

The *Albanoi* in Michael Attaleiates' *History*: revisiting the Vranoussi-Ducellier debate

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Half a century ago, the Greek academic Era Vranoussi presented Balkan and Byzantine studies with a new theory. She argued that the people named Albanoi in Michael Attaleiates' History were not Balkan Albanians, but rather Normans in southern Italy. A debate ensued with French Byzantinist Alain Ducellier that was never resolved. More recently, some notable scholars have begun to incorporate Vranoussi's hypothesis into their work. This article re-examines Vranoussi's arguments and concludes that the evidence favours the traditional reading of Albanoi as Balkan Albanians over the interpretation of this ethnonym as an obscure reference to Norman mercenaries in territories south of Rome.

Keywords: Balkan history; Byzantine military history; Early Medieval Albania; George Maniakes; Varangian Guard

In the Balkans, the subject of Albanian history tends to straddle the spheres of politics and academia. For example, it is not uncommon for Balkan academics outside Albania to favour hypotheses which see the Albanian people migrating as late as possible into the region, thus countering Albanian claims to autochthony.¹ Albanian scholars can use the same evidence to support very different conclusions. One point of contention is whether Albanians inhabited territories near Dyrrachium (modern-day Durrës in Albania) at the beginning of the eleventh century. If so, the likelihood increases, for various reasons, that their ancestors were already established in these same territories in previous centuries. The challenge facing scholars of all disciplines grappling with such matters is an unfortunate dearth of contemporary textual sources related to the Balkans and its peoples before the eleventh century.

1 See A. Madgearu, 'Problema originii albanezilor. Puncte de vedere (I)', *Revista de Istorie Militară* 1–2 [93–94] (2006) 69–76.

The controversy centres on a passage by Michael Attaleiates, a prominent and influential lawyer and judge close to the centre of imperial life in Constantinople. Attaleiates completed a history of the Byzantine Empire around 1080.² Known in English as the *History*, this work describes events from the 1030s to Attaleiates' own day. The narrative body of the text opens with a short moralistic anecdote involving one of Byzantium's greatest generals, George Maniakes.³ In 1038, the Emperor Michael IV the Paphlagonian sent Maniakes to recover Sicily from Arab Muslim control.⁴ After two years of hard fighting, and having gained most of the island's eastern seaboard, Maniakes led his elite army to decisive victory over the enemy's forces on the plains beneath the western slopes of Mount Etna. Yet with the ultimate prize at last within reach, Maniakes' admiral of the fleet, Stephen *patrikios*, a man with close family ties to the emperor, accused the great general of sedition.⁵ Maniakes was arrested, imprisoned and then replaced by his accuser. The army now fell under incompetent leadership, and the island was soon lost to Byzantium forever.

At first glance, Attaleiates appears to give this event only a cursory examination. Nevertheless, his brief account has generated debate in recent decades over questions concerning the ethnic identity of one of the peoples named in Maniakes' army – the *Albanoi*, who appear together with another people he calls *Latinoi*. There was once consensus among most scholars that these *Albanoi* were Albanians. Then, in 1970, Era Vranoussi published an extensive, detailed and erudite study in Greek, contending that Attaleiates' *Albanoi* were not a Balkan people, but rather mercenaries arriving from Normandy who fought to establish themselves in southern Italy in the 1020s and 1030s.⁶ The eminent French Byzantinist, Alain Ducellier, responded in defence of the traditional interpretation.⁷ Their dispute ran for decades.

In the first English translation of Attaleiates' *History*, published in 2012, Anthony Kaldellis and Dimitris Krallis included a footnote in their text referencing Vranoussi's thesis, without qualification, in which they defined *Albanoi* as 'an antiquarian term referring probably to the Normans (from ancient Alba, near Rome), not modern Albanians'.⁸ Given that a future generation of scholars working with the *History* in

2 Michael Attaleiates, *Michaelis Attaliothae Historia*, ed. W. Brunet de Presle and I. Bekker (Bonn 1853). On issues related to dating Attaleiates' text, see E. Tsolakis, 'Das Geschichtswerk des Michael Attaleiates und die Zeit seiner Abfassung', *Byzantinica* 2 (1970) 251–68 (258).

3 Attaleiates, 9.1–15. The author is indebted to Robert Walker for his kind assistance with various Greek texts, and to Konstantinos Giakoumis for his useful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

4 Maniakes' army likely included units that served with him in previous campaigns.

5 The admiral took revenge against Maniakes for flogging him in public after Stephen allowed the head of the Arab forces in Sicily to escape the island by sea.

6 E. L. Vranoussi, 'Οἱ ὄροι «Ἀλβανοὶ» καὶ «Ἀρβανῖται» καὶ ἡ πρώτη μνεῖα τοῦ ὁμόνομου λαοῦ τῆς Βαλκανικῆς εἰς τὰς πηγὰς τοῦ ΙΑ' αἰῶνος', *Byzantinica Σύμμεικτα* 2 (1970) 207–54.

7 A. Ducellier, 'Nouvel essai de mise au point sur l'apparition du peuple albanais dans les sources historiques byzantines', *Studia albanica* 2 (1972) 299–306.

8 Michael Attaleiates, *The History: Michael Attaleiates*, tr. A. Kaldellis and D. Krallis (Cambridge, MA 2012) 595, n. 11. See also D. Krallis, 'The social views of Michael Attaleiates', in J. Howard-Johnston

English will confront Vranoussi's ideas more as fact than unproved theory, it is timely to review her core arguments concerning the identity of the *Albanoi*.

Vranoussi began her 1970 paper with an observation not previously addressed by scholars. She noted that Attaleiates' *History* includes three passages which, according to the traditional interpretation, all refer to Albanians from the Balkans.⁹ In a first step toward establishing her central hypothesis, Vranoussi drew attention to the fact that the three passages employ two different ethnonyms – the first two use Ἀλβανοί, the third Ἀρβανῖται.¹⁰

Table 1. Three passages from Attaleiates' *History* traditionally interpreted as referring to Balkan Albanians

	Event date	Content	Term used
Passage 1	c.1040	Maniakes is arrested for sedition, the Sicilian campaign collapses and former allies of the empire become enemies. ¹¹	<i>Albanoi</i>
Passage 2	1042–43	Maniakes is released from prison and sent to southern Italy to quell a Norman/Lombard uprising. He rebels against the emperor, leads his army toward Constantinople, but is slain by imperial forces near Ostrovo. ¹²	<i>Albanoi</i>
Passage 3	c.1078	Nikephoros Basilakes, a <i>doux</i> of Dyrrachium, raises an army from the surrounding regions and attempts to overthrow another contender for the throne in Constantinople. ¹³	<i>Arbanitai</i>

Observing that Attaleiates was very careful in his use of language and terminology, Vranoussi argued he would never employ different terms to describe the same people group. Noting that the third passage, using *Arbanitai*, refers to peoples from regions around Dyrrachium, she concluded that *Arbanitai* was the term Attaleiates used for Albanians.¹⁴ By this reasoning, *Albanoi* cannot also denote Albanians.

