab Chronicle (938-1034) of Yahya b. Sa'id Al-Antaki* (Ann Arbor 1977), p. 375, relying on the *Chronicle* of Yahya b. Sa'id, reports that the first clash took place immediately after the capture of Melitene, when Constantinople sent against Skleros Michael Bourtzes and Eustathios Maleinos, who were, however, defeated by the rebel close to Melitene and retreated.
  7. On the location see Seibt, W., *Die Skleroi: Eine prosopographisch-sigillographische Studie* (Byzantina Vindobonensia 9, Wien 1976), p. 38, n. 98.
  8. Forsyth, J., *The Byzantine-Arab Chronicle (938-1034) of Yahya b. Sa'id Al-Antaki* (Ann Arbor 1977), p. 378, and Kamer, S., *Emperors and Aristocrats in Byzantium 976-1081* (Ann Arbor 1983), pp. 37-38, relying on the *Chronicle* of Yahya b. Sa'id, report that the first clash took place immediately after the capture of Melitene, when Constantinople sent against Skleros Michael Bourtzes and Eustathios Maleinos, who were, however, defeated by the rebel close to Melitene and retreated.
  9. Kamer, S., *Emperors and Aristocrats in Byzantium 976-1081* (Ann Arbor 1983), p. 391, n. 39, considers it more likely that Sachakios Brachamios participated in the revolt on the side of Bardas Skleros from the beginning.
  10. There is a second account, according to which Bardas Phokas led a part of his army to Iberia to seek the support of David. As Kamer, S., *Emperors*



and *Aristocrats in Byzantium 976-1081* (Ann Arbor 1983), pp. Seibt, W., *Die Skleroi: Eine prosopographisch-sigillographische Studie* (Byzantina Vindobonensia 9, Wien 1976), p. 37. 44-45.

11. This view has been erroneously supported by certain scholars, who, relying on Skylitzes, argue that the battle did not take place at Pangaleia; at this point the Byzantine chronicler confuses the final battle of March 24, 979 (which was fought in an area mentioned in a Georgian inscription as Sarvenisni and is identified with the Roman place-name Aquae Saravenae) with the battle of Pangaleia in the June of 978. Seibt, W., *Die Skleroi: Eine prosopographisch-sigillographische Studie* (Byzantina Vindobonensia 9, Wien 1976), p. 37. 47-48, and Forsyth, J., *The Byzantine-Arab Chronicle (938-1034) of Yahya b. Sa'id Al-Antaki* (Ann Arbor 1977), p. 386.

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## Glossary :

	<b>caliph</b> The supreme religious and political authority of Muslims, considered successor of Muhammad (Arabic: khalifa = deputy). He was the head of the Caliphate, the religious state of the Arabs.
	<b>domestikos ton scholon</b> Commander of the regiment of <i>scholae</i> . The first officer with this title appears in 767/8. In the 10th C the domesticos became very powerful among the army of the <i>themata</i> ; in mid-10th C the office was divided in two, <i>domestikoi ton scholon</i> of the East and those of the West, commanders in chief of the eastern and the western provinces' army respectively.
	<b>doukas (lat. dux)</b> 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 comander of a larger district. After the 12th c., doukes were called the governors of small themes.
	<b>droungarios tou ploimou</b> ("droungarios of the fleet") Commander of the byzantine fleet stationed Constantinople. Droungarios tou ploimou is first mentioned in the middle 9th C (Taktikon of Uspenski).
	<b>emir</b> (from Arabic amir) Emir meaning "commander" or "general", later also "prince". Also a high title of nobility or office in some Turkic historical states.
	<b>magistros</b> Higher office that Philotheos in his Kletorologion places above the anthypatos. This title lost its importance from the 10th century and gradually disappeared - most probably in the middle of the 12th century.
	<b>parakoimomenos</b> The guardian of the imperial private chambers. This high office was given usually to eunuchs that were persons of confidence, since they could not ascend to the throne. From the 9th and up to the 11th century, this office assumed a great importance and there were παρακοιμώμενοι that played important roles in the course of the empire, such as Joseph Bringa.
	<b>patrikios</b> (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.
	<b>protovestiaris</b> (and protovestiarites) Honorific title given to high-ranking officials and future emperors during this period. The protovestiaris was originally responsible for the imperial wardrobe, but in the 9th-11th centuries the holders of the title could command an army or conduct negotiations with foreign states.
	<b>strategos ("general")</b> During the Roman period his duties were mainly political. Office of the Byzantine state's provincial administration. At first the title was given to the military and political administrator of the themes, namely of the big geographic and administrative unities of the Byzantine empire. Gradually the title





lost its power and, already in the 11th century, strategoi were turned to simple commanders of military units, responsible for the defence of a region.

