Nomos and canon in Byzantium: the case of the confiscation of the holy vessels during the reign of Alexios I Comnenus.

TOMOS 31 Volume

ANGELIKI PANAGOPOULOU

NOMOS AND CANON IN BYZANTIUM: THE CASE OF THE CONSPIRACY OF THE HOLY VESSELS DURING THE REIGN OF ALEXIOS I KOMNENOS

ΑΘΗΝΑ • 2021 • ATHENS
In *Alexias*, Anna Komnene is sketching vividly the dilemma of her father, Alexios I, when, in the aftermath of the victorious advancement of the Norman Robert Guiscard and the conquest of Dyrrachium in October 1081, he needed mercenary troops—and consequently money—to repel the enemy. Anna Komnene is stressing that the state treasury was empty as a result of the poor financial management by Nikephoros III Botaneiates (1078-1081), the predecessor of Alexios I. She also mentions that the emperor turned to his mother and his brother who, at this crucial moment, tried to raise money through the clearance of their personal gold or silver belongings. Their example was followed by others, closely affiliated to the royal family, without resolving the problem. The financial dead end in conjunction with the threat against the Empire forced the Emperor to turn to the old *nomoi* and *canons* on the confiscation of holy vessels. Anna Komnene does not


3. *Alexias* 5, II, 1.78-2.82.

4. *Alexias* 5, II, 2.84-89: οἱ δὲ ἐν ἄμηχανίᾳ γεγονότες καὶ πολλοῖς λογισμοῖς ἀνελήμαστις ἵδια τὲ καὶ κοινὴ, ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸν Ῥομπέρτον αὐθής ὀπλιζόμεννον μεμαθήμεσαν,
fail to stress the anxiety caused by the new war preparations of Robert and she mentions the Komnenoi found out that the confiscation of holy vessels was possible when it came to raise money to save prisoners of war\(^5\). Besides, she points out that even the welfare of Christians in Asia, who had escaped the massacre and were under the power of the barbarians was similar to those of prisoners, as these people were infected at a daily basis by being among faithless. Given the extension and the widely understood concept of captivity, the conviction of sacred utensils and relics into coins to prevent the infection of the Christians, which came from the West, would be regarded as the release and redemption of prisoners of war\(^6\).

It was decided to cut the necessary coins to pay the mercenary troops, after melting a few of the holy vessels that were not in use any more and could be served as a cause for sacrilege and profanity\(^7\). The Holy Council and

\[\text{μὴ ἔχοντες ὅ τι καὶ δράσαιεν εἰς τοὺς πάλαι κειμένους νόμους καὶ τοῖς παρὼνες περὶ τῆς τῶν ἱερῶν ἐκποιήσεως ἀπέβλεπαν: For previous confiscations of ecclesiastical property, see Hendy, Byzantine Monetary Economy, 231.}\]


6. Alexias 5, II, 2.91-93; GLAVINAS, Ἡ περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 56.

7. Alexias 5, II, 2.93-97: ὀλίγα τὰ τῶν πάλαι ἱερόμενον ἱερῶν καὶ καταλελυμένων ὡς εἰς μηδεμίαν χρεῖαν συντελόντα, ἀλλ’ ἀφορμὴν μόνον ἱεροσολύμων καὶ ἀσβεστίας ἐμὲ τοὺς πολλοὺς παράχοινα ἃς ἐλθέν χρήσιμάς εἰς μισθόν τῶν στρατιωτῶν καὶ συμμάχρος τὰ τοιαῦτα χρηματίσας ἐσκέψαντο; see also, Alexias 6, III, 4.54-56; P. Bara, The Apparition of

BYZANTINA SYMMEIKTA 31 (2021), 401-430

http://epublishing.ekt.gr | e-Publisher: EKT | Downloaded at 30/12/2021 05:39:10 |
the clergy, to whom Isaac Komnenos the Sebastocrator referred pleading the canons of the Church about holy vessels not in use any more, reacted against the enforcement of the canons, but they finally assented. Anna Komnene cites the words of Sebastocrator, who admitted that “he was forced to force those whom he did not want to force”.

Furthermore, the Byzantine princess confessed that the issue of the confiscation was the reason why the Komnenoi received harsh criticism, even in the period when Alexias was being written, i.e. in the decade after 1136/37.

Leo, the bishop of Chalcedon, ran the campaign against Alexios as the leading figure of the so-called “Komnenian iconoclasm.” According to Leo of Chalcedon, Anna Komnene’s Reproduction of a Lost Family Account of the Doukai, in: Transmitting and Circulating the Late Antique and Byzantine Words, ed. M. Ivanova – H. Jeffrey [The Medieval Mediterranean 118], Brill 2019, 139-157, esp. 149. For the silver that Heraclius was given on loan from the church of Hagia Sophia in 621, to pay his troops for the campaign in Persia, see Glavinas, Η περί τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 55-56; Hendy, Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy, 231; Boyd, A “Metropolitan” Treasure, 7-8; Mangold, Monetary Value, 135-136.

8. Alexias 5, II, 3.1-11: τούτου γοῦν συνδόξαντος ἀνέρχεται ὁ σεβαστοκράτωρ Ἰσαάκιος εἰς τὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ μέγα τέμενος τὴν σύνοδον ἐκκλησιασάς καὶ τὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἅπαν πλήρωμα. θεασάμενοι δὲ τούτον οἱ τῆς ἱερᾶς συνόδου ἐπ' ἐκκλησίας ἅπαντες συνεδριάζοντες τῷ πατριάρχῃ ἐκθαμβοῦσιν γεγονότες ἱρώτων ὅτις χάριν παρεγένετο. ὁ δὲ «λέξων ἤρε τί πρὸς ἡμᾶς χρήσιμον τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν πραγμάτων παρεμπτώσει καὶ σωστικὸν τοῦ στρατοῦ», ἁμα δὲ καὶ τοῖς περὶ τῶν μὴ χρησιμεύοντων ἱερῶν ἱκάνον τῆς ἱερᾶς ἀπεστομάτιζε καὶ πολλά περὶ τούτων δημηγορεῖτο ἀναγκαζόμενος, φησίν. «ἀναγγέλλων ὦ μᵊ βούλεσθαι ἀναγκαζόμενος καὶ γενναιοίς προτιθέμενος λογισμοῦς ἐδώκε τάχα πείθει τοῖς πλείόνάς; on the synod which may have been held in January 1082 and the laws likely invoked by Isaac, see Glavinas, Η περί τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 59-64.


10. See n. 8.


12. For the term, see Bara, The Apparition, 143 and n. 15; for Leo’s of Chalcedon financial independence, which enabled him to defy the emperor, see M. Angold, Church and
Anna, he did not take into consideration how crucial the situation was or the respective nomoi and canons and he used a rude and abusive language against the Emperor\textsuperscript{13}. The latter tried to bring a little calm to the fierce debate by promising to return the holy vessels to the churches they were


\textsuperscript{13} Alexias 5, II, 4.16-22: καὶ γὰρ ἀρχιερείς τις της τημακάτα Χαλκερδόνος Λέων προύκαθθε, οὐ τὸν πάντα οοφῶν καὶ λογίων, ἀρετῆς δὲ ἐπιμεμλημένος, τὸ δὲ ἄηδος αὐτῷ συλληρμαν καὶ ἀνόικητον οὕτως οὐν τὸν ἐν τοῖς Χαλκοπρατίοις πυλῶν ἀφαιρουμένου τοῦ ἐπικειμένου αὐτάς ἀρχηγών ή καὶ χρονίου εἰς τὸ μέσον εἰσδύσει ἐπαρρησιάζετο μηδὸς ἢ οἰκονομίας ἢ τῶν περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν κανόνων ἀκριβῆ γνοσιν εἶχε. Τοῦτο δὲ οὐκ ἐπιδιορθώνει τον ἄλλο ἄρχηγον ή καὶ ἰσοξύνειν εἰς τὸ μέσον εἰσδύσει ἐπαρρησιάζετο μηδὸς ἢ οἰκονομίας ἢ τῶν περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν κανόνων ἀκριβῆ γνοσιν εἶχε.
taken from. After many years, Alexios was forced to cause the deposition of
the bishop as a result of his rigorous attitude and sent him to exile.

As Anna Komnene notes, the repercussions of the above mentioned
dispute went on for almost fifteen years (1081–1095) and reached her age.
As we can infer from Alexias, it was a hotly debated issue that challenged
the limits of the legislative power of the Emperor, the relationship between
nomos and canon, and the attitude of the Emperor towards the canons
and the Church in general. This paper attempts an approach to the above
mentioned issues and their concepts in the 11th century, since even in that
period they were not clearly defined.