Ducellier challenged Vranoussi's assumptions concerning Albanian uniformity in this period. He suggested that Attaleiates' use of these two ethnonyms could indicate that the Albanians were not a uniform people group. In his view, *Albanoi* might depict Albanians who were well integrated into Byzantine society and culture, to the point of being equal to the Byzantines in their legal status (*isopoliteia*), while *Arbanitai* (named as soldiers among an army hastily assembled by *doux* Basilakes from regions around Dyrrachium in 1078) could describe Albanians who were less acculturated to

(ed.), *Social Change in Town and Country in Eleventh-Century Byzantium* (Oxford 2020) 44–61 (55, n. 41); N. Webber, *The Evolution of Norman Identity, 911-1154* (Woodbridge 2005) 87–9. More recent debates about ethnography and collective identity in Byzantium in the early middle ages lie beyond the scope of this article. For an overview of related issues see, Y. Stouraitis, 'Reinventing Roman ethnicity in high and late medieval Byzantium', *Medieval World* 5 (2017) 70–94.

9 Vranoussi, 'Οἱ ὄποι', 207.

10 Vranoussi, *op.cit.* 209–10.

11 Attaleiates, 9.8–15.

12 Attaleiates, 18.17–23.

13 Attaleiates, 297.20–2; Vranoussi, 'Οἱ ὄποι', 231.

14 Vranoussi, *op.cit.*, 231, 235.

Byzantine ways and more pugnacious than their *Albanoi* counterparts.¹⁵ Owing to a paucity of surviving textual evidence, the question remains unresolved.

Vranoussi did not consider the possibility that different Albanian groups might have been known by different names. Her conclusion that Attaleiates used *Arbanitai* alone to describe Albanians is fundamental to her reading of the first of Attaleiates' two *Albanoi* passages. She also argued that a full understanding of this passage requires special attention and wider commentary, and suggested that certain facts only hinted at from one point of view can be clarified by comparing Attaleiates' text with other contemporary sources, both Byzantine and western.¹⁶ The sources she used to this end were, primarily, John Skylitzes' *Synopsis Historiarum* and *Skylitzes Continuatus*.¹⁷ This is significant because of the conclusions she drew. By interpolating external information into Attaleiates' version of events and arguing from silence in the sources, she reinterpreted the first of the *History's* *Albanoi* passages so as to preclude the possibility that Attaleiates' *Albanoi* were ever a Balkan people.

Before addressing the texts of Skylitzes, Vranoussi scrutinized a short and obscure but significant phrase in this passage which Attaleiates used to describe the geographical location of the *Albanoi* and *Latinoi*. It reads, ὅσοι μετὰ τὴν ἑσπερίαν Ῥώμην τοῖς Ἰταλικοῖς πλησιάζουσι μέρεσι.¹⁸ Henri Grégoire suggested replacing μετὰ with κατὰ, and gave this phrase in his French translation as 'qui, du côté de la Rome occidentale, sont voisins de l'Italie'.¹⁹ Vranoussi dismissed this offering as incomprehensible, and chided Grégoire for failing to grasp the meaning of the source text.

While admitting the phrase is difficult to understand,²⁰ Vranoussi contended that Attaleiates did not describe the *Albanoi* as 'voisins de l'Italie' (neighbours of Italy), but πλησιάζουσι τοῖς Ἰταλικοῖς μέρεσι, in which she read πλησιάζουσι as γειτνιάζουν (to abut upon), and τοῖς Ἰταλικοῖς μέρεσι as 'Italian territories' (in line with *regionibus italicis* from Nathan Rosenstein's nineteenth-century Latin translation).²¹ She explained that after the establishment of the Catepanate of Italy (969–1071), Byzantine authors ceased to employ *Italia* for the entire Apennine Peninsula, but used it instead to describe those specific and confined administrative regions still under Byzantine rule.²²

15 A. Ducellier, 'Les Albanais dans l'empire byzantine: de la communauté à l'expansion', in C. Gasparis (ed.), *Oi Albanoi sto Meseiaiova* (Athens 1998) 17–45 (38–9).

16 Vranoussi, 'Οἱ ὄροι', 210.

17 John Skylitzes, *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. I. Thurn (Berlin 1973); *Skylitzes Continuatus, Η Συνέχεια τῆς Χρονογραφίας τοῦ Ἰωάννου Σκυλίτζη*, ed. E. T. Tsolakes (Thessaloniki 1968).

18 Attaleiates, 9.12–13. Kaldellis and Krallis, *History*, 13, rendered this phrase as 'those who abut upon the Italian regions by the Elder Rome'.

19 Michael Attaleiates, 'Michel Attaliatès, *Histoire*, traduction française', tr. H. Grégoire, *Byzantion* 28 (1958) 325–62, 328.

20 Vranoussi, 'Οἱ ὄροι', 212, described it as 'ἡ δυσνόητος φράσις'.

21 For Rosenstein's translation, see Attaleiates, 9.

22 However, V. von Falkenhausen, *Untersuchungen über die byzantinische Herrschaft in Süditalien vom 9. bis ins 11. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden 1967) 47, gave evidence for a broader range of meaning for *Italia* in tenth-century Byzantine writings.

Citing an eleventh-century text by Michael Psellos, in which *Italia* refers 'not to the whole coast-line, but only to that part which lies opposite us and has appropriated the name of the whole peninsula',²³ Vranoussi concluded that Attaleiates' phrase τοῖς Ἰταλικοῖς μέρεσι, in this instance, must denote these same regions.

By piecing the various elements together as she defined them, πλησιάζουσι (= to abut upon), τοῖς Ἰταλικοῖς μέρεσι (= Byzantine-occupied regions of southern Italy), and μετὰ τὴν Ῥώμην, which she gives as νοτίως τῆς Ῥώμης (= south of Rome),²⁴ she interpreted Attaleiates' obscure phrase as indicating lands between Rome and Sicily or between Rome and Apulia adjacent to Italian territories occupied by the Byzantines.²⁵ Thus, in her view, the meaning of Attaleiates' text becomes clear. This assertion, that the *Albanoi* lived in southern Italy, lays the foundation for her subsequent arguments that the *Albanoi* were Normans. It remains to be seen if southern Italy is the only interpretation possible for this short phrase in the *History* concerning the geographical location of the *Albanoi* and *Latinoi*.

Drawing from a very wide body of textual sources, Vranoussi's lengthy paper incorporates an impressive array of citations. When analysing the phrase ὅσοι μετὰ τὴν ἑσπερίαν Ῥώμην τοῖς Ἰταλικοῖς πλησιάζουσι μέρεσι, however, she appears to overlook two passages by a famous Byzantine author that could enable a different interpretation to the one she presents. At issue are tenth- and eleventh-century Byzantine perceptions concerning the geography of ancient Italian territories. Should Attaleiates' obscure phrase be seen as referring to the Balkans, it would undermine Vranoussi's attempt to re-identify Attaleiates' *Albanoi* as Normans in territories 'south of Rome'.