#### stratopedarches

1. Commander in chief (1st-2nd c.), general (5th-9th c.)

2. stratopedarches of the East and stratopedarches of the West: official designation of the eunuch domesticos ton scholon (10th c.) and of the military commander (11th-12th c.)

3. *megas stratopedarches* was initially a high-ranking official and afterwards defined the commander of troops (13th - 14th c.).

#### synkellos

Συμπληρώστε την περιγραφή στην γλώσσα μετάφρασης

#### tagmata (pl.)

Military units stationed in Constantinople and its outskirts during the Middle Byzantine period. The most important tagmata were that of the Scholae, the Excubitors (these originated from respective units of the Early Byzantine period and were organized into an imperial guard and a central strike force by Constantine V), the Vigilia (established by Irene the Athenian) and the Hikanatoi (established by Nicephorus I).

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## Quotations

Leo Deacon's account of the rebellion of Bardas Skleros (976-979)

Μετὰ γὰρ τὴν τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος Ἰωάννου ἐκδημίαν ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος, Βάρδας Μάγιστρος ὁ κατ' ἐπωνυμίαν Σκληρός, φιλαρχίαν καὶ ἀπλησίαν νοσῶν, ἀπάτη τε μετελθὼν καὶ φενακίσας τὸν πολὺν ὄχλον καὶ εὐκολον, ἀποστασίαν δεινὴν κατὰ τῶν κρατούντων ἐμελέτησεν· ἐπὶ τετραετῇ τε ἐνιαυτὸν τὴν Ἀσίαν κατέδραμε, χώρας πυρπολῶν καὶ πόλεις καταστρεφόμενος, τὴν τε Ῥωμαϊκὴν δύναμιν, ἐξ ἀντιπάλου παρατάξεως ἀντιτασσομένην αὐτῷ, τρεπόμενος καὶ κατακαίων ὠμῶς· τοῦτο μὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ Πατρικίου Πέτρου καὶ στρατοπεδάρχου δημαγωγουμένην, ὅτε κατὰ τὴν Λάπαραν τὸ πεδῖον (μεθόριον δὲ τοῦτο τῆς χώρας τῶν Ἀρμενίων) ἡ μάχη συνεκροτεῖτο, ὀπηνίκα καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Πατρικίος Πέτρος, δορατίῳ βληθεὶς καὶ τοῦ ἵππου κατενεχθεὶς, παρ' αὐτὴν ἐξέπνευσε τὴν παρτάξιν, πλείστων ὅτι τῶν ὑπασπιστῶν συναναιρεθέντων αὐτῷ· τοῦτο δὲ ὑπὸ Βάρδα Μαγίστρου τοῦ Φωκᾶ, ὃς πρὸς τῶν κρατούντων τὸ τοῦ Δομεστίκου τῶν Σχολῶν ὑποζωσάμενος ἀξίωμα, ἀντίπαλος τῷ Σκληρῷ κατὰ τὴν Παγκάλειαν παρετάξατο. ἰπήλατον τοῦτο πεδῖον, τῷ Ἀμωρίῳ προσέγγιον. ὅπου δὴ καὶ παρὰ τὸ μεταίχιμιον ῥάβδῳ κατὰ τοῦ κρανίου πληγείς ὁ Φωκᾶς, τοῦ ἵππου τε κατηνέχθη καὶ εἰς γῆν κατεβλήθη· καὶ κἂν ἤλω τῶν ἐναντίων καὶ ἀκλεῶς παραπάλετο, εἰ μὴ ὡς εἰς τῶν πολλῶν παρῶφθη παρὰ τῶν δυσμενῶν, ἠγνοηκότων αὐτὸν, ἐπελθοῦσα δὲ ἡ νύξ τοῦτον διέσωσεν. ὁ δὲ Σκληρός, ταῖς τοιαύταις νίκαις ἐπαρθεὶς τε καὶ φρενωθεὶς, ἀνυπόστατός τις καὶ ἀκαταγώνιστος ἐνομιζέτο. ἐντεῦθεν τὴν τε Νίκαιαν, καὶ Ἀβυδὸν, καὶ Ἀττάλειαν τῷ πολεμῖν παρεστήσατο, καὶ τὴν τῆς Ἀσίας ἐπεποιήσατο Ῥωμαϊκὴν ἐπικράτειαν· καὶ πλείστας τριήρεις προσεῖληφε, καὶ θαλασσοκρατῶν μεγάλα τοὺς ἐμπόρους ἐσίνετο, καὶ αὐτὴν ἤδη τὴν βασιλεύουσαν, τὰς σιτηγούς φορτίδας οὐκ ἔαν ἐς αὐτὴν ἀναπλέειν κατὰ τὸ πρότερον· ἕως οὐ ἐκ Βυζαντίου πυρφόροι νῆες πρὸς τῶν κρατούντων λαθραίως ἐξαπεστάλησαν. ἄς Βάρδας Μάγιστρος ὁ Παρσακουτηνὸς ἄγων, αἰφνίδιον τῇ Ἀβύδῳ προσορμισθεὶς, τὰς τε τριήρεις τοῦ τυράννου κατέφλεξε, καὶ τὴν τῶν στρατιωτῶν κατηκόντισε φάλαγγα, καὶ τὸ φρούριον εἴληφεν. αὐθις τε ὁ Φωκᾶς, χεῖρα περὶ αὐτὸν πλείστην στρατιωτῶν ἠθροικῶς, τῷ Σκληρῷ ἐπιτίθεται, καὶ τοῦτον τρεψάμενος ἐν Ἐκβατάνοις πρὸς τοὺς Ἀγαρηνοὺς φυγεῖν παρεσκεύασεν.