Anna herself uses the terms nomos and canon in Alexias as if there
were no substantial differences. The Komnenoi interpreted nomoi and
canons concerning the confiscation of the holy vessels, Isaac Komnenos the
Sebastocrator pleaded the canons before the members of the Holy Council,
nomoi and canons were invoked by Alexios and the high priests, in order
to refute Leo's arguments, while Leo, the bishop of Chalcedon, criticised
Alexios without taking into consideration the “nomoi about the holy
vessels.” The fact that Alexios and his family had the need to turn to the

---

14. Alexias 5, II, 6,50-58; T. Creazzo, Coinvolgimenti politici e sociali nell’affaire de Leone
Metropolita di Calcedonia, Orpheus 26 (2005) 1-2, 66-85, esp. 67-68; E. Malamut, Alexis Ier
Les procès d’hérésie à Byzance et la définition de l’ecclesiologie comnénienne, Bulletin du
centre d’études médiévales d’Auxerre 7 (2013), 1-14, esp. 2. For the doctrinal content of the
discord and the theological debate around the worship of images, see Glavas, Ἡ περὶ τῶν
ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 151ff.; C. Barber, Leo of Chalcedon, Euthymios Zigabenos and the Return
to the Past, in: Contesting the Logic of Painting. Art and Understanding in Eleventh-Century
Byzantium, ed. C. Barber, Leiden, Boston 2007, 131-157; for the coherence of Leo’s theology,
see D. Krausmuller, Adoring Christ’s image: The Icon Theology of Leo of Chalcedon and
Theodore of Stoudios, Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies 58 (2018), 423-442.

15. R. Macrides, Nomos and Kanon on paper and in court, in: Church and society in
Byzantium, ed. R. Morris, London 1990, 61-85; for the relationship of church and emperor
being the underlying issue of the controversy, see Angold, Church and society, 48; for the
reaction of those who could no longer put up with the interference of the laics in the affairs
of the Church, see Malamut, Alexis Ier, 194.

16. Alexias 5, II, 2.88-89: εἰς τοὺς πάλαι κειμένους νόμους καὶ τοῖς κανόνας περὶ τῆς
tῶν ἱερῶν ἐκποιήσεως ἀπέβλεψαν (the Komnenoi); Alexias 5.8-10, II, 3 (Isaac Komnenos)
άμα δὲ καὶ τοὺς περὶ τῶν μὴ χρησιμευόντων ἱερῶν κανόνας ἀπεισοδάτητε καὶ πολλὰ

Byzantina Symmeikta 31 (2021), 401-430
canons of the Church, seeking a way to legalise the confiscation of the holy vessels and relics but also to deprive the icons from their golden and silver parts, indicates that it was expected from them to act in such a way. The society they lived in had no consistent framework to define the relationship between nomos and canon on the one hand and the imperial will on Church issues on the other.

It is true that, for political and ideological reasons, stemming from the days of Constantine the Great, the Church and the State were not two distinct “authorities” or “legal orders”. Both for men of politics and theologians, they were the two sides of the single and indivisible Christian Empire, the reign of God on earth, two inseparable aspects. The plethora of the imperial...
legislative acts related to the regulation of Church issues had as a result to regulate these issues both with *canons*, i.e. with legislative resolutions coming from the authority bodies of the Church and with *nomoi*, i.e. acts from the legislative body of the State. The Nomocanon was compiled as collective dans l’Empire d’Orient?, *Bizantinistica* 2, III (2001), 155-227, esp. 158-159; *Idem*, Antitasa kata tis exousias kai epistasia sto Vyzantio: h theos tou dion ou tis Ekkhspias, in: Aphivbhtisi tis exousias [Epitheia Kyounia. Eideis Morfotikes Ekdhlwseis] EIE, Athens 2003, 49-65, esp. 50-51. K. Pitsakis refers to the non-existence of two “jurisdictions” in Byzantium, but rather to a political, ideological, cultural “deal” between the Church and the State; K. G. PITSAKIS, La “squinallhia” principe fundamental des rapports entre l’église et l’état, *Kanon* 10 (1991), 17-35, esp. 20; see also K. G. PITSAKIS, “Ius Graeco-Romanum” et normes canoniques dans les églises de tradition orthodoxe, in: *Incontro fra canoni d’Oriente e d’Occidente: Atti del congresso internazionale I* (a cura di R. COPPOLA), Bari 1994, 99-132, on the most important sections, in which the unity between secular and canon law is manifested in the Byzantine Empire, as a result of the unity between the Church and the State; for the intention of Fotios to establish a system of a pure *squinallhia* in the relationship between the Church and the State through the provisions of the «Εισαγωγή», see S. S. TROIANOS, O Mégas Phótos kai oi diatápexes tis «Εισαγωγής». Mezies papharmóseis wos pros tis sçhéses Ekkhspias kai Politeias, Ekkhspia kai Theología 10 (1989-1991), 489-504, esp. 498; for the relations between the State and the Church in Byzantium, see also H. G. BECK, *Nomos, Kanon und Staatsraison in Byzanz* [Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften], Wien 1981, 5ff; S. TROIANOS, «Θεοπίστωμεν τοις προτεινόμενοι τόν νόμον επέκτειν τούς ἁγίους ἑκκλησιαστικοὺς κανόνας...» *Byzantinía* 13/2 (1985) [Festschrift für J. Karagannopoulos], 1193-1200, esp. 1194-1195, for the existence of two jurisdictions, but only one “authority”; S. TROIANOS, Kirche und Staat. Die Berührungspunkte der beiden Rechtsordnungen in Byzanz, *Ostkirchliche Studien* 37 (1988), 291-296, esp. 291-2; MACRIDES, Nomos, 61; F. TINNEFELD, Kirche und Staat im byzantinischen Reich, *Ostkirchliche Studien* 54 (2005), 56-78, esp. 76-77.

Since the early Christian centuries, the Church had asked the intervention of the emperor in doctrinal and disciplinary matters; H. SÁRADI, Imperial Jurisdiction over ecclesiastical provinces: the ranking of new cities as seats of bishops or metropolitans, in: *To Vuzántio kata ton 12o auûna*, 149-163, esp. 149-150. For the imperial legislation related to the regulation of ecclesiastical matters; See A. MICHEL, Die Kaisermachter in der Ostkirche (843-1204), *Ostkirchliche Studien* 4 (1955), 1-42, esp. 8-9; PITSAKIS, Jus Graeco-Romanum, 104ff., 108, 110, 120; PITSAKIS, Empire et Église, 112; K. G. PITSAKIS, L’ empereur roman d’Occident: un laic, *Kanon XV* [Kirchenrecht und Ökumene. Festgabe für den metropolit an von Tyroli und Serention Fantelemon Rodopoulos] (1999), 196-221, esp. 200; PITSAKIS, Saintêté et empire, 160; see also, B. H. STOLTE, Balsamon and the Basilica, *Subseciva Groningana* 3 (1989), 115-125, esp. 115, as concerns the fact that the right of the Emperor to be involved in Church issues was never challenged; for the role of the emperor as the guardian of the faith...

407

NOMOS AND CANON IN BYZANTIUM
a result of resolving the Church issues with the use of both nomoi and canons, both of which are stated in parallel. The pivotal requirement for incorporating a state provision to the Nomocanon was to be consistent with the principles of life within the Church. This, however, was not always the case, as it is evident in the provisions that were called upon in 1081/220.

Anyway, the problematic issue between the Church and the State law did find a resolution of sorts in the 6th century and in particular in 545 when Novel 131 was issued by Justinian. Through this Novel, the Emperor legislated that the holy ecclesiastical canons issued and ratified by the four Holy Councils which had met up to his time, that is, of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesos and Chalcedon, were to have the status of nomoi.

20. For the incorporation of the agreement between the Church and the State in various manuscripts of the Nomocanon of 14 titles as well as in the Basilika and in Novels of various emperors, by incorporating in them the preamble of Novel 6 by Justinian, see Petrović, Νομοκάνων, 57ff.; for the seed of the state laws in the Church canons and the acceptance of the superiority of canons when contrasted to nomoi deriving from the state legislation, see Petrović, Νομοκάνων, 67ff., 74-84, 119-130; see also S. Trianos, Ο βυζαντινός άνθρωπος μπροστά στον Νόμο, in: Βυζαντινό κράτος και κοινωνία. Σύγχρονες κατευθύνσεις της ερευνάς, Athens 2003, 27-56, esp. 31, for the fact that, up to the times of Constantine the Great, the criterion for assessing the secular legislation was its compliance with the divine law; for the Nomocanon of 14 titles, see S. Trianos, Οι πηγές του βυζαντινού δικαίου, Athens- Komotini, 2011, 198-202; S. Trianos, The history of byzantine and eastern canon law to 1500, ed. W. Hartmann – K. Pennington [History of medieval canon law], Washington D.C. 2012, 138-141.

21. Corpus Iuris Civilis, I Novellae, ed. R. Schoell – G. Kroll, Berolini 1922, 654-655: Θεοπλήρωσέν τοίςν, τέξαν νόμων ἐπέθεν τοῖς άγίως ἐκκλησιαστικοῖς κανόνας τοῖς ἐπὶ τῶν ἁγίων τεσσάρων συνόδων ἐκπευθέντας ή βεβαιωθέντας, τοιούτου τῆς ἐν Νικαίᾳ τῶν τι’ καὶ τῆς ἐν Κωνσταντινοπόλει τῶν ἁγίων ρν’ πατέρων καὶ τῆς ἐν Εφέσῳ πρώτης, ἐν ὑπὸ Νεστόριος κατεκρίθη, καὶ ἐν ᾗ Καλχηδόνι, καθ’ ἑν Εὐτυχῆς μετὰ Νεστορίου ἀνεθεματίσθη, τῶν γὰρ προειρημένων ἁγίων δ’ συνόδων καὶ τὰ δόγματα καθάπερ τὰς θείας γραφὰς δεχόμεθα καὶ τοὺς κανόνας ὡς νόμους φυλάττομεν; see also the 29th chapter of the 9th title of the Nomocanon; Rhalles – Potles I, 210, in: Σύνταγμα τῶν
Under no circumstances was the emperor bound by the *nomoi*\(^\text{22}\). Since *nomos* and *canon* were typically at the same level, from the formal point of view it was made possible for the emperor to intervene in the scope of canon law\(^\text{23}\). The provision of Justinian was integrated in the Basilica issued in the beginning of the reign of Leo VI\(^\text{24}\).