We begin with a review of the wider historical context. In the fourth century A.D., Constantine I established himself in the eastern half of the Roman Empire and built the city of Constantinople on the shores of the Bosphorus. His successors made the new metropolis their permanent residence. Relevant to this present study is the fact that Constantine also 'split up the Empire into three large prefectures, each consisting of a number of dioceses'.²⁶ These were: the Prefecture of the East, including Constantinople and Thrace; the Prefecture of Illyricum, with its capital at Thessalonike and lands extending to Dyrrachium and environs; and the Prefecture of Italy, which included Dalmatia. According to George Ostrogorsky, 'it was not until the end of the fourth century that their boundaries took firm shape'.²⁷

23 Michael Psellos, *Michaelis Pselli Chronographia*, ed. D. R. Reinsch, I (Berlin 2014) 138, 78.4–6: ἀλλὰ μόνον δὴ τὸ πρὸς ἡμᾶς τμήμα, τὸ κοινὸν ἰδιοσάμενον ὄνομα. ὁ μὲν οὖν τοῖς ἐκεῖσε μέρεσι μετὰ παντὸς ἐπιστάς τοῦ στρατεύματος, πᾶσιν ἐχρᾶτο τοῖς στρατηγήμασι. Engl. tr., Michael Psellos, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*, tr. E. R. A. Sewter (Harmondsworth 1966) 193.

24 Vranoussi, 'Οἱ ὄροι', 214. See also, Ducellier, 'Les Albanais dans l'empire byzantin', 36–7, and 37, n. 86.

25 Vranoussi, 'Οἱ ὄροι', 213–14.

26 G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, tr. J. Hussey, 2nd English edn (Oxford 1968) 35; J. Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans: a critical survey from the sixth to the late twelfth century* (Ann Arbor 1991) 18–19.

27 Ostrogorsky, *op.cit.*

When the Emperor Theodosius I died in 395, his two sons inherited a divided empire which they ruled over separately, with one in the east and the other in the west. According to John Fine,

The line dividing the two parts of the empire was basically the same as the old Greek-Latin culture line and the later Orthodox-Roman Catholic line. This boundary ran through the Balkans from Sirmium on south to Skadar [modern-day Shkodër in northern Albania]. Thus the Balkans became the border region between Old Rome and New Rome (Byzantium) and between Latin and Greek.²⁸

Written sources are sparse in their coverage of the Balkans for these centuries. The peoples inhabiting the territories along the eastern Adriatic immediately south of Fine's dividing line, including the mountainous lands of what is today northern Albania, likely engaged with the ancient port of Dyrrachium. When the Byzantines established Dyrrachium as a *thema* in the early ninth century much of the region fell under its jurisdiction, though determining precise borders across the different periods is difficult.²⁹ This background may prove useful when it comes to interpreting Attaleiates' phrase, τοῖς Ἰταλικοῖς μέρεσι.

In the tenth century, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus wrote a work concerning the geography of the Byzantine Empire, best known by its conventional Latin title, *De Thematribus*. In a section dealing with the *thema* of Dyrrachium, the emperor stated that Dalmatia 'is a region of Italy' (τῆς Ἰταλίας ἐστὶ χώρα).³⁰ In a later work, known as *De Administrando Imperio*, Constantine described Dalmatia's territories 'in olden times', as follows:

Dalmatia used to start at the confines of Dyrrachium, or Antibari, and used to extend as far as the mountains of Istria, and spread out as far as the river Danube. All this area was under the rule of the Romans and this province was the most illustrious of all the provinces of the west [τῶν ἄλλων ἐσπερίων θεμάτων].³¹

28 Fine, *Early Medieval Balkans*, 15.

29 A. Ducellier, *La façade maritime de l'Albanie au moyen âge: Durazzo et Valona du XIe au XVe siècle* (Thessaloniki 1981) 92. On Dyrrachium's establishment as a theme, see J. Ferluga, 'Sur la date de la création du thème de Dyrrachium', *Byzantium on the Balkans* (Amsterdam 1976) 215–24.

30 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De thematribus*, ed. Agostino Pertusi (Vatican City 1952) 9.35–6 and 40. See H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* I (Munich 1978) 533; J. Shepard, 'Aspects of Byzantine attitudes and policy towards the West in the tenth and eleventh centuries', in J. D. Howard-Johnston (ed.), *Byzantium and the West, c. 850–c. 1200* (Amsterdam 1988) 67–118 (69–70). Vranoussi, 'Οι ὄροι', 212, also cites this passage, but only as an example of how Byzantine authors used 'Italia'.

31 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. G. Moravcsik, tr. R. J. H. Jenkins, rev. edn (Washington, D.C. 1967) 138, 30.8–140, 30.13: Ἐκ παλαιοῦ τοίνυν ἡ Δελματία τὴν ἀρχὴν μὲν εἶχεν ἰ ἀπὸ τῶν συνόρων Δυρραχίου, ἤγουν ἀπὸ Ἀντιβάρεως, καὶ παρετείνετο μὲν μέχρι τῶν τῆς Ἰστρίας ὄρων,

Constantine's assertion that Dalmatia was among τῶν ἑσπερίων θεμάτων (the western themes) with a southern border starting 'at the confines of Dyrrachium' is significant. In his obscure phrase regarding geographical location, Attaleiates also used *hesperia*, describing Rome as τὴν ἑσπερίαν Ῥώμην. Though *hesperia* means, literally, 'western land',³² it is also found in ancient Greek texts and Latin epic poetry depicting Italy and Italian regions.³³ Kaldellis and Krallis seem to recognize an archaic nuance in this instance, for they translate τὴν ἑσπερίαν Ῥώμην as 'the Elder Rome', instead of 'the Western Rome'.³⁴ Attaleiates may have been reflecting on the distant past when he wrote of 'hesperian' Rome and related 'Italian regions'³⁵ if, like Constantine Porphyrogenitus a century before him, he understood that territories once part of Italy had extended to the very borders of Dyrrachium. Judging from Attaleiates' prestigious education, and the breadth of knowledge exhibited in his *History*, it is unlikely he was ignorant of this perception of ancient Italy's Balkan reaches. Given Constantine's claims that Dalmatia 'is a region of Italy', and that, 'in olden times', Dalmatia 'used to start at the confines of Dyrrachium', then if, in the eleventh century, the *Albanoi* inhabited areas south of these old borderlands,³⁶ it is reasonable to read ὅσοι μετὰ τὴν ἑσπερίαν Ῥώμην τοῖς Ἰταλικοῖς πλησιάζουσι μέρεσι as Attaleiates describing Albanians whose lands abut upon regions to the north which, in antiquity, belonged to Italy and were administered from Rome.³⁷ Perhaps when Attaleiates wrote his *History* in the late 1070s, the lands of the *Albanoi* were no longer under Dyrrachium's jurisdiction, and his description is thus a form of archaism. Attaleiates also explains elsewhere in his first *Albanoi* passage that the *Albanoi* (and *Latinoi*) remained close allies of Byzantium until c.1040, when they unexpectedly broke with the empire – which, if the *Albanoi* were Albanians, would have included Dyrrachium. Other evidence suggests that, in these same regions, around the first half of the eleventh century, ecclesiastical

ἐπλατύνετο δὲ μέχρι τοῦ Δανουβίου ποταμοῦ. Ἦν δὲ ἅπασα ἡ τοιαύτη περίχωρος ὑπὸ τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχήν, καὶ ἐνδοξότερον τῶν ἄλλων ἑσπερίων θεμάτων τὸ τοιοῦτον θέμα ἐτύγγανε; Engl. tr., 139, 141.