Hase, C. B. (ed.), *Leonis Diaconi Caloensis Historiae libri decem* (Bonn 1828), pp. 169.14-170.24.

John Skylitzes describes the first clash between Bardas Phokas and rebel Skleros

Ὁ δὲ παρακοιμώμενος τοῖς ὄλοις ἀπορηθεὶς (ἤδη γὰρ καὶ ὁ Σκληρὸς ἐπλησίαζε τῇ βασιλίδι) μίαν ἐγνώκει βοήθειαν ἀποχωρῶσαν, Βάρδαν τὸν Φωκᾶν μεταπέμψασθαι τῆς ὑπερορίας, μόνον ἀξιόμαχον οἰηθεὶς τοῦτον ἀντίπαλον ἔσεσθαι τῷ Σκληρῷ. λόγου δὲ θᾶπτον μεταπεμψάμενος καὶ ὄρκους ἀσφαλισάμενος καὶ πλοῦτον παρεσχηκῶς δαψιλῆ καὶ τῷ τῶν μαγίστρων ἀξιώματι τιμήσας,



δομέστικον προχειρίζεται τῶν σχολῶν καὶ κατὰ τοῦ Σκληροῦ ἐξίησιν. ὁ δὲ τὸν ὑπὲρ τῶν ὄλων ἀναδεξάμενος ἀγῶνα πρῶτον μὲν ἐπεχείρησεν ἀπὸ Θράκης περαιωθῆναι εἰς Ἄβυδον. φυλάττοντος δὲ τὰ ἐν Ἑλλησπόντῳ χωρία Ῥωμανοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Σκληροῦ, ἀποκρουσθεὶς ἐκεῖθεν ἐπάνεισιν εἰς τὴν βασιλίδα, ἐκεῖθεν τε πλοίου ἐπιβάς καὶ τοὺς ἐναντίους λατῶν πρὸς τὴν ἀντίπρορθμον γίνεται γῆν, καὶ νυκτοπορίαις χρησάμενος ἄπεισιν εἰς Καισάρειαν, ἐκεῖσε τε Εὐσταθίῳ μαγίστρῳ τῷ Μαλεΐνῳ καὶ Μιχαῖλ τῷ Βούρτζη συμπαιξίας (ἔφθασε γὰρ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐκ μετανοίας τὰ τοῦ βασιλέως πάλιν ἐλέσθαι) μετ' αὐτῶν πρὸς πόλεμον ἐξηρτύετο. καὶ δὴ λαόν, ὡς ὁ καιρὸς ἐδίδου, ἀθροίσας, καὶ τοὺς ἐκ τῆς φυγῆς ἐσκεδασμένους ἀλίσας, πρὸς τὸ Ἀμώριον γίνεται. καὶ ὁ Σκληρὸς δὲ τὴν τούτου ἔξοδον ἀκηκῶς, καὶ νῦν πρῶτον οἰηθεὶς τὸν ἀγῶνα ἔσσεσθαι αὐτῷ πρὸς ἄνδρα πολεμιστὴν καὶ φέρειν εἰδότα γενναίως καὶ τακτικῶς τὰς πολέμου στροφάς, καὶ οὐχ, ὡς τὸ πρότερον, πρὸς ἀνδράρια ἐκτετμημένα θαλαμευόμενα καὶ σκιατραφῆ, ἄρας ἀπὸ Νικαίας πρὸς τὸ Ἀμώριον ἄπεισι, καὶ συναντήσας συμπλέκεται τῷ Φωκᾷ. οὐχ ὑποστάντων δὲ τῶν περὶ τὸν Φωκᾶν διὰ τὸ ταῖς προηγησαμέναις ἤτταις χαυνωθῆναι τὸν τῆς ἀνδρείας αὐτοῖς καὶ τόλμης τόνον, ἐπικρατέστερος γίνεται ὁ Σκληρὸς. οὐ μέντοι καὶ παντάπασιν ἐς ὑπαγωγὴν ἄκοσμον ἐσκεδάστο ἢ στρατιὰ τῷ Φωκᾷ, ἀλλ' ὑποκλίνασα