---

\(^\text{22}\) G. D. AGRON, Lawful society and legitimate power: ἔννομος πολιτεία, ἔννομος ἀρχή, in: *Law and society in Byzantium*, 27-51, esp. 31ff; for the fact that the *basileus* dictated the *nomos* and was the *nomos* for practical purposes, see B. H. STOLTE, “LAW is King of all Things?” The Emperor and the Law, in: *The Emperor in the Byzantine World. Papers from the Forty-Seventh Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. S. TOUGHER [Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies 21], London; New York, 2019, 171-178.

\(^\text{23}\) S. TROJANOS, Θεοπτική, 1198-1200.

\(^\text{24}\) Specifically, Leo expanded the measure so that the *canons* that now “had the status of *nomoi*” (ἐπέχουσιν τάξιν νόμων) would also include the *canons* from the Councils since the promulgation of Novel 131 (545) until the Seventh Ecumenical Council at Nicaea (787) (including the canons ratified by Canon 2 of the Council of the Quinisext Ecumenical Synod of Troullo); B V, 3, 2 = Nov. 131 c.1, in: *Basilicorum Libri LX*, series A, vol. I, ed. H. J. SCHELTEMA – VAN DER WAL, Groningen, 1955, 141; see also Synopsis Basilicorum E.X. 6, in: *Jus Graeco-Romanum V. Synopsis Basilicorum*, ed. K. E. ZACHARIAE VON LINGENTHAL, Lipsiae 1869, (from now on: Synopsis Basilicorum), 297; P. PETROVIC, Νομοκάνων, 79, n. 69, 87, for the fact that the Nomocanon of 14 titles mentions seven and not four ecumenical synods in the 2nd chapter of the 1st title, in which the Novel 131 of Justinian was incorporated. According to the researcher, this explains why the 1st chapter of the Novel 131 included in the Basilica was later supplemented to mention seven ecumenical synods; RHALLES – POTLES I, 36-37; MACRIDES, Nomos, 64-65. See also, S. TROJANOS, Die Kirchenrechtlichen Novellen Leos

**BYZANTINA ΣΥΜΜΕΙΚΤΑ 31 (2021), 401-430**
The issue about the superiority of nomos or canon is evident in the writings of scholars of canon law in the 12th century. Whereas Anna Komnene is writing Alexias and describes the religious conflict, with her father at the heart of it, the ambiguity as concerns the relationship between nomos and canon is depicted in the comments of Theodore Balsamon in the Nomokanon of 14 Titles. Balsamon mentions the incorporation of Novel 131 into the Basilica, confirming thus its legal power. He states his view on the superiority of nomos and canon, according to which canons are superior to nomoi, since the former have been defined and ratified by both the Emperors and the Holy Fathers, whereas the nomoi were drawn only by the emperors and could not possibly prevail over the canons or the Bible.
Despite his view on this highly controversial issue, Balsamon’s comments are by no means an integrated approach concerning the relationship between nomos and canon, nor to the rights of the emperor over the Church. The confusion drawn by Balsamon’s comments is basically due to the fact that by giving to canons the status of nomoi, a nomos could prevail over an earlier canon. In addition, a posterior canon could prevail over an

mentioned comment of Balsamon, concludes that he thinks of canons as being superior to nomoi, not because of their special nature but because of the positive provisions of the civil law included in the Basilica; Stolte, Civil law, 545, n. 8, raises objections on the basis of an argumentum ex silentio, since Balsamon’s saying is not explicit; Petrović, Νομοκάνων, 90-92, for the fact that Balsamon stresses the inferiority of the imperial law that cannot be superior either to the Bible or to the canons; see also Pitsakis, Jus Graecoromanum, 107, for the fact that the comment of Balsamon is another indication of the unity of canon and secular law in Byzantium.

29. The embarrassment of Balsamon, when he comments the Canon 16 of the so-called First/Second Council (Πρωτοδευτέρα, 861) is evident: ἔδοξε γοῦν τὰ τοῦ κανόνος μᾶλλον ὀφείλειν κρατεῖν ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ ἐτι ἀμφιβάλλω. Καθὸ μὲν γὰρ τὸ ζήτημα ἐκκλησιαστικόν, πρόσκειμαι τοῖς λέγουσιν ὀφείλειν μᾶλλον τὰ τοῦ κανόνος κρατεῖν καθὸ δὲ τὰ βασιλικὰ ἀνεκαθάρθησαν μετὰ τὴν τοῦ νομοκάνονος ποίησιν καὶ τὴν τοῦ κανόνος τούτων ἀπόλυσιν, πρόσκειμαι τῇ ἑτέρᾳ γνώμῃ (Rhalles – Potles II, 699; Troianos, Nomos, 219). In his comments, the principle that a canon not included in the Basilica is invalid, is contradicted at some point; Rhalles – Potles II, 703.21-23; Stolte, Balsamon, 124-125; elsewhere preference is given to the superiority of a canon in relation to a Novel included in the Basilica; Rhalles – Potles II, 422; Stolte, Balsamon, 124; in another case, the principle dominating in his work, i.e. new canons render old canons invalid, is also violated; Rhalles – Potles III, 153-4; at another point of his comments, Balsamon seems to accept the possibility of amendment or repeal of an ecclesiastical canon by an imperial law; Rhalles – Potles II, 393-394; Christophopoulos, Σχέσεις τῶν κανώνων πρὸς τοὺς νόμους, 70; see also Stolte, Civil law, 546ff, on the cases in the comments of Balsamon that a canon renders a law included in the Basilica invalid or ratifies the power of a law that has not been included in the Basilica. K. G. Pitsakis, Conceptions et éloges de la romanité dans l’empire romain d’Orient: deux thèmes “byzantins” d’idéologie politique avec référence particulière à Cosmas Indicopleustès, Cassia, Théodore Balsamon et les patriarches Michel IV Autérianos et Antoine IV, in: Idea giuridica e politica di Roma e personalità storiche 1 (a cura di P. Catalano e P. Siniscalco) [Da Roma alla terza Roma. Documenti e Studi. Rendiconti del X seminario, Campidoglio 21 Aprile 1990], Roma 1991, 97-139, esp. 107, notes that Balsamon is faithful to both powers he has been called to serve, i.e. the Empire and the Church, the unity of which in a single legal order he advocates.
earlier *nomos* as *lex posterior* or modify it. Under those circumstances, in the effort to harmonise the two legal orders, it was highly likely for the *nomoi* to receive a favourable treatment. Any contradictions between *nomoi* and *canons* could be resolved mainly with the application of the principle that a new law renders an earlier law invalid.

In 1082 the consequences of giving the same status to *nomos* and *canon* gave the Komnenoi the ground to support the confiscation of holy vessels and relics, based on the Novel 120 (CXX) issued by Justinian and included in Basilica that allowed the confiscation when it came to save prisoners of war. The same Novel defined that the holy vessels that were not in use any more could be sold or melted to pay for the debts of charitable houses so as not to sell property.

---

30. Troianos, Θεοπήγομεν, 1198; Macrides, Nomos, 65; Troianos, Nomos, 203; Tinnefeld, Kirche, 76-77; Richter, Oikonomia, 503; Heith-Stade, Canon, 58; Petrović, Νομοκάνων, 87-88, stresses that non incorporating the provision οἱ τοῖς κανόσιν ἐναντιούμενοι πράγματι σύμπεπτον ἐδοκεῖσθαι and the Basilica gave rise to heated conversations, since the content of the Basilica was valid and all the earlier laws that were not incorporated in them were rendered invalid. There was also the issue of the relationship between the *canons* «ἔνθα νόμος ἐναντιοῦται» and the Basilica, as they were posterior to the *canons*. The dispute of the two parts is evident from the testimony of Balsamon in his second comment in the 2nd chapter of the 1st title of the Nomocanon; Rhalles – Potles I, 37-38.

31. Troianos, Nomos, 221; see also Macrides, Nomos, 74 and 84ff, who notes that Balsamon supports the imperial privileges in some cases and accepts the inability of the patriarch to react against imperial power. Besides, Macrides stresses that, when sometimes Balsamon says that *nomoi* should prevail over *canons*, he speaks about *nomoi* that aim at supporting the Church; see also Petrović, Νομοκάνων, 85, 92ff, for the incorporation of caesaropapism in the Nomocanon through the comments made by Balsamon.

32. Περὶ δὲ τῶν ιερῶν σκευῶν τῶν διαφερόντων τῇ αὐτῇ ἁγιωτάτῃ μεγάλῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ τῆς βασιλείας πόλεως ἢ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἱεροῖς οἴκοις ἐν οἱῳδήποτε τόπῳ τῆς ἡμετέρας πολιτείας κειμένοις γενικῶς διατυποῦμεν, ὥστε μὴ ἄλλως ταῦτα πιπράσκειν, καὶ συμβῇ τὸν τοιούτου εὐαγῆ τόπον χρέεσι βαρύνεσθαι, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλα κινητὰ πράγματα ὧν ὀφείλει τὰ χρέα ἀποδοθῆναι, ἴτα τὰ εὑρισκόμενα περιττὰ σκεύη ἢ ἄλλοις εὐαγέσι τόποις χρείαν ἔχουσι πωλεῖν ἢ χωνεύειν ὥστε μὴ τὰ ἀκίνητα πράγματα ἐκποιεῖσθαι (Novel 120, c. 10; C.I.C., 589 =B V, 2, 12); the Justinian legislation on the exclusion regarding the inalienability of the...
However, since the 4th and mainly in the 5th century, the Church had secured that its property could not be expropriated through *canons* which defined that church estate along with holy vessels, libraries and sacred vestments were dedicated to God and belonged to Him. As a consequence, they were an integral part of the Church and nobody could deprive the Church of them, neither could they be pawned or reduced. Only the sale of estate that did not bring in any income was allowed and only in great need. In that case, the bishop had to explain the reasons that led him to such a decision to the metropolitan bishop.