32 H. G. Liddell *et al.*, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford 1968) 586.

33 See e.g. N. Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 3: A Commentary* (Leiden 2006) 11, 153.

34 Attaleiates, *History*, 13.

35 A. Kazhdan, 'Latins and Franks in Byzantium: perception and reality from the eleventh to the twelfth century', in A. Laiou and R. P. Mottahedeh (eds.), *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World* (Washington D. C. 2001) 83–100, 86, observed that the use of 'ancient nomenclature' was 'in general typical of Attaleiates'. On classicisms in Byzantine writing, see N. G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium* (London 1996) 4–8.

36 For evidence suggesting that these territories were the homelands of the Albanians, see A. Ducellier, 'L'Arbanon et les albanais au XIe siècle', *Travaux et Mémoires* 3 (1968) 353–68; G. Stadtmüller, *Forschungen zur albanischen Frühgeschichte*, 2nd edn (Wiesbaden 1966) 51, 118–24; A. Madgearu, *The Wars of the Balkan Peninsula: Their Medieval origins*, rev. edn (Lanham, MD 2008) 25–6.

37 It is assumed the term *katalmeta* describes some relationship between τοῖς Ἰταλικοῖς μέρεσι and ἑσπερίαν Rome, but not as Vranoussi suggests, 'south of Rome'. See A. Ducellier, 'Les Albanais dans l'empire byzantine', 37.

sites previously affiliated with the Eastern Church suddenly came under the auspices of Western Christianity and the pope in Rome.³⁸

Without considering alternative interpretations for Attaleiates' obscure phrase, Vranoussi set hers as the first entry in the following list of six elements depicting the *Albanoi* and *Latinoi*, extracted from the *History*'s first *Albanoi* passage: (1) they were established in a specific region of southern Italy, (2) they were formerly σύμμαχοι (allies) of the Byzantines, (3) they shared in the Byzantine's ἰσοπολιτεία (equality of civil rights/commonwealth),³⁹ (4) and in their θρησκεία ('practicing the same religion'), (5) they had their own ἄρχων, and (6) they became enemies (πολέμιοι παραλογώτατοι) of the Byzantines.⁴⁰

Vranoussi observed that these elements, taken together, do not depict a tagmatic military unit within the Byzantine army (as Grégoire assumed in his translation), but entire populations under the rule of an *archon*.⁴¹ This observation has merit. Her subsequent conclusion that these *Albanoi* were somehow Normans in Italy in the mid-eleventh century is, as we shall see, far less robust. It seems remarkable that a scholar of Vranoussi's ability should suggest, in the absence of firm supporting evidence, that Attaleiates – whom she acknowledged was precise in his use of language – applied meaning-laden terms such as *symmachoi* and *isopoliteia* to the small and largely disparate bands of recalcitrant Norman mercenaries before 1040,⁴² happily selling their swords to the highest bidder and wreaking havoc across southern Italy,⁴³ or that Attaleiates would have expressed surprise over one or more of these same bands breaking an agreement with the Byzantines.⁴⁴ Later in his *History*, Attaleiates described Normans (using Φράγγοι) as 'a race treacherous by nature'.⁴⁵ Alexander Kazhdan noted Anna Komnene's awareness of the Normans' 'habit of breaking oaths'.⁴⁶ For Byzantines

38 P. Xhufi, 'Krishtërimi Roman në Shqipëri, shek. VI–XVI', in N. Ukgjini, W. Kamsi, R. Gurakuqi (eds.), *Simpozium ndërkombëtar: Krishtërimi ndër shqiptarë, Tiranë, 16–19 nëntor 1999* (Shkodër 2000) 89–99 (91–2).

39 Shepard, 'Aspects', 96–7.

40 Vranoussi, 'Οἱ ὄποι', 215.

41 Vranoussi, *op.cit.* 215, 218. On *tagmata*, see H. Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, 'Recherches sur l'administration de l'empire byzantin aux IXe–XIe siècles', *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 84/1 (1960) 1–111 (24–7).

42 For *symmachoi*, see J. Shepard, 'Uses of the Franks in eleventh-century Byzantium', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 15 (1993) 275–305, 280–1. For *isopoliteia*, see D. Zakythinos, 'Byzance: état national ou multi-national?', *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρίας* 10 (1981) 29–52 (45–6); P. Sánchez, 'L'*isopoliteia* chez Denys d'Halicarnasse: nouvelle interpretation', *Chiron* 46 (2016) 45–83. G. Loud, *The Age of Robert Guiscard: Southern Italy and the Norman conquest* (Harlow 2000) 75, observed that in southern Italy in the 1030s, 'the Normans were far from being united'.

43 Loud, *op.cit.* 74–80.

44 J. Shepard, 'Uses of the Franks', 282, wrote of the Normans appearing 'quite abruptly in Greek and Latin sources on mid-eleventh-century Byzantium – self-serving, materialistic volunteers, to whom pay was of overriding concern, and who were swift to mutiny if left unsatisfied'.

45 Attaleiates, 125.9–10: φύσει γὰρ ἄπιστον τὸ γένος τῶν Φράγγων. Engl. tr., Shepard, 'Aspects', 96.

46 Kazhdan, 'Latins and Franks', 91.

writing in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, both treachery and martial prowess are recurring themes in their developing concepts of 'Norman-ness'. From the little that is known of Normans in southern Italy before 1040, it is difficult to see how they conform to Attaleiates' depictions of the *Albanoi* and *Latinoi*.

In search of other support for her *Albanoi* = Normans hypothesis, Vranoussi turned to Skylitzes' *Synopsis*.⁴⁷ Skylitzes reported that the *protospatharios* Michael Dokeianos replaced Maniakes as head of the imperial army in southern Italy.⁴⁸ One day, a Lombard named Arduin, who had led the Norman unit in Maniakes' army in Sicily, complained that his men were not treated fairly, including in matters of pay. Dokeianos responded by flogging Arduin in public. As a result, Arduin and his Norman followers turned against the Byzantines, inflicting two major defeats on Dokeianos' army in 1041.⁴⁹ In the second battle, at a place called Horai, a large force of Lombards joined with the Franks.⁵⁰ Shortly after, the emperor recalled Dokeianos from Italy. Vranoussi drew attention to apparent similarities between Skylitzes' account of these events and the first of Attaleiates' *Albanoi* passages. Both texts report Michael Dokeianos mistreating a foreign leader. According to the *Synopsis*, Dokeianos' flogging of Arduin caused a Norman revolt that was later supported by Lombard forces. In the *History*, Dokeianos' offence against the *archon* of the *Albanoi* and *Latinoi* turned them into enemies of the empire. On the assumption that the two authors were reporting the same events, Vranoussi equated Attaleiates' anonymous *archon* with Skylitzes' Arduin, the *Albanoi* with the Normans, and the *Latinoi* with the Lombards.⁵¹ This reading of the *History*'s first *Albanoi* passage offers support for her hypothesis that the *Albanoi* were Normans. Unfortunately for Vranoussi's argument, however, this approach to these texts is flawed by a substantial error in Skylitzes' *Synopsis*.