μὲν ἐνέδωκε, σχολαίαν δ' ἐποίητο τὴν ὑποχώρησιν, ὡς μὴ ὑπὸ δειλίας δοκεῖν ἐλαύνεσθαι, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἐπιτάγματος ὑπέκρινε στρατηγικῶς μετ' εὐκοσμίας καὶ τάξεως. καὶ γὰρ δὴ καὶ νῶτα δόντας τοὺς στρατιώτας καὶ πρὸς φυγὴν ὠρμημένους, ὀπισθεν οὐραγῶν ὁ Φωκᾶς τοὺς ἐπιόντας ἠμύνετο καὶ οὐ μετὰ σφοδρότατης εἶα καὶ ῥύμης καὶ βίας προσφέρεσθαι. ἔνθα καὶ λέγεται Κωνσταντῖνον τὸν Γαυρᾶν μετὰ τῶν ἀμφ' αὐτὸν τὸ φεύγον διώκοντα φιλοτιμίᾳ χρησάμενον ἀκαίρῳ, καὶ μεγάλην εὐκλειαν ἔξιν οἰηθέντα, εἰ αἰχμάλωτος ὑπ' αὐτοῦ γένοιτο ὁ Φωκᾶς, μωπίσαντα τὸν ὦ ἐπαχεῖτο ἵππον, μετὰ μεγίστης ὀρμῆς προσενεχθῆναι τῷ Φωκᾷ. ὃν οὗτος ἰδὼν καὶ ὅστις εἴη κατανοήσας, ἠρέμα τὸν ἵππον παρενεγκῶν καὶ ὑπαντιάσας παίει κορύνῃ κατὰ τῆς κόρυθος. καὶ ὁ μὲν λειποθυμήσας τῇ ἀνυποστάτῳ φορᾷ τῆς πληγῆς πίπτει παραυτίκα τοῦ ἵππου, ὁ δὲ Φωκᾶς ἀδείας μείζονος τυχῶν τῆς ἐπὶ τὰ πρόσω πορείας εἶχετο, σχολῆ καὶ βάδην ἰών, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀνεμμένοις τοῖς χαλινοῖς. οἱ γὰρ σὺν τῷ Γαυρᾷ τὸν οἰκτεῖον πεπτωκότα θεασάμενοι στρατηγὸν καὶ ἐπιμέλειαν τούτου τιθέμενοι ἀνήκαν τὸν διωγμὸν. ὁ δὲ Φωκᾶς ἅμα τοῖς σὺν αὐτῷ τὸν λεγόμενον Χαρσιανὸν κατελιφῶς κἀκεῖσε αὐλισάμενος ἐσκόπει τὸ μέλλον, τιμαῖς τε ταῖς ἐκ βασιλέως δεξιούμενος πολλοὺς προσφοιτῶντας καὶ τῶν συνόντων εὐεργεσίας παραθεραίνων τὰς προθυμίας. ἐπόμενος δὲ τούτῳ καὶ ὁ Σκληρὸς, καὶ περὶ τινα τόπον Βασιλικὰ θέρμα καλούμενον κατασκηνώσας, εἰς μάχην τὸν ὀμῶνυμον ἐξεκαλεῖτο, ἀσπασίως δὲ καὶ τούτου δεξαμένου τὴν πρόκλησιν αὐθὶς ἑτέρα συνίσταται μάχη. καὶ χρόνον μὲν τινα ἀντέσχον οἱ περὶ τὸν Φωκᾶν, αὐτοῦ τούτου παριππεύοντος ἀπανταχοῦ καὶ τῇ σιδηραῖα κορύνῃ τὰς τῶν ἐναντίων ῥηγύνντος φάλαγγας καὶ μύριον ἐργαζομένου φόνον. ὁμοῦς δὲ καὶ πάλιν νῶτα δεδωκότες οἱ περὶ τούτον ἐτράπησαν.

Thurn, I. (ed.), *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 5, Berlin-New York 1973), 324.32-326.82.

