

= Nikephoros Melissenos =

Nikephoros Melissenos (Greek : Νικηφόρος Μελισσηνός , ca . 1045 ? 17 November 1104) , Latinized as Nicephorus Melissenus , was a Byzantine general and aristocrat . Of distinguished lineage , he served as a governor and general in the Balkans and Asia Minor in the 1060s . In the turbulent period after the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 , when several generals tried to seize the throne for themselves , Melissenos remained loyal to Michael VII Doukas and was exiled by his successor Nikephoros III Botaneiates . In 1080 ? 1081 , with Turkish aid , he seized control of what remained of Byzantine Asia Minor and proclaimed himself emperor against Botaneiates . After the revolt of his brother @-@ in @-@ law Alexios I Komnenos , however , which succeeded in taking Constantinople , he submitted to him , accepting the rank of Caesar and the governance of Thessalonica . He remained loyal to Alexios thereafter , participating in most Byzantine campaigns of the period 1081 ? 1095 in the Balkans at the emperor 's side . He died on 17 November 1104 .

= = Biography = =

= = = Origins and early career = = =

Nikephoros Melissenos was probably born circa 1045 at Dorylaeum , where his family had extensive estates . Through both his father and his mother , he was of aristocratic descent : his father belonged to the Bourtzes line , while his mother to the illustrious Melissenos family , which dated back to the 8th century and had produced several distinguished generals . Sometime before 1067 , Nikephoros married Eudokia Komnene , the second daughter of the Domestic of the Schools John Komnenos and Anna Dalassene and sister of the future Byzantine emperor Alexios I Komnenos (r . 1081 ? 1118) . They had at least one known son , who was named John Komnenos .

Melissenos held the rank of magistros and the post of governor (doux) of Triaditza (modern Sofia) for some time during the 1060s . In 1070 , he joined the field army commanded by his eldest brother @-@ in @-@ law , the protostrator Manuel Komnenos , in a campaign against the Seljuk Turks . The campaign ended in defeat near Sebasteia (modern Sivas) , and Melissenos along with Manuel Komnenos were captured by a Turkish chieftain whom the Byzantines called Chrysoskoulos . Manuel , however , quickly persuaded the Turk to enter into Byzantine service , and their captivity ended .

Melissenos remained loyal to Michael VII Doukas (r . 1071 ? 1078) during the rebellion of the strategos of the Anatolic Theme , Nikephoros Botaneiates (Nikephoros III) , which began in October 1077 . Michael VII rewarded him by appointing him to Botaneiates 's post , but after Botaneiates 's victory and entry into Constantinople in April 1078 , Melissenos was exiled to the island of Kos .

= = = Rebellion = = =

In autumn 1080 , Melissenos left Kos and returned to Asia Minor . There , he succeeded in gaining the support of the local population , and in recruiting many Turkish tribesmen as mercenaries to his army . One by one , the cities of western and central Asia Minor opened up their gates to him , and Turkish garrisons were installed in them . Botaneiates tried to send Alexios Komnenos , who had recently suppressed the revolts of Nikephoros Bryennios and Nikephoros Basilakes , against him , but he refused . In February 1081 , Melissenos 's troops took Nicaea , where he was acclaimed as emperor , and defeated a loyalist army under the eunuch John .

In March 1081 , Melissenos was encamped with his army at Damalis , on the Asian shore across the Bosphorus from Constantinople . There , he received news of the revolt of the Komnenoi against Botaneiates and the proclamation of Alexios Komnenos as emperor . He sent letters to the Komnenoi , suggesting a division of authority over the imperial territory , with the Balkans remaining

under Komnenian control and himself keeping Asia Minor , although he also emphasized that the Byzantine Empire should remain united . In reply , the Komnenoi offered to recognize him as Caesar ? the second highest dignity after the imperial title itself ? and to give him the governance of Thessalonica ? the Empire 's second @-@ most important city ? if he would submit to them . Melissenos initially refused to accept this offer , but as the Komnenoi were on the verge of taking Constantinople and might refuse to make similar concessions later , he eventually agreed .

At the same time , the emperor Nikephoros Botaneiates tried to forestall the capital 's fall to the Komnenoi by sending for Melissenos and asking him to enter the city and assume imperial authority . His envoys , however , were obstructed by George Palaiologos and never reached Melissenos . Constantinople fell to the Komnenian forces , and on 8 April 1081 , Melissenos too entered the imperial capital . True to his word , Alexios I raised him to Caesar and gave him authority over Thessalonica , as well as allotting the city 's revenues to his income . At the same time , however , Alexios raised his brother Isaac Komnenos to the newly created dignity of sebastokrator , which he placed above that of Caesar , bypassing Melissenos .

This act of submission , unique among the various rebels of the time , may throw some light on Melissenos 's motivation for his uprising , according to the historian Jean @-@ Claude Cheynet . Cheynet believes that Melissenos was probably more concerned with safeguarding his Asian estates from the depredations of the Turks , and when Alexios granted him Thessalonica and equivalent estates around it ? some of which Melissenos later distributed to his clients , like the Bourtzes family ? he readily gave up the contest for the Byzantine throne .

Despite the end of Melissenos 's revolt , it left a profound legacy : although Melissenos himself submitted to Alexios Komnenos , the towns he had occupied and garrisoned with Turkish soldiers in Ionia , Phrygia , Galatia , and Bithynia remained in their hands . Thus , by becoming involved in the Byzantine civil wars as mercenaries and allies ? especially through their use by Botaneiates and Melissenos during their respective revolts to hold down various cities for them ? the Turks completed their relatively peaceful take @-@ over of central and western Asia Minor .

= = = Service under Alexios Komnenos = = =

Melissenos continued to serve Alexios I faithfully throughout the rest of his life . In autumn 1081 , he marched alongside Alexios in his campaign against the Normans of Robert Guiscard . In the Battle of Dyrrhachium , which ended in a crushing Byzantine defeat , he commanded the Byzantine army 's right wing .

In the 1083 campaign in Thessaly against the Normans , who , under Guiscard 's son Bohemond were besieging Larissa , Melissenos was used by Alexios as the centerpiece to a ruse . The emperor gave him the imperial insignia and a detachment of the army , which Bohemond proceeded to attack in the belief that this was the main Byzantine force , since the emperor was present with it . While the Normans pursued Melissenos 's men , Alexios with the main army took and looted the Norman camp , forcing Bohemond to lift the siege and withdraw .

Melissenos fought alongside Alexios in the Battle of Dristra (late August 1087) against the Pechenegs , commanding the Byzantine left wing . The battle ended in a heavy Byzantine defeat , and Melissenos was taken captive along with many other Byzantines , to be ransomed by the emperor after some time . In spring 1091 , Melissenos was sent to Ainos to recruit soldiers from among the Bulgarians and Vlachs . Occupied with this task , he did not join the imperial army in time for the crushing Byzantine victory over the Pechenegs at the Battle of Levounion on 29 April , arriving the next day .

Later in the same year , he participated in the family council of Philippopolis which examined the accusations of conspiracy raised against John Komnenos , the doux of Dyrrhachium by the Archbishop of Ochrid Theophylact . The council degenerated into a heated family quarrel , where John 's father , the sebastokrator Isaac , accused Melissenos and Adrian Komnenos of slandering his son , but in the end Alexios dismissed the charges .

In the 1095 campaign against the Cumans , Melissenos , along with George Palaiologos and John Taronites were left in charge of defending the region of Berrhoe (modern Stara Zagora) against

Cuman attacks . This is the last mention of Melissenos in Anna Komnene 's Alexiad . He died on 17 November 1104 .