In a landmark paper, Jonathan Shepard (without drawing attention to the point) challenged the central feature in Vranoussi's interpretation of the two accounts. He argued that Skylitzes' report of Dokeianos' flogging of Arduin was a 'distortion', and 'almost certainly incorrect'.⁵² A close review of the textual evidence in various languages led Shepard to deduce that it was Maniakes who punished Arduin, not Dokeianos. Wolfgang Felix arrived at the same conclusion.⁵³ Felix also questioned Arduin's role in Maniakes' army, and determined that the historian Geoffrey Malaterra had correctly described the Greek-speaking Lombard as a liaison and interpreter between the Normans and the Byzantines, whereas Skylitzes saw him

47 Vranoussi, 'Oï ôpot', 218–20.

48 Skylitzes, 425.1–426.16.

49 von Falkenhausen, *op.cit.* 89.

50 Skylitzes, 426, 3.37.

51 Vranoussi, 'Oï ôpot', 225.

52 J. Shepard, 'Byzantium's last Sicilian expedition: Skylitzes' testimony', *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici* 14–16 (1977–79) 145–159 (151–2).

53 W. Felix, *Byzanz und die islamische Welt im früheren 11. Jahrhundert: Geschichte der politischen Beziehungen von 1001–1055* (Wien 1981) 211, n. 70. See also Loud, *The Age of Robert Guiscard*, 79.

erroneously as an independent prince.⁵⁴ Vranoussi would have been aware of discrepancies between the sources over who flogged Arduin, for at least two of the authors she cited elsewhere in her paper depicted Maniakes as the perpetrator.⁵⁵ The fact that she fails to engage with this issue should raise concerns over her handling of existing evidence. If, as now seems likely, it was Maniakes who flogged Arduin, then Vranoussi's contention that the *Synopsis* and the *History* report the same event unravels, for the only specific element the two accounts share – the name of Michael Dokeianos – is eliminated. Furthermore, the dates and locations do not tally, for Maniakes could only have beaten Arduin while still in command in Sicily, long before the Lombard and his followers took to fighting Dokeianos in southern Italy. Given that Skylitzes may have used Attaleiates' *History* as a source for his *Synopsis*,⁵⁶ it is also possible that, having read in Attaleiates about Dokeianos offending the *Albanoi/Latinoi archon*, Skylitzes interpreted *Latinoi* as 'Normans', assumed the passage concerned Arduin's flogging and aligned his account with the *History*'s version. This would explain why Skylitzes 'erroneously' depicted Arduin as leader of the Normans (ἀρχηγὸν ἔχοντα Ἄρδουῖνον).⁵⁷

In an attempt to further strengthen her case, Vranoussi proposed an etymology for her *Albanoi* = Normans hypothesis.⁵⁸ Working back from the two occurrences of *Albanoi* in Attaleiates' *History*, she suggested that when the Normans first arrived in southern Italy, the existing populations referred to them using a conjectural term *albaniaubains*, which she derived from the Latin *alibi*, meaning 'aliens'. This supposed usage in southern Italy (for which there is no evidence) then passed to Constantinople (again, without evidence) where Attaleiates later learned of it and, alone among Byzantine or any other authors, applied it to Normans (instead of his usual *Italo*i or *Frango*i) – but only twice and both times in events involving Maniakes in the early 1040s. It is worth noting that in the *History*'s second *Albanoi* passage, Attaleiates named the *Albanoi*, this time together with *Romaioi* (regular Byzantine soldiers), as members of Maniakes' rebel force in 1042–43. This is significant because William of Apulia, writing at the end of the eleventh century, claimed that the Normans of southern Italy all refused Maniakes' offers of payment to join his

54 Around the time of the first crusade, Geoffrey Malaterra, in Italy, wrote a prose account of the Norman conquest entitled *De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis et Roberti Guiscardi ducis fratris eius*.

55 J. Gay, *L'Italie méridionale et l'empire byzantin depuis l'avènement de Basile Ier jusqu'à la prise de Bari par les Normands (867–1071)* (Paris 1904) 453–4; F. Chalandon, *Histoire de la domination normande en Italie et en Sicile* (Paris 1907) 94.

56 C. Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976–1025)* (Oxford 2005) 83, n. 41.

57 Skylitzes, 425.12.

58 Vranoussi, 'Oι ὄροι', 225–8. See also L. Melazzo, 'The Normans and their languages', in M. Chibnall (ed.), *Anglo-Norman Studies XV: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1992* (Woodbridge 1993) 243–50 (246–7).

insurrection.⁵⁹ Jonathan Shepard observed, 'there is no explicit evidence that they or other Normans took part in the rebellion which [Maniakes] mounted upon returning to Italy in 1042'.⁶⁰ Ducellier's response to Vranoussi's proposed etymology was unambiguous: because no evidence exists to show that the term *aubain* was used in Italy, it cannot be transferred to the text of Attaleiates as denoting Normans. On the basis that the only Greek examples come from the two passages in Attaleiates' *History*, Ducellier concluded that the Ἀλβανοί were neither aliens nor Normans.⁶¹

The cornerstone of Vranoussi's hypothesis is her insistence that the identity of the *Albanoi* must be sought in southern Italy. Most of her other arguments stand or fall by this. Given the lack of evidence for her attempt to equate the Normans and Lombards of Skylitzes' *Synopsis* with the *Albanoi* and *Latinoi* of the *History*, the highly tenuous nature of her Ἀλβανοί–*Albani*–Normans etymology, and the possibility that Attaleiates' obscure phrase ὅσοι μετὰ τὴν ἐσπερίαν Ῥώμην τοῖς Ἰταλικοῖς πλησιάζουσι μέρεσι refers to lands around Dyrrachium, Vranoussi's attempt to make the *Albanoi* into Normans is, at best, unconvincing.

Vranoussi's approach to the *Albanoi* question focussed largely on language. She berated scholars for engaging with the *History* in translation without consulting editions in the original Greek, and she admonished those whose knowledge of Greek she deemed inadequate.⁶² She worked closely with Attaleiates' text, assigning definitions to specific terms and phrases and clarifying its meaning using information from other sources. In her analysis she appears to treat Attaleiates' first *Albanoi* passage as a dispassionate historical narrative. Viewing beyond the minutiae of the text, however, reveals that Attaleiates never intended to give a full account of the Sicilian campaign. This point takes on considerable importance, for the passage's structure and limited content suggest a very different purpose, further weakening Vranoussi's hypothesis that the *Albanoi* were Normans.