### The final defeat of Bardas Skleros recounted by John Skylitzes

Ἐκεῖθεν οὖν ὁ Φωκᾶς, ὡς εἶχε, διὰ ταχέων ἄνεισιν εἰς τὴν Ἰβηρίαν, καὶ Δαβιδῷ τῷ τῶν Ἰβήρων ἄρχοντι προσελθὼν εἰς ἐπικουρίαν ἤπει στρατόν. τοῦ δὲ μετὰ προθυμίας ὑπηρετοῦντος (ἐφιλίωτο γὰρ τῷ Φωκᾷ, ἐξ ὅτου δούξ ἦν ἐν Χαλδίᾳ) λαὸν ἐκεῖθεν εἰληφῶς οὐκ ὀλίγον, ἀθροίσας δὲ καὶ τοὺς μετ' αὐτοῦ ἐσκεδασμένους ὄντας ἐκ τῆς τροπῆς, κάτεισιν εἰς Παγκάλειαν, ἔνθα στρατοπεδευσάμενος ἦν ὁ Σκληρὸς. Τόπος δὲ ἡ Παγκάλεια πεδῖον ἀναπεπταμένον τε καὶ ἰππήλατον, ἐγγιστὰ που τοῦ ποταμοῦ Ἄλυος κείμενος. καὶ γίνεται πάλιν καρτερός ἀγῶν. ἐνταῦθα τὸν ἑαυτοῦ λαὸν θεασάμενος ὁ Φωκᾶς κατὰ μικρὸν ἐνδιδόντα καὶ πρὸς φυγὴν βλέποντα, βέλτιον εἶναι κρίνας τὸν εὐκλεῖθ θάνατον τῆς ἀγεννοῦς καὶ ἐπονειδίστου ζωῆς, τὰς τῶν ἐναντίων συγκόψας φάλαγγας πρὸς αὐτὸν μετὰ σφοδρότητος ἵεται τὸν Σκληρόν. εὐρώστως δὲ κἀκείνου τὴν αὐτοῦ ὑποδεξαμένου ὀρμῆν, καὶ μηδενὸς τῶν στρατιωτῶν ἐπιβοηθούντος, ἀλλὰ τῷ τῶν ἀρχηγῶν ἀγῶνι βουλομένων κριθῆναι τὰ πράγματα (καὶ γὰρ δὴ καὶ ἐφαίνετο πάγκαλόν τι θέαμα καὶ κατάπληξιν τοῖς ὄρωσιν ἐπάγον ἀνδρῶν δύο μονομαχία ἐπ' εὐτολμίᾳ καὶ ῥώμῃ ψυχῆς μέγα φρονούντων), ὑποστάντες ἀλλήλους συστάδην ἐμάχοντο. καὶ ὁ μὲν Σκληρὸς τοῦ ἵππου τοῦ Φωκᾶ τὸ δεξιὸν οὖς σὺν τῷ χαλινῷ παίσας ἀποκόπτει τῷ ξίφει. ὁ δὲ Φωκᾶς τῇ κορύνῃ πατάξας αὐτὸν κατὰ τῆς κεφαλῆς τούτον μὲν ἐπὶ τοῦ τραχήλου τοῦ ἵππου ῥίπτει τῷ βάρει τῆς πληγῆς κατενεχθέντα, αὐτὸς δὲ τὸν ἵππον κεντρίσας καὶ τὰς τῶν ἐναντίων διατεμῶν φάλαγγας ἔξεισι, καὶ πρὸς τινα λόφον ἀνελθὼν τοὺς ἐκ τῆς τροπῆς ἀνεκαλεῖτο. οἱ δὲ περὶ τὸν Σκληρόν κακῶς ἔχοντα τούτον θεασάμενοι ἐκ τῆς πληγῆς καὶ ἤδη λειποψυχούντα τῷ τραύματι ἐπὶ τινα πηγὴν ἄγουσι τὸν λύθρον ἀπονησόμενον. ὑπάπτειον γὰρ καὶ τὸν Φωκᾶν τελείῳ ἤδη παραδοθῆναι ἀφανισμόν. τοῦ ἵππου δὲ ἀποσκιρτήσαντος καὶ τὸν κατέχοντα ἀποδράντος καὶ διὰ τῶν στρατευμάτων ἐπιβάτου χωρὶς θεόντος ἀτάκτῳ ῥύμῃ, καὶ τῷ αἵματι πεφυρμένου (Αἰγύπτιον τὸν ἵππον ἐκάλουν), καὶ καταμαθόντες, οὗ τινος ὁ ἵππος, καὶ νομίσαντες τὸν ἑαυτῶν ἄρχοντα πεπτωκέναι, ἀκόσμως τρέπονται πρὸς φυγὴν, κρημοῖς καὶ Ἄλυϊ τῷ ποταμῷ ῥίπτοντες ἑαυτοὺς καὶ ἀκλεῶς ἀπολλύμενοι, μηδενὸς ὄντος τοῦ διώκοντος. τοῦτο κατιδὼν ὁ Φωκᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ λόφου, καὶ θεῖον ἔργον εἶναι τὸ πρᾶγμα, ὥσπερ ἦν εἰκός, ὑποτοπάσας, κάτεισι μετὰ τῶν συνόντων ἐπιδιώκων τοὺς φεύγοντας ὑπ' ἀλλήλων συμπατουμένους καὶ ἀλκῆς ὅλως μὴ μεμνημένους, καὶ τοὺς μὲν ἀναιρῶν, τοὺς δὲ χειρούμενος. ὁ δὲ Σκληρὸς μετ' ὀλίγων διασωθεὶς φεύγει πρὸς Μαρτυρόπολιν. ἐκεῖθεν δὲ πρεσβευτὴν ἐκπέμπει τὸν ἑαυτοῦ ἀδελφὸν Κωνσταντῖνον πρὸς Χοσρόην τὸν τῆς Βαβυλώνας ἄρχοντα, ἐπικουρίαν καὶ συμμαχίαν αἰτῶν. παρέλκοντος δ' ἐκείνου καὶ μήτε τῇ δόσει συντιθεμένου, μήτ' ἀπαναινομένου, καὶ τοῦ Κωνσταντίνου