It is obvious that the Justinian Novel still in force in the 11th century and incorporated in the Basilica, allowed the confiscation of the holy vessels is to be found in the Nomocanon of 14 titles; *Rhales – Potles I*, 108-109, 239; regarding the *canon* 12 of the Seventh Ecumenical Synod (with the commentaries of Zonaras, Balsamon and Aristenos), see *Rhalles – Potles II*, 592-611; regarding the *canons* 33 of the synod of Carthage (with the commentaries of Zonaras, Balsamon and Aristenos), see *Rhalles – Potles III*, 390-392; see also Institutiones by Justinian on the possibility of confiscating the holy vessels on the basis of the law; *Sacra sunt, quae rite et per pontifices deo consecrata sunt, veluti aedes sacrae et dona, quae rite ad ministerium dei dedicata sunt, quae etiam per nostram constitutionem alienari et obligari prohibuimus excepta causa redemptionis captivorum*: C.I.C., Inst. II, 1, 8, in: Corpus Iuris Civilis I, ed. P. Krüger – Th. Momssen, Berlin 1889; see the translation in Greek: *ἱερὰ εἶνε ὅσα προσηκόντως καὶ διὰ τῶν ἱερῶν εῖς τὸν Θεὸν καθιερώθησαν, ὡς ἱεροὶ ναοί καὶ δώρα, ἐτήν καὶ δέ ἕμετέρας διατάξεως ἀπηγορεύσαμεν ν’ ἀπαλλοτριῶνται καὶ ἐπιβαρύνωνται, ἐκτός λόγῳ ἐξεγορασθέντων αἰγιαλολότων*: C.I.C., Εἰσηγήσεις, Πανδέκται I, ed. H. Liakopoulos, Athens 1930, 29; see *Glavinas, Η περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν έρις*, 60-61, n. 41, where Novel 7 and Novel 55 are also referred; *Rapp, Holy Bishops*, 230; Gerhold, Le “mouvement”, 89.

vessels, although it was forbidden by the holy *canons*. The Justinian Novel was opposed to the provisions of the canon law, but Balsamon was of the opinion that ἐνθὰ μὲν γὰρ οὐδέν τι οἱ κανόνες διορίζονται, ὀφείλομεν τοῖς νόμοις ἀκολουθεῖν. Characteristically enough, Balsamon, in his comment on Canon 12 of the Seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicaea stresses that there is no contradiction between the *canon* of the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea and the Novel of Justinian regarding the exploitation, under certain circumstances, of the church or the monastery estate property. This is a statement that brings to light how necessary the conformity of the state laws to the spirit of the *canons* was. He points out that the Novel defines when to confiscate the property of the Church, the monasteries, the Μεγάλη Εκκλησία, and charitable houses that either bring income or not, while allowing the confiscation of holy vessels in case of emergency as well.

Besides, the incorporation of the Novel 120 in the Basilica and the equation of *nomoi* to *canons* through the Justinian Novel 131 –also incorporated in the Basilica– consolidated the superiority of the former to an earlier provision of the canon law. Balsamon, in his comments on Canon 26(34) of the Council of Carthage refers to Novel 120 by Justinian as the imperial provision introducing, under conditions, the possibility to confiscate holy vessels, while pointing out that it was written long after the above mentioned canon and it was incorporated into the Basilica defining when the exploitation of ecclesiastical and monastic movable and immovable property was possible and when not.

In the second half of the 11th century, the Komnenoi did not lose the opportunity to take advantage of the incorporated –in one of the most important sources of law of the Orthodox Church– provision of the 6th century which was well known in the legal environment of the Church and gave the possibility of an extensive interpretation. Anna refers that Isaac Komnenos tried to convince the members of the Council in late 1081 or in early 1082 to approve of the confiscation pleading “the holy canons

34. RHALLES – POTLES I, 68.
35. Canon 12 of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (RHALLES – POTLES II, 596-597); GLAVINAS, Ἡ περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 61, n. 42; ΚΟΝΙΔΑΡΙΣ, Τὸ δίκαιον, 256-257; ΠΑΠΑΓΙΑΝΝΗ, Νομικοὶ θεσμοί, 255.
37. GRUMEL – DARROZÈS, Regestes, no 921; GLAVINAS, Ἡ περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 54ff.
concerning vessels that are not in use any more”. In fact, according to Anna, he presented what a nomos prescribed as prescribed by canon law. Given that nomos and canon were of equal status, a favourable treatment of secular law as opposed to ecclesiastical law, can be traced here38. Although Anna tried to show that the confiscation of holy vessels was a necessary evil in the framework of the inconvenience and anxiety caused by the Normans, although Isaac Komnenos obtained everyone’s consent to secure the necessary funds “through the law”39, it is obvious that Alexios and his family had violated the holy canons.

In a letter in 1083 to the emperor, who was to blame the most in this case, Leo the Bishop of Chalcedon refers to the way and the method of the confiscation as “hubris”, “injustice” and “offence” (ὕβρις, ἀδικία, ἀδίκημα)40. He does not fail to mention the places that fell victim to confiscation41, while Anna tries to mitigate what happened and contrary to Leo she notices that “nothing else was confiscated than the golden and silver ornaments that surrounded the relic of Empress Zoe along with a few other vessels that were not used in the Divine Liturgy”42. The words of Leo are confirmed by

38. See p. 411-412.
40. Leo spoke about the breach of faith, the desecration of the holy, the dishonour of the precious nacre, the violation of the Holy Cross, the crash of the holy utensils, the verbal outrage of the image of God, the breaking of the head, face and parts of the body of Jesus, putting the Saviour of the world into fire as a murderer, giving dogs what is sacred and throwing pearls to pigs; Leo of Chalcedon, Ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα Αλέξιον τὸν Κομνηνὸν, Εκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀλήθεια 20 (1900) 403a; Glavinas, Ἡ περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 80-87.
41. Leo of Chalcedon, Ἐπιστολὴ, 403b: τὰ Μοναστήρια, ὅσα ἱερὰ ἐσυλήθησαν· τὰ ἀσκητήρια, ὅσα τὰ οἰκεῖον περιῄρηνται κόσμον τὰ θυσιαστήρια, ὅσα γυμνωθέντα τῆς εὐπρεπείας αὐτῶν, νεκροὶ ναὸι λατρευτικοί, ἐσότερο αὐτὰ τὰ Κιβώτια, ἐν ὃς τὰ ἱερὰ ἀπετέθηναν τῷ θεοῦ, στις θεσμὸι τῶν κενώματος, μυρίων κορδήρων τρανότερον βοῶσι, ὡς οὐδὲν ἐν ἐσοπτηθηθηκέναι, ἔχουσι μάρτυρες μὲν τοσοῦτοι τοῦ πράγματος καὶ οὕτως ἀπαραλόγιστος; Glavinas, Ἡ περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 66.
42. Alexius 6, III, 34.1-37: καὶ ἐπεὶ μὴδὲν ἔτερον ἀφαίρεθην καταφαινότο, ἀλλ’ ἢ μόνος ὁ τῇ οἰκρῷ τῆς βασιλίδος ἔκεινς Ζωῆς ἐκ χρυσοῦ καὶ ἀργυρίου ἐπικείμενος κόσμος καὶ ὀλίγα τῶν ἄλλα σκεύη μὴ τοιοῦτον εἰς ἱερὰν λειτουργίαν χρησιμοποιοῦσα; Glavinas, Ἡ περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 66-67.

BYZANTINA ΣΥΜΜΕΙΚΤΑ 31 (2021), 401-430

http://epublishing.ekt.gr | e-Publisher: EKT | Downloaded at 30/12/2021 05:39:10 |
both Theodore Skoutariotis, who tends to forgive the emperor\textsuperscript{43}, and Niketas Choniates, who mentions that the gates of the temple of Chalkoprateia were deprived of the silver and a lot of holy vessels in a number of temples had been melted\textsuperscript{44}.

From the above it is evident that the violation of the holy canons as concerns the inalienability of holy vessels was in line with the principle of Balsamon developed in his comment on Canon 16 of the Synod of Carthage. Balsamon states that “the emperor stands above any nomoi and canons”\textsuperscript{45}. According to the principle of imperial oikonomia (κατ’ οἰκονομίαν βασιλικήν)\textsuperscript{46}, a priest could take a secular office as a result of imperial will.

\textsuperscript{43} Theodoros Skoutariotis, Synopsis Chronike, ed. K. N. Sathan [Μεσαιωνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη VII], Venice 1894, 186: ἐὰν δὲ καὶ τὰ πλεονεκρὰ τοὺς ἐν Κωνσταντινούπολει ἐπισυνεβη ὡς μὲ φιλεῖ γίνεσθαι ἐν τοιούτους παράγματος; Glavinas, Ἡ περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 67.

