

= Michael Bourtzes =

Michael Bourtzes ( Greek : ?????? ??????? , Arabic : Mi?? ? ?l al @-@ Burdj? ; ca . 930 / 35 ? after 996 ) was a leading Byzantine general of the latter 10th century . He became notable for his capture of Antioch from the Arabs in 969 , but fell into disgrace by the Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas . Resentful at the slight , Bourtzes joined forces with the conspirators who assassinated Phokas a few weeks later . Bourtzes re @-@ appears in a prominent role in the civil war between Emperor Basil II and the rebel Bardas Skleros , switching his allegiance from the emperor to the rebel and back again . Nevertheless , he was re @-@ appointed as doux of Antioch by Basil , a post he held until 995 , when he was relieved because of his failures in the war against the Fatimids .

= = Biography = =

= = Career under Nikephoros II and John Tzimiskes = = =

Michael Bourtzes was the first prominent member of the Bourtzes family , originating in the upper Euphrates region , which went on to become one of the major clans of the Byzantine military aristocracy during the 11th century . The name has been proposed as deriving either from the Arabic burdj , " tower " , or from the placename Bourtzo or Soterioupolis near Trebizond . Likewise the ethnic origin of the family is disputed among scholars : Vitalien Laurent and Jean @-@ Claude Cheynet suggested an Arab origin , while Peter Charanis and Nicholas Adontz advocated an Armenian origin .

The date of Michael Bourtzes 's birth is unknown , but must be placed sometime between 930 and 935 . He is first mentioned in late 968 , when he was appointed by Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas ( reigned 963 ? 969 ) as patrikios and strategos of the small theme of Mauron Oros ( " Black Mountain " ) , on the southern outliers of the Amanus Mountains . With his base on the newly built fortress of Pagras , Bourtzes and his thousand men were tasked with controlling the northern approaches to the Arab @-@ held city of Antioch . Acting against Nikephoros 's orders not to assault the city in his absence , in the late autumn of 969 , Bourtzes persuaded a traitor inside the city to surrender one of the wall 's main towers , which he then promptly occupied on 28 October . He then defended this post against repeated attacks of the city 's defenders for three days , until the reinforcements led by the stratopedarches Peter arrived and secured the city for the Byzantines . Despite his major role in this success , Bourtzes 's reward was distinctly lacking : angry at him for disobeying his orders , or , according to another account , for laying fire and destroying much of the city , Emperor Nikephoros dismissed him from his post and appointed a kinsman of his , Eustathios Maleinos , as the first governor of Antioch .

Angered by this treatment , Bourtzes joined a conspiracy involving a number of other prominent generals who were discontent at Nikephoros , chief amongst them John Tzimiskes . On the night of 10 / 11 December 969 , a group of these conspirators , including Tzimiskes and Bourtzes , managed to gain access to the imperial Boukoleon Palace by sea , and proceeded to murder the emperor and install Tzimiskes as his successor . Despite his prominent role in the assassination of Nikephoros II , the historical sources barely mention Bourtzes for the duration of Tzimiskes 's reign ( 969 ? 976 ) . Only Yahya of Antioch records that in summer 971 , with 12 @, @ 000 men , he oversaw the repairs carried out to the walls of Antioch following an earthquake and executed one of the murderers of Patriarch Christopher , but it is not certain whether he had been placed in command there as governor . Rather , at the time of Tzimiskes 's death in January 976 , he is stated by John Skylitzes to have commanded the elite tagma of the Stratelatai in the army of Bardas Skleros .

= = Career under Basil II = = =

At the point of Tzimiskes 's death , imperial power reverted to the legitimate emperors , the young brothers Basil II ( r . 976 ? 1025 ) and Constantine VIII ( co @-@ emperor until 1025 , sole emperor

in 1025 ? 28 ) . In view of their youth and inexperience , however , government essentially continued to be exercised by the powerful parakoimomenos , Basil Lekapenos . Almost immediately , the parakoimomenos moved to forestall any moves by one of the powerful Anatolian magnates to seize the throne and reign as a supposed " guardian " of the two young emperors , like Phokas and Tzimiskes had done . A general reshuffle of the most important army posts in the East followed , interpreted by later historians like Skylitzes as a move to weaken the position of over 40 powerful strategoi . At this point , Bourtzes was appointed commander of the troops in northern Syria , with his seat at Antioch ; indeed , he seems to have been the first to be titled doux of Antioch . According to Skylitzes , this move was designed by the parakoimomenos to wean him away from his close relationship with Skleros , who as one of the Empire 's senior generals and de facto second 40 in 40 command under his relative Tzimiskes , was a prime candidate for usurping the throne . Almost immediately after his appointment , Bourtzes set out in a deep raid into Fatimid 40-controlled Syria , reaching Tripolis and returning with much booty .