χρονοτριβοῦντος, ἠναγκάσθη καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Σκληρὸς μετὰ τῶν συνόντων ἀπάντων πρὸς Χοσρόην φοιτῆσαι.

Thurn, I. (ed.), *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 5, Berlin-New York 1973), 326.83-327.29.

### The suppression of the rebellion of Bardas Skleros

Τῆς δὲ τοῦ Σκληροῦ τροπῆς ἀγγελθείσης τῷ βασιλεῖ διὰ γραμμάτων τοῦ Φωκᾶ καὶ τῆς εἰς Βαβυλῶνα ἀναχωρήσεως, τοῦτον μὲν ὁ βασιλεὺς ἀποδεξάμενος ἀξίως ἐτίμησε, πρὸς δὲ Χοσρόην τὸν τῆς Βαβυλῶνος ἀμερμουμένην πρεσβευτὴν ἐκπέμπει τὸν βέστην Νικηφόρον τὸν Οὐρανόν, ἰκετεύων μηδεμιᾶς ἐπιστροφῆς ἀξιῶσαι τὸν ἀποστάτην, μηδὲ θελῆσαι παράδειγμα γενέσθαι τοῖς ὀψιγόνοις φαῦλον, ἀμελήσας μὲν βασιλέως ἀδικουμένου βασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτὸς ὢν, προσθήμενος δὲ τυρράνω ἀδίκῳ καὶ ἀποστάτῃ. ἐνεχείρισε δὲ καὶ γράμματα βασιλικά ἐνσεσημασμένα, δι' ὧν συμπαθείας ἀπάσης ἤξιον τὸν Σκληρὸν καὶ τοὺς συνόντας αὐτῷ, εἰ μεταμαθόντες τὸ δέον τὸν τε ἑαυτῶν ἐπιγνώσι δεσπότην καὶ πρὸς τὰ οἰκεία ὑπονοστήσουσι. διασωθέντος δὲ πρὸς Χοσρόην τοῦ Οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῶν βασιλικῶν φωραθέντων γραμμάτων, ὁ Χοσρόης καὶ τὸν πρεσβευτὴν καὶ τὸν Σκληρὸν καὶ πάντας τοὺς σὺν αὐτῷ Ῥωμαίους ὑπονόησας φρουραῖς παραδίδωσι. καὶ τούτους μὲν εἶχεν ἢ φρουρά, τῶν δὲ μὴ συναελθόντων ἀποστατῶν τῷ Σκληρῷ Λέων μὲν ὁ αἰχμάλωτος καὶ οἱ τοῦ δουκὸς Ἀνδρονίκου τοῦ Λυδὸς παῖδες Χριστόφορος ὁ Ἐπεικτής καὶ Βάρδας ὁ Μουγγός (ἔφθη γὰρ ἐκεῖνος ἀποθανεῖν) τὸ Ἀρμακούριον καὶ τὴν Πλατεῖαν πέτραν καὶ ἄλλα τινὰ φρούρια ἐρμυνὰ ἐν τῷ θέματι κείμενα τῶν Θρακησίων κατεσχηκότες ἀντείχον ἕως ὀγδόης ἰνδικτιῶνος, καὶ ἐπεκδρομας ἐκ τούτων ποιούμενοι τὰ βασιλέως ἐλύπουν. καὶ οὐ πρὶν ἐπαύσαντο τὰς χώρας λεηλατοῦντες, πρὶν ἂν ἀμνηστίαν εἰληφότες κακῶν διὰ Νικηφόρου πατρικίου τοῦ Παρσακουτηνοῦ τῷ βασιλεῖ προσεχώρησαν.