\textsuperscript{44} Νικηφόρος Χωνιάτου, Σύνοψις τῶν δογμάτων τῶν κινηθέντων ἐπὶ τῆς βασιλείας Κυροῦ Αλεξίου Κομνηνοῦ: καὶ ἄλλων μὲν ναῶν ἱερὰ ἀποσπάσας, τῇ χωνείᾳ παρέδωκε καὶ εἰς νόμισμα κέκοφε, πρὸς δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις καὶ τὰς τοῦ νεὼ τῶν Χαλκοπρατείων καθελὼν πύλας ἀργύρῳ διηλειμένας, in: Annae Komnenae Supplementa, historiam graecorum ecclesiasticam seculi XI et XII spectantia, ed. Th. K. Tafel, Tübingae 1832, 1-8, esp. 5-6; see also Glavinas, Ἡ περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 68-71, for the churches that were deprived of holy items. In particular, it was the church of Chalkoprateia, from which the silver gates were removed along with the silver that was on them, as well as the church of Christ Antifonetes, where the golden and silver ornaments were removed from the relic of Empress Zoe, and the church of Saint Averkios, which was inside the patriarchate.

\textsuperscript{45} Rhalles – Potles III, 349: ὁ βασιλεύς οὔτε νόμοι οὔτε κανόσιν ὑπόκειται.

\textsuperscript{46} On the concept of oikonomia in the world of theology and canon law, see M. Azkoul, Oikonomia and the orthodox church, Patristic and Byzantine Review 6 (1987), 65-79; S. N. Trojanos, Akribeia und Oikonomia in den Heiligen Kanones, in: Historia et ius I: 1969-1988, Athens 2004, 783-799; G. Dagron, La règle et l’exception. Analyse de la notion d’ économie, in: Religiose Devianz. Untersuchungen zu sozialen, rechtlichen und theologischen Reaktionen auf religiöse Abweichung im westlichen und östlichen Mittelalter, ed. D. Simon [Ius Commune 48], Frankfurt am Main 1990, 1-18; Richter, Oikonomia, 492-515; Kalbells, Byzantine Republic, 74; D. Dobromir, Oikonomia and Akribeia in the canons of St. Basil, Kanon XXIV [Oikonomia, Dispensatio and Aequitas Canonica], (2016), 34-44; Heith-Stade, Canon, 59-60; A. Anapliotis, Oikonomia and its Limits in Orthodox Canon Law, Ancilla Iuris 73 (2019), 74-84; see also Pitsakis, «Συναλληλία», 26, for an interesting interpretation of the term oikonomia in the framework of unity of the Byzantine legal order and in contrast with the latin dispensatio. On the use of oikonomia by Alexios in the sense of administration, see Richter, Oikonomia, 527-528; for a change in the concept of oikonomia as a result of its...
and, though prohibited in the canons, they would be no obstacle to this. Although he states that he does not agree with this practice\(^\text{47}\), *oikonomia*, i.e. the fact that the emperor had the right to annul a law under certain circumstances as well as to introduce an exception that did not cancel the rule\(^\text{48}\), in combination with the “archbishopric jurisdiction” of the emperor

applicability by the political power and the occasional appearance of *oikonomia* in Justinian law in the meaning of administration, see Richter, *Oikonomia*, 509-510, 516.

47. Rhalles – Potles III, 349-350; Balsamon states that Canon 4 of Chalcedon gave the emperor the right to assign secular tasks to the monks and the clergy. The emperor appoints the bishops, who have the right to allow the clergy to involve in secular pursuits. Since this is permitted to bishops, then the emperor, who is not obliged to obey by the canons, must have that right as well; Rhalles – Potles II, 228-229; see D. Simon, Princeps legibus solutus. Die Stellung des byzantinischen Kaisers zum Gesetz, in: *Gedächtnisschrift für Wolfgang Kunkel*, ed. D. Nörr – D. Simon, Frankfurt am Main 1984, 449-492, esp. 475-477, for Balsamon’s effort to set the imperial rights within the Church under the commitments of the provisions of canon law; see also A. Kazhdan, Some observations on the Byzantine concept of law: three authors of the ninth through the twelfth centuries, in: *Law and society in Byzantium*, 199-216, esp. 212ff, for the role of the imperial will on making legal decisions. It is typical that Ioannes Zonaras in his comment on Canon 17 of the Council of Chalcedon explains that “the Fathers of the Ecumenical Council claim that the ecclesiastical order of the cities should be consistent with the imperial decrees for the foundation of those cities, since “we cannot disobey the imperial will”; Rhalles – Potles II, 260. Balsamon states in his comments on the same canon that the emperor has the right to decide what he likes (τὰ βουλητέα αὐτῷ), while summarising a σημείωμα by Alexios Komnenos in his comments on Canon 38 of the Council of Trullo, he insists that the emperor has the right to give cities bishop cathedrae or to raise a bishop cathedra to a metropole at his will (κατὰ τὸ αὐτῷ βουλητέον); Rhalles – Potles II, 261-262; see also Petrović, *Νομοκάνων*, 145ff; Saradi, imperial jurisdiction, 153ff; Stolte, *Civil law*, 550.

48. On Balsamon’s belief that no new law is created through the application of *oikonomia*, see Anapliotis, *Oikonomia*, 82; on the confrontation of order (τάξις) and *oikonomia* in the political and ideological sphere, see H. Ahlweiler, *L’idéologie politique de l’empire byzantin*, Paris, P.U.F., “SUP-l’historien”, 1975, 129ff; Leo VI in the Novel 109 refers to the principle of *oikonomia* as a factor that forms the emperor’s decisions: Εἰ δὲ βασιλεῖς, οία πολλά συμβαίνει, πράττων οἰκονομίαν τινὰ καὶ μνηστείαν καὶ τὴν ἐξ ἱερολογίας συνάρμοσιν τοῖς μνηστευομένοις ἕνδον τῶν διομοιθέτων ἔτων ἐπιφημιεῖται, τόστο πρὸς τὸν νόμον οὐδὲν ἀντὶκειται. Ἐξεστι γὰρ τοῖς ἐκ Θεοῦ τὴν οἰκονομίαν τῶν κοιμικῶν ἐγκεχειρομένης πραγμάτων ὑπέρτερον καὶ κατὰ νόμον οἰκονομεῖν ὑπὲρ τοῖς ἐπτρόποις (Les Novelles de Léon VI le Sage, ed. P. Noailles – A. Dain, Paris 1944, 355-356); the above mentioned excerpt of Novel 106 was incorporated into Novel 31 (1092) by Alexios I;
deriving from the semi-clerical nature of his office⁴⁹, were, according to Balsamon, two factors that justified the fact that the emperor stood above nomoi and canons⁵⁰.

However, obedience to nomoi and canons, while acting of his own free will and accord since nobody could force him to do so⁵¹, was what gave the emperor the ἔννομος ἀρχὴ and rendered him ἔννομος ἄρχων⁵². Securing


50. The decisions of the emperor were indisputable; Nov. 113, I, 529-530; Nov. 113 was incorporated in the Basilica; B II, 6, 23 = Nov. 113 c. 1 pr., 78-79; B II, 6, 24 = Nov. 113 c. 1 § 1; B II, 6, 25 = Nov. 113 c. 2; B II, 6, 26 = Nov. 113 c. 3; Ὅ βασιλεὺς τοῖς νόμοις οὐχ ὑπόκειται (Synopsis Basilicorum B. III 1, 130; Ὅπερ ἀρέσει τῷ βασιλεῖ, νόμος ἐστίν (Synopsis Basilicorum B. III 2, 130); Ὅ οἰκιδήτου ἔναντι τιμωρεῖται (Synopsis Basilicorum B. IV 5, 131); Kalblendis, Byzantine Republic, 74; see also S. TroiAnos, Die Sonderstellung des Kaisers im früh-und mittelbyzantinischen Kirchlichen Prozess, Βυζαντίνα 3 (1971), 71-80, esp. 76. As concerns the status of the emperor’s decisions in the Justinian legislation that could not be disputed and had been incorporated into the Basilica, see Simon, Princeps legibus solutus, 462ff, 473; see also Michel, Kaiseracht, 4-5, for cases that, despite the application of the recognised imperial right of oikonomia, the emperor’s decisions were characterised as non canonical.

51. Michel, Kaiseracht, 5-6, 10-11, 15; Beck, Nomos, 13-14; DaGRON, Lawful society, 32, about the παραινετικὰ κεφάλαια that were compiled in the 6th century or those attributed to Basil I in the 9th century, which urged the emperor to respect the laws, although he knows that nobody can force him to do so. These texts aimed at giving an answer to the inevitable issue of absolute power, not by transforming the political system but rather by “subtly changing” the emperor; see also Kalblendis, Byzantine Republic, 84-85.