In his preface, Attaleiates stated that the study of history 'has proven to be exceedingly useful for life, as it reveals the lives of those who were virtuous and those who were not, describes illustrious deeds born of flawless planning and effort as well as inglorious actions caused by the faulty planning or negligence of those governing public affairs'.⁶³ When past deeds are 'stripped bare by history', he continued, 'they convey clear instruction and set patterns for the future. They simply lead us to imitate

59 William of Apulia, *Guillaume de Pouille: La Geste de Robert Guiscard*, ed. M. Mathieu (Palermo 1961) 126–7.

60 Shepard, 'Uses of the Franks', 284, n. 38.

61 Ducellier, 'Les Albanais dans l'empire byzantin', 36–7.

62 Vranoussi, 'Οἱ ὄροι', 235, 240.

63 From the new standard edition, with Spanish translation, Michael Attaleiates, *Miguel Atalates: Historia*, ed. and trans., I. Pérez Martín (Madrid 2002) 5.5–9: Τὸ τῆς ἱστορίας χρῆμα πολλοῖς τῶν πάλαι σοφῶν σπουδάσθην οὐ παρέργως χρήσιμον ἐς τὰ μάλιστα κατεφάνη τῷ βίῳ, τοὺς τῶν ἀρίστων καὶ μὴ τοιούτων βίου ἀνακαλύπτον καὶ πράξεις ἐπιφανεῖς ἐξ ἀνεπιλήπτου βουλήσ καὶ σπουδῆς διαγράφων καὶ ἀδοξίας αὐτῶν πάλιν ἐκ δυσβουλίας ἢ ὀλιγωρίας τῶν προεστώτων τοῖς πράγμασιν. Engl. tr., *History*, 9.

what was discerned well and to avoid ill-advised and shameful deeds'.⁶⁴ In Attaleiates' compact and carefully crafted account of the causes and consequences of Maniakes' downfall – with which he opens the narrative body of his entire work – he clearly aimed to increase the didactic value of the passage by 'stripping bare' the 'inglorious actions' directed against the great general, presumably to encourage his audience to avoid such 'ill-advised and shameful deeds' in the future.

Attaleiates began by establishing the period and context of his anecdote, writing: 'While the sceptres of the Romans were still held by the blessed emperor Michael, whose homeland was the province of the Paphlagonians, the race of the Hagarenes in the west, in Sicily, was pressed hard by Roman forces, both at sea and on land.'⁶⁵ This terse introduction to the 1038–40 Sicilian campaign assumes considerable familiarity with the subject matter on the part of readers, if they are to comprehend the scant reference to 'the race of Hagarenes' (Arabs) in Sicily 'pressed hard' by Roman (Byzantine) forces 'both at sea and on land'. Attaleiates adds no information. Having set the scene, he interpreted the events that played out in Sicily as follows:

And had Georgios Maniakes, who had been entrusted with the overall military command, not been slandered that he was seeking to usurp the throne and removed from his position, and had the war not been assigned to others, that island would now be under Roman rule, a place so large, famous, endowed with the greatest cities along its coasts, and lacking in no resource.⁶⁶

From other sources we know that Stephen *patrikios* – admiral of the fleet for the Sicilian campaign and brother-in-law to Emperor Michael IV – falsely accused Maniakes of sedition. We also know that the emperor's brother, John the Orphanotrophos, who held great authority over the empire at that time, had the general arrested and transported in chains to Constantinople. Without naming the perpetrators, Attaleiates links Maniakes' mistreatment (slandered, removed from his post) with the disasters that followed. This brings us to the crux of the story. Attaleiates now strips bare the 'inglorious deeds' behind Maniakes' undoing, and reveals the tragic consequences for Byzantium: 'As it was, however, envious resentment brought down the man, his accomplishments, and that great enterprise. For his successors in command made

64 Attaleiates, *op.cit.*, 5.12–17: Ταῦτα τοίνυν διὰ τῆς ἱστορίας ἀπογυμνούμενα, πολλῆς, ὡς ἴεφαμεν, εἰσηνηχοῦτα τὴν χρησιμότητα, διδασκαλία σαφῆς χρηματίζοντα καὶ ρυθμὸς τῶν μετέπειτα, πρὸς μίμησιν ἀτεχνῶς ἔλκοντα τῶν εἰς διακεκριμένων καὶ ἀποτροπῆν τῶν ἀσυμβούλων καὶ δυσκλεῶς πεπραγμένων ἐν πολέμοις καὶ μάχαις καὶ λοιποῖς ἀναγκαισιότατοις ἐπιχειρήμασι καὶ προβλήμασι. Engl. tr., *History*, 11.

65 Attaleiates, *op.cit.*, 7.1–4: Ἄρτι τὰ Ῥωμαίων σκήπτρα διέποντος τοῦ τῆς εὐσεβοῦς λήξεως Βασιλέως Μιχαήλ, ὃ πατὴρ ἦ τῶν Παφλαγόνων ἐγνωρίζετο ἐπαρχία, κατεπολεμήθη τὸ τῶν Ἀγαρινῶν φύλον πρὸς ἐσπέραν ἐν Σικελία ναυτικαῖς τε καὶ πεζικαῖς Ῥωμαίων ἰδυνάμεσι. Engl. tr., *History*, 11 (slightly revised).

66 Attaleiates, *op.cit.*, 7.4–8: Καὶ εἰ μὴ διαβληθεὶς περὶ τυραννίδος ὁ τὴν στρατηγίαν τῶν ὄλων ἐμπιστευθεὶς Γεώργιος ἐκεῖνος ὁ Μανιάκης, ἐκ μέσου γέγονε καὶ ἄλλοις ἀνετέθη τὰ τοῦ πολέμου, κἂν ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίοις ἐτέλει νυνὶ νῆσος οὕτω μεγάλῃ καὶ περιβόητος καὶ πόλεσι περιεζωσμένη μεγίσταις καὶ τῶν ἄλλων χρηστῶν οὐδενὸς ἀποδέουσα. Engl. tr., *History*, 11, 13.

wretched and base decisions, causing the Romans to lose that island along with most of their army.⁶⁷

This first *Albanoi* passage exemplifies the type of didactic moralizing promised in the *History*'s preface. Attaleiates, a well-informed and well-connected author with access to a very wide range of sources, gives an account of Maniakes and the Sicilian campaign that is devoid of detail. He includes just enough information to show that moral failure in leaders can bring disaster. The shameful debacle involving Maniakes resulted in three significant 'losses' for the Byzantines: (1) the island of Sicily and all its riches, (2) 'most of their army', and (3) a pair of close allies, deemed so significant that their description takes up a full third of the entire passage. Attaleiates concludes his opening anecdote as follows:

Not only that, but the Albans and Latins who abut upon the Italian regions [κατὰ] the Elder Rome and were previously allies and formed part of our commonwealth, even practicing the same religion,⁶⁸ most unexpectedly now became our enemies because the man who held the command, the *doux* Michael Dokeianos, offended their ruler.⁶⁹

Vranoussi would have us accept that the revelation this passage builds to and culminates in – *symmachoi* peoples becoming staunch enemies of the empire – involved unruly bands of barbarian outsiders, largely ignorant of the imperial language, culture and religion, who, together with their Lombard insurgent overlords, had tried to drive the Byzantines from territories they still held in southern Italy. If Attaleiates hoped to dissuade his readers from engaging in 'ill-advised and shameful deeds', the example of disgruntled Norman mercenaries fighting Dokeianos in 1041 presents a woefully ineffective deterrent. Attaleiates' moralistic purpose in this short passage is badly served by Vranoussi's reading of *Albanoi* as Normans in southern Italy.