Thurn, I. (ed.), *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum* (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 5, Berlin - New York 1973), 327.30-328.52.

### An 11th-C. Byzantine scholar's account of the rebellion of Bardas Skleros (976-979)

Διὰ ταῦτα οἱ ἐκείνων ἀνεψιαδεῖς πολέμους κατ' αὐτοῦ σφοδροὺς ἀνεργίσαν· καὶ πρῶτός γε ὁ Σκληρὸς, ἀνὴρ καὶ βουλευσασθαι ἰκανὸς καὶ καταπράξασθαι περιδέξιος, πλοῦτόν τε περιβεβλημένος, μέγα ἄρκοῦντα τυρράνω, καὶ δυναστείας ἔχων ἰσχύν, πολέμους τε μεγάλους κατωρθώκως, καὶ τὸ στρατιωτικὸν ἅπαν συννεῦον ἔχων πρὸς τὸ ἐκεῖνον βούλημα. Οὗτος τοιγαροῦν πολλοὺς συναιρομένους ἔχων τῇ τυρρανίδι, πρῶτος τὸν κατὰ τοῦ Βασιλείου τεθάρηκε πόλεμον, καὶ πᾶσαν ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἵππικὴν τε καὶ πεζικὴν παρήλαυνε δύναμιν, καὶ ὡς ἐπὶ προκειμένῳ πράγματι τῇ βασιλείᾳ προήει τεθαρηρικῶς. Τὰ πρῶτα μὲν οὖν ἀπεγνώκεισαν οἱ περὶ τὸν βασιλέα τὰς σωζούσας ἐλπίδας, τὴν ὀπλιτικὴν πᾶσαν ἰσχύν τῷ Σκληρῷ ἐγνωκότες συρρέυσασαν· ἔπειτα δὲ συλλεξάμενοι ἑαυτοὺς καὶ περὶ τῶν ὄλων γνωσιμαχήσαντες, ὥσπερ ἐν ἀπόροις πόρον εὐρηκεῖναι ᾤθησαν, καὶ Βάρδαν τινὰ, εὐγενέστατον ἄνδρα καὶ γενναιοτάτον, τοῦ βασιλέως Νικηφόρου ἀδελφιδούν, ἀξιόμαχον περὶ τὸν τυρρανῆσαντα Σκληρὸν κρίναντες, τὰς καταλελειμμένας δυνάμεις φέροντες τούτῳ παρέδωσαν, καὶ τοῦ στρατοπέδου παντὸς ἡγεμόνα πεποιηκότες, ἀντιστησόμενον τῷ Σκληρῷ ἐκπετόμφασιν. Ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ περὶ τούτῳ οὐδὲν ἔλαττον τοῦ Σκληροῦ ἐδεδοίκεσαν, ἅτε βασιλείου τυγχάνοντι γένους, καὶ οὐδὲν μικροπρεπῶς ἐννοησομένῳ περὶ αὐτοῦ, περιδύουσι μὲν τὸ πολιτικὸν τῆς περιβολῆς σχῆμα καὶ ὅσον οἶδεν ἢ τυραννίς, τῷ δὲ τῆς ἐκκλησίας κλήρῳ ἐγκαταλέγουσιν, εἶτα δὴ καὶ φρικώδεσιν ὄρκους καταλαμβάνουσιν τοῦ μὴ ἀποστασίας ἀλῶναι ποτε ἢ παραβάσεως τῶν ὠμοσμένων· οὕτω γοῦν αὐτὸν ἐξεγγυησάμενοι μετὰ πασῶν ἐκπετόμφασιν τῶν δυνάμεων. Ἦν δ' ὁ ἀνὴρ οὗτος, ὡς ὁ λόγος ἔχει, τὴν μὲν γνώμην ἐς τὸν θεῖον ἀναφέρων καὶ βασιλέα, συννεφεῶς αἰεὶ καὶ ἐγρηγορῶς, καὶ πάντα προῖδειν καὶ συνιδεῖν ἰκανός, πολεμικῶν τε τεχνασμάτων οὐδενὸς ἀδαής, ἀλλὰ πάσαις μὲν τειχομαχίαις, πάσαις δὲ λοχίσεσι καὶ ταῖς ἐκ παρατάξεως ἀγωνίαις ἐθάς, τὰς δὲ διὰ χειρὸς πράξεις δραστικώτερος ἐκεῖνου καὶ γενναιοτέρου· ὁ γὰρ τοι πληγὴν παρ' ἐκεῖνου δεξάμενος εὐθέως ἀφήρητο τὴν ψυχὴν· κὰν πόρρωθεν ἐπεβόησεν, ὅλην συνετάραττε φάλαγγα. Οὗτος τοιγαροῦν τὰς ὑπ' αὐτὸν διελῶν δυνάμεις καὶ εἰς λόχους ἐγκατατάξας, οὐχ ἅπαξ ἀλλὰ καὶ πολλάκις τὴν ἀντικειμένην εἰς φυγὴν ἔτρεψε φάλαγγα, καὶ τοῦτο πλήθει τῶν ἀντιτεταγμένων· τοσοῦτον <δὲ> τῶν ἐναντίων ἐλάσων ἐτύγχανεν ὢν, ὅσῳ τῇ τέχνῃ καὶ τοῖς στρατηγήμασι κρείττων δόκει καὶ γενναιοτέρου. Ἐθάρρησαν γοῦν ποτε πρὸς ἀλλήλους καὶ οἱ τῶν ἀντικειμένων ἡγεμόνες ταγμάτων καὶ μονομαχησάμενοι ἐκ συνθήματος εἴλοντο· καὶ μέντοιγε συνελάσαντες εἰς τι μεταίχιμον, εἶδον τε ἀλλήλους καὶ ἐν συμβολαῖς εὐθὺς ἐγεγόνεισαν. Καὶ πρῶτός γε ὁ τυρραννεύων Σκληρὸς, οὐκ ἐπισχῶν ἑαυτὸν τῆς ὁρμῆς, ἀλλ' εὐθὺς νόμους ἀγωνίας παραβεβηκῶς, ὁμοῦ τε ἀγχοῦ τῷ Φωκᾶ ἐγεγόνει καὶ παίει τοῦτον ὡς εἶχε κατὰ κεφαλῆς, δυναμώσας τὴν χεῖρα τῇ φορᾷ τῆς ὁρμῆς· καὶ ὁ πεπληγὼς πρὸς τὸ ἀδόκητον τῆς πληγῆς βραχὺ τι τοῦ χαλινοῦ γεγονῶς ἀκρατῆς, αὐθις συνηθοῖκε τοὺς λογιμοὺς, καὶ κατὰ ταῦτο μέλους τὸν πλήξαντα παῖσας, τῆς πολεμικῆς ὁρμῆς ἔπαυσε καὶ φυγεῖν παρεσκεύασεν. Αὕτη τελεωτέρα κρίσις καὶ δημοτελεστέρα ἀμφοῖν ἔδοξε· καὶ ὁ Σκληρὸς τοῖς ὄλοις ἐξαπορηθεὶς, καὶ μήτε πρὸς τὸν Φωκᾶν ἀντιστηναί ἔτι δυνάμενος, προσδραμῖν τε τῷ βασιλεῖ αἰσχυρόμενος, βουλήν βουλευέται οὔτε συνετωτάτην οὔτε ἀσφαλεστάτην· ἀπάρας γὰρ ἐκ τῶν Ῥωμαϊκῶν ὀρίων εἰς τὴν τῶν Ἀσσυρίων μετὰ πασῶν αὐτοῦ τῶν δυνάμεων συνήλασε γῆν, καὶ δῆλον αὐτὸν καταστήσας Χοσρόην τῷ βασιλεῖ, εἰς ὑποψίαν ἐκίνησεν· οὗτος γὰρ τό τε πλήθος φοβηθεὶς τῶν ἀνδρῶν, ἴσως δὲ καὶ ὑποπτεύσας τὴν ἀθρόαν