52. DaGRON, Lawful society, 33; Simon, Princeps legibus solutus, 463ff; it is characteristic that Psellos in the 11th century regarded the principle of justice as one of the main objectives of a fair emperor, who was the source of both the justice and the laws on the basis of his relationship with God; see also Kazhdan, some observations, 207. Besides, the legitimacy of the Byzantine emperor as a legislator resulted from the following figure: God was the source of law, but the creator of the specific norms was the emperor on the basis of his relationship with God; TroiAnos, ο βυζαντινός άνθρωπος μπροστά στον νόμο, 31; see also, A. E. LaioU, Law, Justice and the Byzantine Historians: Ninth to Twelfth Centuries, in: Law and society

BYZANTINA SYMMEIKTA 31 (2021), 401-430
the ἔννομος ἀρχή was definitely the aim of Alexios I in the early stage of his reign, as, according to Anna Komnene, among the officials there were malicious people that underpinned any attack against the emperor53. It is typical that in the σημείωμα issued by him in January 1086, Alexios wonders how it was possible for Leo of Chalcedon, who was supposed to seek integrity and had for a long time an authoritative opinion regarding the customs and laws of the church, to try to please people and state that he cares about people's opinions54. The emperor should also take seriously into

in Byzantium, 151-185, esp. 156, 171; Kekaumenos, Στρατηγικὸν, ed. G. Litawrin, Sovety i rasskazy Kekavmena, Mόγч, 1972, 274. 6-7; Simon, Princeps legibus solutus, 482-483, stresses that Kekaumenos presents the emperor as a person subject to divine commands, the orders of whom can be waived by his people, if they contradict with divine commands or lay beyond reason. Actually, the author of Στρατηγικὸν is oriented to a contraction of the emperor's almighty; for the emperor's right to act beyond the law only to benefit the Roman people, see Kaldellis, Byzantine Republic, 72-82. See also P. Magdalino, Aspects of twelfth-century Byzantine Kaiserkritik, Speculum 58 (1983), 326-345, esp. 333.


54. Alexios’ σημείωμα (Σακκέλιον, Documents inédits, 119: ὁν λαληθέντων, ἐπιλήψῃ μὲν κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν ἔνδον ἢ βασιλεία μον, εἴ γε τηλικοῦτος ἀνθρώπιος, λόγον μὲν
consideration the Church officials of the higher ranks (τοὺς ἐκκρίτους τῆς ἐκκλησίας) (higher clerks of the Patriarchate as well as the law scholars – stemming from families of the capital–deacons and clergymen of the Great Church). In the 11th century these people formed a group, the aim of which was to care for certain interests. The formation of canonical awareness, as a result of the systematisation of the canon law in the 11th century, made Alexios firmly believe that colliding with the canons was extremely dangerous while trying to establish his authority.

But it was not only the canons that he collided with. Novel 120 introduced an exception to the general provision on the prohibition of the confiscation of the holy vessels, while its scope was limited and concerned their forced alienation only for the salvation of prisoners of war, or the confiscation of the sacred utensils that were no longer in use to pay off the debts of charitable houses in order to prevent the sale of their own property. As a result, strict conditions were laid down for the confiscation of the holy vessels, which were clearly not fulfilled in the case of the confiscation of 1081/2 carried out by Alexios I. The issue in its essence concerned not only the hierarchical relationship between nomoi and canons, but also the relationship between general and special provisions. Novel 120 which


55. For these lobbies, see Grumel, Les documents athonites, 128; V. Tîftixoglu, Gruppenbildungen innerhalb des Konstantinopolitanischen Klerus während der Komnenenzeit, BZ 62 (1969), 25-72, esp. 42ff; A. P. Kazhdan - A. W. Epstein, Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries, London, 1985, 165; for the alliance of the emperor with the patriarchal clergy in the framework of imposing the imperial will in the organisation of the Church, see Gloinas, 'Ἡ περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 131; Angold, Church and society, 54-60; P. Bara, The Use of the Donation of Constantine in Late-Eleventh-Century Byzantium: the Case of Leo Metropolitan Bishop of Chalcedon, Chronica. Annual of the Institute of History. University of Szeged 17 (2017), 106-125, esp. 107, 122; for the hypothesis that some discontented members of the patriarchal clergy might support Leo’s party, see Bara, Donation, 124.

allowed the confiscation of the holy vessels under strict conditions and had been equated with the canons by the Novel 131 of Justinian, was the special provision which overrode the canons, as the general provisions which prohibited the confiscation and had been ratified by the Holy Synods of the 4th and 5th century. Nevertheless, the confiscation of 1081/2 didn’t meet the prerequisites of Novel 120, a fact that forced Anna Komnene to insert a legal fiction in her narrative. She points out that the welfare of Christians in Asia, who had escaped the massacre and were under the power of the barbarians was similar to those of prisoners, due to their permanent exposure to danger, in order to equate them with the prisoners of war57. The Christians in Asia and consequently the ones that would be captured in the war against the Normans, thus fell within the narrow scope of the application of Novel 120, resulting in providing Alexios with the legal support he needed for the application of the Novel, which as a special provision laid down particularly strict conditions for the confiscation of the holy vessels that were not met in this particular case.

This is the reason why the emperor stresses in the chrysobull issued in 1082 how crucial the situation was, although he avoids to mention the nomoi that allowed the confiscation. Alexios insists particularly on apologizing for violating the canons, a fact that was particularly alleged by his opponents. While the emperor was not bound by the nomoi, his right to intervene in the scope of the canon law was challenged, despite the fact that nomoi and canons were typically at the same level. The Byzantines were mainly concerned with the right of the emperor to intervene in certain aspects of religious life, while what he did elsewhere, including most of the political sphere, was understood as secular and thus not problematic58.

In the chrysobull of 1082 Alexios claims that he had sought advice from certain “spiritual and devout men” who obviously assured him that, were he to handle the issue in the right way, his actions would be justified. Alexios, unlike Anna in the Alexias, admits that the confiscation has been applied to a lot of churches and offerings59, he asks for forgiveness and he assures that

57. See p. 402.
58. KADDELLIS, Byzantine Republic, 192-193; see pp. 406-408 and n. 19.
59. See n. 7; τῶν ἱερῶν ἔγνω καὶ θείων ἅψασθαι κειμηλίων καὶ τούτῳς τὸ τῆς χρείας ἐνδέον παραμυθήσασθαι· τουτὶ μὲν τὸ ἔργον ἐν πολλαῖς τῶν ἁγίων ἐκκλησιῶν

BYZANTINA ΣΥΜΜΕΙΚΤΑ 31 (2021), 401-430
he had no intense to practice *hybris* or disregard God. Alexios I Komnenos characterises himself as a “debtor towards the holy churches” (ὀφειλέτης ταῖς ἁγίαις ἐκκλησίαις) and he promises to return their property to the churches when the danger is not great anymore and the empire becomes strong again60. In an emotional atmosphere and swearing in God, Alexios’ chrysobull forbids his successors to deprive the sacred churches of the holy vessels ever again. He also characterises anyone who would do so as sacrilegious. Alexios could not possibly bide his successors through a legal act. However, he tried to make himself seem as the guarantee not only for his own devoutness but for the devoutness of his successors as well. This fact indicates how necessary it was to mitigate the reactions against him, in a period when historical sources criticise indirectly the fact that emperors stood above the law61.

The violation of the holy canons was brought up in a gathering (συνέδριον), called by Alexios I in December 1083, in which he analysed further and justified why the confiscation was a necessity and the reasons that led to it. Senators participated in the συνέδριον along with military officials, the clergy, curators of the churches that brought along βρέβια, i.e. lists with the vessels and relics of each church. Anna Komnene writes in *Alexias* about the “questioning of the emperor” (ἀνάκρισιν τοῦ βασιλέως) and that “Alexios was questioned” (ἐξητάζετο), while she did not hesitate to state that the emperor rendered himself responsible. He was charged with the accusation of breaching the holy canons. In order to support himself, Alexios spoke about the situation and how crucial it was, the *nomoi* that

60. Nov. 22 (A. 1082), in: *Jus Graeco-Romanum* III, 355-58, esp. 356; DÖLGER – WIRTH, Regesten I/2, no 1085; V. GruMEL, L’affaire, 127; on the dating of the chrysobull, see GLAVNAS, Ἡ περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 73f.

61. A. E. LAIOT, Imperial marriages and their critics in the eleventh century: the case of Skylitzes, *DOP* 46 (1992), 165-176; see also MAGDAINO, Byzantine Kaiserkritik, 330, 345, on the critic from the part of Ioannes Zonaras against Alexios I for not awarding justice and an “alternative” ideology which was directed against the imperial absolutism.
allowed the confiscation of holy vessels to save prisoners of war and used David as a paradigm along with a relevant act of Pericles in Ancient Greece. He also charged himself and he defined that the church of Antifonitou should be provided every year with a large amount of gold from the state, while he issued an annual grant to those who served as members of the choir in the church of Chalkoprateia.

The σημείωμα of 1086 gives us valuable information about the accusations from the part of Leo against Patriarch Eustratios for appropriating the holy vessels and delivering the Saints to “fire and melting” (πυρὶ καὶ χωνείᾳ). Patriarch Eustratios got rid of the accusations, but the competent committee recognised, on the basis of the σημείωμα that the patriarch definitely took part in some actions justified by the principle of oikonomía as well as by actions of his predecessors that had been accused of conducting like Garidas. Leo based his accusations on the canons assigning the bishops as the ones responsible for taking care of the Church issues (τῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῶν πραγμάτων) and did not allow the former to take advantage of them. Since the imperial will could not be disputed and it was not easy to form a direct accusation against the emperor, Leo

---

62. Alexios 6, III 5; Glavinas, Η περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 87-92; Gerhold, Le “mouvement”, 90; see above, n. 44, for the churches that were deprived of holy items.