If, instead, we read Attaleiates' *Albanoi* as Balkan Albanians – concurring with Ducellier that (1) the weight of evidence favours this traditional interpretation over 'Normans', and (2) the Albanians were not a uniform people group known by one ethnonym only – then it remains to consider briefly the identity of their *Latinoi* counterparts, described together with the Albanians as former allies of the empire who had also participated with the Byzantines in their commonwealth (*isopoliteia*) and

67 Attaleiates, *op.cit.*, 7.8–11: Νῦν δὲ ὁ φθόνος καὶ τὸν ἄνδρα καὶ τὰς πράξεις καὶ τοσοῦτον κατειργάσατο ἔργον, αἰσχροῦς γὰρ καὶ ἀγεννῶς βουλευσαμένων τῶν ὕστερον στρατηγῶν, σὺν αὐτῇ καὶ τὸ πλεῖστον τοῦ στρατεύματος ἀπολόλει Ῥωμαίοις. Engl. tr., *History*, 13.

68 Shepard, 'Aspects', 96, translates: 'Even our former allies and partakers of an equal commonwealth (*isopoliteia*) with us, as being of the very same religious worship, Albans and those Latins beyond western Rome who live near the Italian regions...'.⁶⁹

69 Attaleiates, *op.cit.* 7, 11–15: Οὐ μὴν δὲ ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ ποτε σύμμαχοι καὶ τῆς ἰσοπολιτείας ἡμῖν συμμετέχοντες, ὡς καὶ αὐτῆς τῆς θρησκείας, Ἀλβανοὶ καὶ Λατῖνοι ὅσοι κατὰ τὴν ἑσπερίαν Ῥώμην τοῖς ἰταλικοῖς πλησιάζουσι μέρεσι, πολέμιοι παραλογότατοι ἐχρημάτισαν, ἐμπεπαρωχηκότος εἰς τὸν ἄρχοντα τούτων τοῦ τότε τὴν στρατηγίαν ἰθύνοντος Μιχαὴλ δοκῆδος τοῦ Δοκειανοῦ. Engl. tr., *History*, 13.

religion (*thrēskeia*). By allowing for options beyond just Normans and Lombards when attempting to define Attaleiates' *Latinoi*, it may be possible to reconsider the meaning of the *History*'s first *Albanoi* passage.

Byzantine authors began using the term *Latinos* as a 'generic appellation for Western peoples' in the eleventh century.⁷⁰ Of the units serving in Maniakes' Sicilian campaign, Attaleiates' *Latinoi* could denote any of the following: (1) the 300 Normans sent from southern Italy by Prince Guaimar of Salerno,⁷¹ (2) the Lombards who joined them or served with regular conscripts from the Byzantine-held regions in southern Italy, (3) the Varangian Guard, (4) Harald Hardrada, the future king of Norway, and his five hundred Scandinavian warriors,⁷² or (5) some combination of the above.

Many scholars have assumed that the *Latinoi* of Attaleiates' first *Albanoi* passage were the Normans serving in the Sicilian campaign who left for Southern Italy after Maniakes flogged Arduin.⁷³ Furthermore, a reference in *Skylitzes Continuatus* asserts, among other things, that Maniakes (c.1042) took many Normans (*Frangoi*) with him from Italy to Byzantium to fight in his rebellion.⁷⁴ This text also claims that, after their defeat at the battle of Ostrovo (now in north-western Greece) – which they reached from Dyrrachium on the Via Egnatia – some remained in Byzantium and took on the name *Maniakatoi*.⁷⁵ Shepard observes that this passage in the *Continuatus* is 'inaccurate in several respects'.⁷⁶ Among the issues he raised is the fact that earlier sources do not name Normans as insurrectionists in the cause of Maniakes. As noted above, William of Apulia stated explicitly that no Normans agreed to join with the general. Outside of *Skylitzes Continuatus*, those named in Maniakes' rebel force were *Albanoi*, *Romaioi* (regular Byzantine troops) and Varangians.⁷⁷ The surmise that

70 A. Kazhdan *et al.* (eds.), *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, II (New York 1991) 1187 for Latins; Kazhdan, 'Latins and Franks', 86; Shepard, 'Uses of the Franks', 276–82.

71 Loud, *The Age of Robert Guiscard*, 77, observed that in response to Michael IV's request for assistance in the Sicilian campaign, Guaimar 'appears to have used this opportunity to rid himself of potential trouble-makers', by sending his Norman mercenaries to Maniakes. As to the number of Normans involved in Sicily, see von Falkenhausen, *Untersuchungen*, 72.

72 On the role of the Varangians and Harald Hardrada (Haraldr Sigurðarson harðráði) in Maniakes' army, see S. Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium: an aspect of Byzantine military history*, ed. and tr. B. Benediktz (Cambridge 1978) 66–71.

73 For example, see Shepard, 'Aspects', 96–7.

74 *Skylitzes Continuatus*, 167.7–12.

75 Anna Komnene, *Anna Comnenae Alexias*, ed. D. R. Reinsch and A. Kambylis, I (Berlin 2001) 20, 228, described them as καὶ τῆς τοῦ Μανιάκου ἐκείνου ἀποσπάδος ('members of the detachment of the famous Maniakes') in events dating to 1078, and τῶν καλουμένων Μανιακατῶν Λατίνων ('the so-called Maniacate Latins'), in events dating to the early 1090s. Engl. tr., *The Alexiad of Anna Comnena*, tr. E. R. A. Sewter (Harmondsworth 1969) 40 and 238. See Glykatzzi-Ahrweiler, 'Recherches', 34, n. 10; Shepard, 'Uses of the Franks', 284, n. 38.

76 Shepard, *op.cit.*

77 In an encomium dedicated to Constantine IX, possibly composed before 1055, Michael Psellos, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη. Συλλογή ἀνεκδότων μνημείων τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς ἱστορίας*, ed. K. N. Sathas, V (Venice 1876) 138, stated, καὶ τῆς Ρωσικῆς μοίρας οὐκ ἐλάχιστον ('not the least part of the Russian contingent')

Attaleiates' *Latinoi* were Normans invites the same difficulties as Vranoussi's *Albanoi* = Normans hypothesis, for Attaleiates described the *Albanoi* and these *Latinoi* in precisely the same terms. Furthermore, the *History* states it was *doux* Michael Dokeianos who had offended their *archon*, which could have occurred only after they left Sicily for southern Italy.