ἔφοδον, δεσμώτας πεποηκῶς ἐν ἀσφαλεῖ κατεῖχε φρουρᾶ.

Renauld, E. (ed.), *Michel Psellos, Chronographie ou histoire d'un siècle de Byzance (976-1077)* 1 (Paris 1926), pp. 5.1-9.10.

## Chronological Table

early January 976: John I Tzimiskes passes away. Basil II and Constantine VIII come to power. Bardas Skleros becomes doukas of Mesopotamia

late spring of 976: Bardas Skleros rebels in Harput of Mesopotamia and is declared emperor by his troops

fall of 976: A contingent of the rebel army is defeated by the imperial forces at the area of Koukou Lithos. The rebels are victorious in the battle of Lapara

summer of 977: The rebels defeat the imperial forces in the area of Oxyolithos

fall of 977: Bardas Skleros defeats the imperial forces in the battle at the area of Rageai

early 978: The city of Nicaea is sacked by Bardas Skleros. Basil Lakapenos recalls Bardas Phokas from exile

June 19, 978: Battle at Pangaleia between the imperial forces under Bardas Phokas and the rebel army under Bardas Skleros. Phokas is defeated

fall of 978: Bardas Skleros defeats Phokas again at the area of Basilika Therma

March 24, 979: Bardas Skleros is defeated by Bardas Phokas in the theme of Charsianon. Suppression of the rebellion

late 979: The last of the rebels in the Thracesian theme capitulate