63. Alexios’ σημείωμα, 118; on Leo’s accusations against Garidas, see Leo of Chalcedon, Επιστολ. 403-404; Grumel, Le décret, 334; Glavinas, Η περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 83-86, 93-95; for the close connections between Leo and the Doukai, who strongly desired the restitution of patriarch Kosmas on the patriarchal throne, along with the weakening of Alexios’ power, see Gerhold, Le “mouvement”, 93-95.

64. On the concept of oikonomía, see above, n. 46.

65. Alexios’ σημείωμα, 114-116; see below, 426 and n. 75; Glavinas, Η περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 93-95; the result of the research for the accusations against the patriarch was that he had not kept any vessels for personal use. He had just taken some measures that he himself considered good and useful, in line with what other patriarchs had done before him. As stressed by Stephanou, the accusations against the patriarch were not about the private use of the holy vessels, but their disposal in an arbitrary way; Stephanou, Λε προκες, 17-18.

turned against Patriarch Eustratios and insisted on his responsibility not to allow the emperor to implement his “irrational impulses” (ταῖς ἀλογίστοις ὁρμαῖς ἐπιτεθῆναι κώλυμα). It is characteristic that Alexios Komnenos’ σημείωμα in May 1087, which was written on the occasion of the right of the emperor to raise bishoprics or archbishoprics to metropolises, a part of which is cited by Balsamon in his comment on Canon 38 of the Quinisext Ecumenical Synod of Trullo, defines that the emperor would never decide before being informed by the patriarch on the content of the holy canons so that a barrier would be set to intercept the irrational imperial will67.

In the σημείωμα of 1086, Alexios stresses that the nomoi forgive the confiscation under certain circumstances, while the confiscation without any prerequisites is considered a sacrilege. According to Alexios, those who commit such a sacrilege are reprimanded, but they are not sentenced as “impious” (ἀσεβεῖς)68. However, Leo accused the Patriarch of being “impious”, for supposedly confiscating holy vessels. He based his statements on ecclesiastic and secular law69. The accusation was not verified70. Alexios

67. Rhalles – Potles II, 393- 394; Nov. 29 (A. 1087), in: Jus Graeco-Romanum III, 368-370; Dolger – Wirth, Regesten 1/2, no 1140; Petrović, Νομοκάνων, 153; Saradi, Imperial jurisdiction, 159-160; see n. 47.

68. Sakelion, Documents inédits, 120: (Leo) ἀσέβειαν γὰρ εἰςῄη τὴν τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἀναπόδεικτον ἐκποίησιν, ἣν κατὰ τὸ ἐφειμένον μὲν οἱ νόμοι γινομένην συνεχώρησαν, οὐ καλῶς [δὲ] προβαίνουσαν, εἰς ἱεροσυλίαν ἄντικρυς ἀναφέρουσιν, καὶ τοὺς ταύτην τὸλμωντας καὶ ἀμαρτήσαντας κατακρίνουσιν, ἀλλ’ οὐ ὡς ἀσεβεῖς καταδίκῃ ὑπάγουσιν; Glavinas, Η περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 105.

69. Sakelion, Documents inédits, 123: καθαπερεὶ γὰρ αὐτὸς νέος καθίσας δογματιστής, καὶ τὸ ἄπαν κράτος εἰς ἑαυτὸν τῶν κανόνων καὶ τῶν νόμων ἐξαρτησάμενος, πάσαν ἐπὶ τὸ ἱερὸν ἀναφέρεσθαι παρ’ οἰουδήτινος γινομένην, εἰς ἀσέβειαν περιφανῶς ἀναφέρειθαι; Glavinas, Η περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 121.

70. Alexios’ σημείωμα 120; Grumel, Le décret, 335; this was supported by Alexios in the framework of the ἔνδημοθύσα σύνοδος of 2nd December 1085. Characterising the confiscation of holy vessels as blasphemy was something new that appeared for the first time in that case and was the logical conclusion of Leo’s theory on icons, which was officially and in writing supported for the first time in January 1086 before the ἔνδημοθύσα σύνοδος; Grumel – Darrouzes, Regestes, no 939; Glavinas, Η περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 104ff.; see Gerhold, Hétérodoxie théologique, 3-4, 7-9, for the fact that Leo’s accusations against patriarch Eustratios resulted in depriving the emperor of his role as “guardian of Orthodoxy” and for Alexios’ attempt to secure for himself this title, in order to consolidate his authority through the re-imposition of imperial control on the church.
does not mention that it was the *canons* that stated that the usurper of the holy vessels is not only blasphemous but also guilty of disrespect (τῆς ἐσχάτης δυσσεβείας)\(^7\). It is obvious that the emperor, comparing the *nomoi* to the *canons*, aims at proving the strength of the imperial will, concealing though the opposition of *nomoi* to the *canons*. The power of the imperial will is also confirmed by stating the jurisdiction of the imperial court and the fact that its decisions were indisputable. In the *σημείωμα* of 1086, Alexios stresses that the *canons* are the ones that condemn those that deviate the procedure and instead of standing before the ecclesiastical court, they disturb “the ears of the emperor” (τὰ ὦτα τοῦ βασιλέως), as Leo did. He points out that canon law legalises the jurisdiction of the imperial court, since whoever turns to the emperor, is found guilty on the basis of the *canons* not because they have turned to him, but because they have deviated the ecclesiastical law. It is remarkable that in the Synod called upon in January 1086, as an initiative of Alexios, Leo was not condemned because of his theory on holy vessels, but because in his attempt to bring patriarch Eustratios before the court, he did not obey by the procedure set out in *nomoi* and *canons* and deviated the ecclesiastical court, to which he ought to have turned. Instead, he turned to the emperor “disturbing his ears”\(^7\). However, Leo was found guilty also on the basis of secular law, since he did not obey by the imperial *σημείωμα* which proved the patriarch was innocent, committing thus the offence of sacrilege, in line with the principle that ὁ οἰαδήποτε βασιλικῇ ἀντιγραφῇ ἐναντιωθείς, ὡς ἱερόσυλος τιμωρεῖται\(^7\).

In the *σημείωμα* of January 1086, Alexios brings back the issue of the chrysobull of 1082 ratifying its power and he introduces the term *oikonomia* as the factor that forms the emperor’s decisions\(^7\). Based on

---

71. Καίτοι φανερῷ καθιστηκότος τοῦ μιάσματος, καὶ δήλων ὑν, ὡς οἱ τὰ τοιαύτα πράττοντες, οὐ μονὸν καθαιρέσεως, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς ἐσχάτης δυσσεβείας τῷ ἐγκλήματι περιπίπτονοι: Canon 10 of the 1st and 2nd Council of Constantinople (RHALLES – POTLES II, 683).


73. See n. 50; GLAVINAS, Η περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 124.

74. Ἄ μεντοὶ η βασιλεία μοι διὰ χρυσοβεβούλλων γραφῆς ἐξῆθετο πρόσερε, αὐτῇ τε καὶ τοῖς μετ’ αὐτὴν εὐσεβῆς βασιλεύσοντας τῶν ἱερῶν καὶ θείων ἀναθημάτων κατὰ
he also justifies the patriarch’s decisions, who is said to have served _οἰκονομίας_ τινας ἐκκλησιαστικὰς with his attitude. Alexios assures that his Chrysobull will bind his successors in the future. It was quite possible that his successors would face cases of equal emergence or even greater in the future that might call for even more difficult decisions to be made. However, they would have to justify their choices again and not use his precedent as pretence. At the end of the _σημείωμα_, however, it could be inferred that the emperor left a loophole for possible confiscations in the future. Alexios refers one more time to _nomoi_ and _canons_ that allow and define the confiscation of the holy vessels, reminding that his Chrysobull does not introduce any new legislation that renders the existing legislation void –either secular or ecclesiastical– but it is binding only for him and his successors. He indicates that the chrysobull is not binding for the Church or the people (τῷ παντὶ πολιτεύματι) As concerns the latter, both the

---

75. For the verb _πολιτεύομαι_ as a Roman term and the «πολιτευόμενοι» as part of the

---

78. For the verb _πολιτεύομαι_ as a Roman term and the «πολιτευόμενοι» as part of the
secular and the ecclesiastical legislation should be taken into account so as to define when confiscation could take place along with the appropriate punishment for those who practice it without a good reason. “Akribeia” (ἀκρίβεια), i.e. being accurate in nomos and canon, being equal to one another in the σημείωμα, would give eventually the possibility to practice confiscation under certain circumstances.

In conclusion, in an era when the absolute nature of the imperial authority was seriously challenged, confined by both the Church and the people, Alexios was at the heart of an attack concerning the discord for the confiscation of the holy vessels. This attack could be considered as part of the broader criticism that Alexios faced in relation to the management of public resources as his private property.

politeia, according to Leo VI’s Novels, see KalDellis, Byzantine Republic, 10-11; for the use of the term «πολίτευμα» and its meaning, see KalDellis, Byzantine Republic, 41, 44, 151.