In spring , however , Bardas Skleros , now appointed doux of Mesopotamia , rose in revolt and proclaimed himself emperor at his base in Melitene . Bourtzes was commanded by Constantinople to lead his force north , join the army of Eustathios Maleinos , now governor of Cilicia , and block the rebel from crossing the Antitaurus Mountains . Leaving his son in control of Antioch , Bourtzes complied and marched north . In the ensuing battle at the fortress of Lapara in the province of Lykandos ( autumn 976 ) , however , the combined loyalist force was routed , with Bourtzes being the first to retreat according to the chroniclers . As Skylitzes pointedly comments , Bourtzes ' conduct during the battle was attributed either to cowardice or to malice ; certainly soon after , he deserted the imperial camp and joined Skleros . According to the contemporary Yahya of Antioch , Bourtzes at first fled to a fortress in the Anatolic Theme , but was followed by Skleros and persuaded to come over to his side . Bourtzes 's defection brought Skleros control of Antioch as well : Bourtzes commanded his son Constantine to join him , and the city was left in the hands of the Arab Kulayb , who was soon overthrown by another Arab , Ubaydallah , who also joined Skleros . In the summer of 977 , Bourtzes was deployed , along with Romanos Taronites , in command of Skleros 's forces shadowing the operations of the imperial army advancing from Kotyaion to Ikonion . The presence of the tribute caravan from Aleppo entangled the two forces in an impromptu fight at Oxyliothos , which ended in a bloody defeat for the rebels . After this , Bourtzes again switched sides and rejoined the imperial army , now led by Bardas Phokas .

Nothing is known of Bourtzes 's career for the next twelve years . Uniquely amongst the military leaders who had revolted against him , Basil II continued to rely on Bourtzes and entrusted him again with the critical position of doux of Antioch in 989 , in the aftermath of another rebellion , this time of Bardas Phokas . In November 989 , Bourtzes took the city over from Leo Phokas , the son of Bardas , who himself had submitted to the emperor only months earlier . From this position , over the next few years Bourtzes led the defence of the imperial frontier in a renewed bout of fighting with the Fatimids , as the two empires disputed control over the Hamdanid emirate of Aleppo .

In 991 he provided military assistance to the Hamdanid emir of Aleppo , Sa 'd al 40 Dawla , which enabled the latter to defeat the rebel Bakjur , who with Fatimid help tried to seize Aleppo . Early in the next year , a Fatimid army under Manjutakin advanced on Aleppo . Manjutakin sent a messenger to Bourtzes , claiming that his conflict was with Aleppo , and did not involve the Byzantines , but Bourtzes had the messenger arrested . After defeating the Hamdanids in battle near Apamea , Manjutakin laid siege to Aleppo for 33 days , after which he left part of his forces behind and led the rest to confront Bourtzes , who was marching to the city 's aid . At the ensuing battle at Siderophygon ( Arabic Jisr al 40 Hadith ) Bourtzes and his men were defeated . Manjutakin followed up his success by capturing the fortress of Imm , commanded by Bourtzes ' nephew , and taking him and 300 troops prisoner , before embarking on a plundering raid through Byzantine territory as far as Germanikeia ( Ar . Mar 'ash ) . The Fatimid general returned to Aleppo , but was unable to take it and withdrew later in the year . At about the same time , the Muslim population of Laodicea , Antioch 's seaport , rose in revolt , but Bourtzes was able to put it down and deported the populace to the interior of Byzantine territory in Asia Minor .

In the late summer of 993 , Manjutakin launched yet another expedition , capturing Apamea and

Larissa ( Ar . Shayzar ) and continuing his raids in the Byzantine province around Antioch , before returning safely to Damascus . In spring 994 , Manjutakin once more moved against Aleppo . Responding to the calls for aid by the Hamdanids , Basil II ordered Bourtzes to come to their aid , and sent the magistros Leo Melissenos with reinforcements to Syria . The Byzantine army however was surprised and heavily defeated when attacked on two flanks by Manjutakin in a battle at the banks of the Orontes , on 15 September 994 . Manjutakin went on to capture Azaz and continued his siege of Aleppo until the personal intervention of Basil II in a lightning campaign the next year . These failures , as well as accusations that he had exacerbated the conflict by imprisoning the Fatimid ambassador in 992 , brought Basil 's displeasure upon Bourtzes , who was replaced with Damian Dalassenos .

Nothing more is known of Michael Bourtzes after that , and it may be that he died sometime around the autumn of 995 . He did , however , have at least three sons , Michael , Theognostos , and Samuel , known because they conspired against Constantine VIII after he blinded Michael 's son , named Constantine , in 1025 / 26 .