From this, it is possible to suggest two tentative conclusions: (1) that Attaleiates' account of Dokeianos offending the *Albanoi/Latinoi archon* concerns a separate and unrelated incident to Maniakes' flogging of Arduin, and (2) that the three hundred Normans in Maniakes' Sicilian campaign were not the *Latinoi* Attaleiates mentioned in his first *Albanoi* passage. Otherwise, we would have to accept that Attaleiates mistakenly named Dokeianos as Arduin's tormentor, incorrectly described Arduin as an *archon* and then left him anonymous, despite the detailed description of the *Albanoi* and *Latinoi* at the end of this passage. On the basis that Attaleiates' *History* was a major source in *Skylitzes Continuatus* (a text which Skylitzes may also have compiled),⁷⁸ and there is evidence to suggest Skylitzes used the *History* in his *Synopsis*, it seems reasonable to conjecture that the author in both instances read *Latinoi* as 'Normans' in Attaleiates' first *Albanoi* passage and viewed his other information through the prism of that assumption. Catherine Holmes has warned historians that 'it would be dangerous to assume that Skylitzes was merely a passive copyist and abbreviator whose testimony can be accepted as an accurate transmission of the materials he collates', and that his 'active authorship can impose serious distortions on the contents and interpretations of the underlying materials he transmits'.⁷⁹

The other candidates for Attaleiates' *Latinoi*, apart from Normans and Lombards, are the Varangians and/or a contingent of Harald Hardrada's men.⁸⁰ In this case, according to the *History's* account, these Varangians/Rus/Scandinavians would have – together with the *Albanoi* – rejected all ties with Byzantium, which, for the Varangians c.1040, were very close, and become staunch enemies of the empire. Such behaviour by Varangians would have shocked the Byzantines, for, since its establishment by Basil II in the 980s, the Varangian Guard had won high esteem and a place of honour in

fought for Maniakes when he fell at Ostrovo in 1043. See S. Papaioannou, *Michael Psellos: rhetoric and authorship in Byzantium* (Cambridge 2013) 5. This tr., J. Shepard, 'Why did the Russians attack Byzantium in 1043?', *Byzantinische-neugriechische Jahrbücher* 22 (1978) 147–212 (174). According to W. Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford 1997), 955, n. 8, Maniakes' army 'included many Varangians'. See also Blöndal, *The Varangians of Byzantium*, 116–17.

78 Tsolakes, *Skylitzes Continuatus*, 76–99, concluded that Skylitzes also authored the *Continuation*. See also Holmes, *Basil II*, 83, n. 41.

79 Holmes, *op.cit.*, 130.

80 M. Bibikov, 'Byzantine sources for the history of Balticum and Scandinavia', in I. Volt and J. Päll (eds.), *Byzantino-Nordica 2004: papers presented at the International Symposium of Byzantine Studies held on 7–11 May 2004 in Tartu, Estonia* (2005) 12–28 (13), noted that in Psellos' writings, 'the Varangians were identified with "Italians", which reflected their connection with the Normans of Sicily'.

Byzantine society.⁸¹ Anna Komnene observed of the Varangians that they ‘bear on their shoulders the heavy iron sword, they regard loyalty to the emperors and the protection of their persons as a family tradition, a kind of sacred trust and inheritance handed down from generation to generation; this allegiance they preserve inviolate and will never brook the slightest hint of betrayal.’⁸² Varangians in the emperor’s service enjoyed the status of a *symmachoi* people.⁸³ They might also be described (in contrast to Normans) as having shared with the Byzantines in their *isopoliteia*. Equating the *Latinoi* of the *History*’s first *Albanoi* passage with former Varangians presents a more plausible explanation for Attaleiates’ insinuating surprise at their having turned against the empire than the surmise that they were recent Norman arrivals in Italy.

As a working hypothesis, the interpretation advanced here could expand into new and unexpected areas of research. If we accept that Skylitzes may, in this instance, have misread Attaleiates’ *Latinoi* as Normans, then it opens the way to explore the possibility that the later *Maniakatoi* of *Skylitzes Continuatus* were not Normans, but, instead, a combination of Albanians and Varangians from Maniakes’ rebel force who survived defeat at Ostrovo in 1043 and together escaped back up the Via Egnatia to Dyrrachium and the Albanians’ homelands.⁸⁴ Psellos wrote, ‘As for [Maniakes’] army, some got away to their native countries without attracting the enemy’s attention, but the majority deserted’.⁸⁵ That the *Maniakatoi Latinoi* reappear in the company of a *doux* of Dyrrachium in events dating to 1078 and the early 1090s, still bearing the name of the great general, suggests they lived to establish themselves as an organized military force and passed that identity on to their offspring.⁸⁶ This fits with Attaleiates’ statement that the *Albanoi* and *Latinoi* dwelt together under a single *archon* in lands abutting upon ‘Italian regions’ related to ‘*hesperian*’ Rome. Viewed against a possible background of Albanians with former members of the Varangian Guard inhabiting the ancient borderlands near Dyrrachium, we can begin to revisit

81 See D. Smythe, ‘Insiders and outsiders’, in Liz James (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantium* (Malden, MA 2010) 67–80 (75–7).

82 Komnene, I, 79: οἱ δὲ γε ἐπὶ τῶν ὄμων τὰ ξίφη κραδαίνοντες πατριον παράδοσιν καὶ οἷον παρακαταθήκην τινὰ καὶ κληρον τὴν εἰς τοὺς αὐτοκράτορας πίστιν καὶ τὴν τῶν σωμάτων αὐτῶν φυλακὴν ἄλλος ἐξ ἄλλου διαδεχόμενοι τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν πίστιν ἀκράδαντον διατηροῦσι καὶ οὐδὲ ψιλὸν πάντως ἀνέξονται περὶ προδοσίας λόγον. Engl. tr., *Alexiad*, 63.

83 Shepard, ‘Uses of the Franks’, 280–1; Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, ‘Recherches’, 34.

84 Perhaps by the time of writing *Skylitzes Continuatus*, the origin story of the *Maniakatoi Latinoi* had been largely lost to the Byzantines.

85 Michael Psellos, *Chronographie*, ed. E. Renauld, II (Paris 1967) 6, 86.4–5: τὸ δὲ περὶ ἐκεῖνον στρατόπεδον, μέρη μὲν τινα ἐπὶ τὰς οἰκειὰς πατρίδας ἀπεληλύθεσαν ἀφανῶς, τὸ δὲ πλεῖστον μέρος τοῖς ἡμετέροις προσέθετο. Engl. tr., Psellos, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*, 197–8. The ‘enemy’ here is the imperial army. Psellos’ statement that ‘some got away to their native countries’, suggests that the ‘majority’ who ‘deserted’ were regular Byzantine soldiers who returned to the emperor’s service after the death of Maniakes.

86 The hypothesis that the *Maniakatoi* operated outside of the imperial army’s command is preferable to the surmise that Constantine IX allowed Maniakes’ deserters to remain as a unit and bear the name of their slain leader, the very general who had come so close to deposing the emperor.

necessary questions about the wider history of this region in the second half of the eleventh century.

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