79. Ἐφ᾽ ἄλλα περὶ τῆς τῶν ἱερῶν ἐκποιήσεως νόμου καὶ κανόνες διαγορεύουσιν, ὅτε καὶ πῶς ἐφῆκαν γίνεσθαι τὴν ἐκποιήσιν διαφημίζοντες σαφῶς, ταύτα ἐξε τοῦ ἱεροῦ καὶ ἡ νομικὴ καὶ κανονική αὐθεντία ἐπὶ τῆς ἱδίας ἀσφαλείας ἐστιντείται. Οὕτω γὰρ τὸ παρὰ τῆς βασιλείας μου γεγονός χρυσόβουλλον νεαράν τινα νομισθόταν εἰσήγαγεν ἐν ἀνατροπῇ τῶν πρὸς ιερῶν νόμων, ἱερατικῶν τε καὶ πολιτικῶν, περὶ τῆς τῶν ἱερῶν ἐκποιήσεως ἀλλ’ ἑαυτῆς ἐδέσμησε καὶ τοὺς μετ’ αὐτὴν βασιλεῖς. Καὶ μέντοι κρατήσει τὰ δεδομένα εἰς τὸ ἐξῆς παρὰ αὐτὴ τῆς βασιλείας μοι καὶ τοῖς μετ’ αὐτὴν εὐσεβῶς βασιλεύσονσι. Παρὰ δὲ γε ταῖς τοῦ Θεοῦ Ἐκκλησίαις καὶ τοίς πατίς πολιτεύματι, οἱ νόμοι καὶ οἱ κανόνες τὸ ἐνεχθῆναι, καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἐκείθεν ἀκρίβειαν ἢ τῶν ἱερῶν ἐκποιήσεως ἐκχωρῆσθαι, ὡς ἡ καταδίκη τοῖς παρὰ τὸ δέον ἐκποιουμένοις ἐκείθεν ἐπενεχθῆσθαι (Sakkélíon, Documents inédits, 128); Glávinas, Ἡ περὶ τῶν ἱερῶν σκευῶν ἔρις, 125.

80. It is typical that Alexios in his σημείωμα stresses the need to secure “akribeia” (ἀκρίβεια), since the case has to do with church issues (ἐκκλησιαστικὰ πράγματα). The term «ἀκρίβεια» appears again in the “semeioma”, when Alexios refers to the persistence of Leo to keep it, when he was asked to prove his accusations “on the basis of the canons” (κανονικῶς); Sakkélion, Documents inédits, 118.

81. The complaint that Alexios had treated the public resources as his private property is voiced by John Zonaras: καὶ τοῖς πράγμασιν οὐχ ὡς κοινοῖς οὐδ᾽ ὡς δημοσίοις ἐκχωρῆσον καὶ ἓναντὶ οὐκ οἰκονόμησέν ἤγητο τοῦτον, ἀλλὰ δεσπότην, καὶ οἶκον οἰκεῖον ἐνόμιζε καὶ ἐνόμιζε τὰ βασίλεια (Ioannis Zonarae Épimier Historianum, III, ed. L. Dindorf, Lipsiae 1870, 18. 29. 23-26); for Zonaras’ critique on Alexios, see Magdalino, Byzantine Kaiserkritik, 329-330, 335-338; for the republican values outlined by Zonaras in terms of his critique to Alexios, see KalDellis, Byzantine Republic, 47-48.

BYZANTINA ΣΥΜΜΕΙΚΤΑ 31 (2021), 401-430
With regard to the confiscation of the holy vessels, the most powerful argument of his opponents was that the emperor had broken the canons. Alexios did break the holy canons, as it is also evident in Alexias, but he had relied on the secular law, its inclusion in the Nomocanon, and the possibilities it gave him within certain limits, which he had eventually also overrun, without admitting it. It is typical that, according to Anna, Isaac Komnenos was forced to force those whom he did not want to force, indicating thus that the clergy adhered to the spirit of the canons. On the other hand, Leo of Chalcedon, says Anna, turned against Alexios μηδόλως ή οἰκονομίας ή τῶν περὶ τῶν ιερῶν κειμένων νόμων ἐπαισθανόμενος, i.e. without taking into consideration the two factors that concerned imperial administration and allowed the deviation from the provisions of the canons regarding the inalienability of the holy vessels. Moreover Anna's parallel mention of oikonomia and the nomoi related to the sacred vessels, suggests that it was the principle of oikonomia that enabled Alexios to violate the limits set even by the nomoi on the confiscation of the holy vessels.

However, from Alexios' attempt to get rid of the charge of violating the canons along with his desire to expiate, it is evident that the threat for the absolute nature of the imperial power was imminent and it came not only from the part of the officials or of the Church hierarchy, the members of which tried to limit the emperor's authorities both in religious and in political issues in the second half of the 11th century, but also from the people, who were politically active in the 11th century and their views were expressed through the guilds, which played an important role in the internal Byzantine life.

82. See p. 420-421.
83. See n. 13.
84. See pp. 418-420 and n. 51.
85. S. VRYonis, Byzantine «δημοκρατία» and the guilds in the eleventh century, DOP 17 (1963), 289-314, esp. 302ff; see also S. VRYonis, Byzantine Imperial Authority: theory and practice in the eleventh century, in: La notion d' autorité au Moyen Age. Islam, Byzance, Occident. Colloques internationaux de la Napoule, session des 23-26 octobre 1978, organisés par G. Makdisi, S. Sourdel et J. Sourdel-Thomine, Paris 1982, 141-161; ANgOLD, Byzantine Empire, 93-98; KAzhidan – EPstein, Change, 50ff; for the granting of greater autonomy to cities, during the period of the Comneni, see, P. CHARANIS, The Role of the People in the Political Life of the Byzantine Empire: The Period of the Comneni and the Palaeologi, Byzantine Studies/Études Byzantines 5, 1-2 (1978), 69-79, esp. 75ff; for the republican activity of the people in the eleventh century, see D. KrAllis, Democratic Action in Eleventh-
The fact that Alexios was faced with the clash of his decisions with the ecclesiastical law forced him to find ways to assure the doctrine of superiority of the emperor’s will. He used the equality of nomos and canon, established by the secular law, by promoting his need for expiation and by constantly appealing to canons both in the chrysobull of 1082 and in his σημείομα of 1086. He tried to put an end to the inconsistency between nomoi and canons, but he indirectly sought ways to apply the emperor’s will after all, which in this case ended up going beyond even the strict limits set by the nomoi, in terms of imperial oικονομία86.

All this happened in the constantly changing framework at the end of the 11th century, within which the social powers, i.e. the people and the Church, should be seriously taken into consideration. Appealing to these two social powers at the end of his σημείομα in 1086, Alexios demonstrated the ability of the emperor and his counselors to renounce subtly the principle of the imperial oικονομία and give priority to the above mentioned social factors, the profit of which would lead them to make the choice – either based on a nomos or a canon, to possibly practice another confiscation in the future. In the second half of the 11th century, rhetoric emerges as the basic tool of the imperial will in order to overcome the inconsistencies between nomoi and canons and also to cover up the violation of nomoi and canons, to the benefit of the emperor’s authority87.

---

86. It is typical that the abuse of oikonomía was an assumption of twelfth-century critics on contemporary emperors; Magdalino, Byzantine Kaiserkritik, 339.

87. Beck, Nomos, 59; Magdalino, Byzantine Kaiserkritik, 345; Macrides, Nomos, 85, for the use of the technique of rhetoric and oikonomía both by the Church and by the state in order to resolve the contradictions between nomoi and canons.
ΝΟΜΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΝΩΝ ΣΤΟ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΟ:
Η ΠΕΡΙΠΤΩΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΕΚΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ ΤΩΝ ΙΕΡΩΝ ΣΚΕΥΩΝ ΕΠΙ ΑΛΕΞΙΟΥ Α’ ΚΟΜΝΗΝΟΥ

Στο άρθρο διερευνώνται η σχέση νόμων και κανόνων στο Βυζάντιο, καθώς και η στάση του βυζαντινού αυτοκράτορα απέναντι στους κανόνες και την εκκλησία γενικότερα, όσο και στους νόμους. Αναδεικνύονται, εξάλλου, τα όρια της νομοθετικής εξουσίας του αυτοκράτορα, με αφορμή την έριδα που αποσχίλησε το Βυζάντιο για περίπου δεκαπέντε χρόνια (1081-1095) ως αποτέλεσμα της εκποίησης από τον Αλέξιο Α’ Κομνηνό των ιερών σκευών, προκειμένου να χρηματοδοτηθούν μισθοφορικά στρατεύματα για την αντιμετώπιση του νορμανδικού κινδύνου μετά την κατάληψη του Δυρραχίου από τους Νορμανδούς τον Οκτώβριο του 1081. Η εξίσωση νόμων και κανόνων από την Νεαρά 131 του Ιουστινιανού το 545, καθώς και η ασαφής θέση των νομικών του 12ου αιώνα απέναντι στη σχέση νόμων και κανόνων, ως αποτέλεσμα της στενής σχέσης Εκκλησίας και Πολιτείας στο Βυζάντιο, των δύο όψεων της μίας χριστιανικής αυτοκρατορίας, αντικατοπτρίζονται στη χρήση των όρων «νόμος» και «κανόνας» με μία διάθεση εξίσωσης τους στην Αλεξιάδα της Άννας Κομνηνής, που καταγράφεται τα σχετικά με την έριδα. Από την άλλη πλευρά, διαπιστώνεται η κατασκευή ενός πλάσματος δικαίου από την πλευρά της Άννας Κομνηνής, προκειμένου να καλυφθεί η παραβίαση από τον Αλέξιο Κομνηνό ακόμα και των αυστηρών προϋποθέσεων που έθετε η Νεαρά 120 του Ιουστινιανού για την εκποίηση των ιερών σκευών, με τη ρητορική να αποτελεί ισχυρό εργαλείο της αυτοκρατορίας εξουσίας στον αγώνα για την εδραίωση της ισχύος της.