THE PROVINCIAL ARISTOCRACY IN BYZANTINE ASIA MINOR (1081-1261)

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Thesis Abstract

Meriç T. Öztürk, "The Provincial Aristocracy in Byzantine Asia Minor (1081-1261)"

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the power basis of the provincial aristocracy in Byzantine Asia Minor between 1081 and 1261. Following an introductory chapter and another chapter setting the historical background, the two main chapters of the thesis explore, respectively, the political and the economic means of aristocratic power during the two centuries concerned. Bridging the reappearance of the aristocracy in ninth-century Byzantium with the peak of the military aristocracy under the Komnenoi, the present study seeks to understand the nature of the group and questions how the provincial aristocracy in Asia Minor maintained continuity and how it was transformed down to the end of the Nicaean era.

In order to comprehend the status of the provincial aristocrats, it is crucial to look at the power relations in provincial society. The period chosen for the study extends from the ascension of the emperor Alexios I Komnenos to the throne (1081) until the year 1261, which is traditionally considered as the end of the Nicaean Empire. Within this time span, the thesis presents the breaks and continuity in the provincial aristocracy's influence in Byzantine Asia Minor and concludes that the region generated a gradually expanding group of aristocrats who challenged the state depending on how far the central authority was maintained. This conclusion is reached by asking how the social structure was set up in Asia Minor and where the provincial aristocrats would be situated in that context. In this frame, the networks in Asia Minor –either the state incorporated or among the local interest groups– are investigated.

The provincial aristocracy of Asia Minor held several administrative offices and even had risen up to higher positions in the civil, military, and fiscal administration. Occupying these offices brought considerable fame and consequently some sort of political power in some regions. That social power sometimes ended with rebellions, raised by locally powerful individuals, some of which are investigated in the thesis. Furthermore, the economic basis of power constituted another aspect of provincial aristocratic authority in Byzantine Asia Minor. Several sources, such as lands, salaries, imperial donations, inherited properties, *pronoia*, became major instruments for providing wealth for the provincial aristocrats.

Key words: Byzantine Asia Minor, provincial aristocracy, administrative offices, rebellions, economic power basis.

Tez Özeti

Meriç T. Öztürk, "Bizans Küçük Asyası'nda Taşra Aristokrasisi (1081-1261)"

Bu tezin amacı 1081 ile 1261 yılları arasında Bizans Küçük Asyası'ndaki taşra aristokrasisinin güç kaynaklarını araştırmaktır. Bir giriş bölümü ve tarihsel arka planı oluşturan başka bir bölümü takiben, tezin iki ana bölümü ilgili iki yüzyıl boyunca aristokratik gücün sırasıyla politik ve ekonomik kaynaklarını araştırmaktadır. 9. yüzyıl Bizansı'nda aristokrasinin yeniden ortaya çıkışı ile Komnenoslar döneminde askerî aristokrasinin doruğa ulaştığı zaman arasında köprü kuran bu çalışma, bu grubun doğasını ve Küçük Asya'daki taşra aristokrasisinin İznik döneminin sonuna kadar nasıl bir devamlılık gösterdiğini ve dönüşüme uğradığını sorgulamaktadır.

Taşra aristokratlarının statüsünü kavramak için taşra toplumundaki güç ilişkilerine göz atmak önem arz etmektedir. Çalışma için seçilen dönem imparator I. Alexios Komnenos'un tahta yükselişinden (1081) geleneksel olarak İznik İmparatorluğu'nun sonu olan 1261 yılına kadar olan süreyi kapsamaktadır. Bu zaman dilimi içinde Bizans Küçük Asyası'ndaki taşra aristokrasisinin nüfuzundaki fasılalar ve devamlılığın sunulması ve bölgenin, merkezi otoritenin ne denli sağlandığına bağlı olarak, devletle çatışan, gitgide büyüyen bir aristokratlar grubunu meydana getirdiği sonucu çıkarılmaktadır. Mevcut bağlamda Küçük Asya'da toplumsal yapının nasıl kurulduğu ve taşra aristokratlarının nerede konumlandıklarını sorarak bu sonuca ulaşılmaktadır. Bu çerçevede, Küçük Asya'daki –devletin müdahil olduğu ya da yerel çıkar grupları arasındaki– ağlar incelenmektedir.

Küçük Asya'nın taşra aristokrasisi çeşitli idarî görevleri hâizdi ve hatta sivil, askerî ve malî yönetimde yüksek mevkilere yükselmişti. Bu görevlerde bulunmak onlara dikkate değer ün ve en nihayetinde bazı bölgelerde bir çeşit siyasî güç getirmişti. Bu toplumsal güç bazen, yerelde güçlü bireyler tarafından çıkarılan ve bazıları bu tezde incelenen isyanlarla sonuçlanmıştı. Ayrıca, ekonomik güç kaynağı Bizans Küçük Asyası'ndaki taşra aristokrat otoritesinin bir başka yönünü oluşturur. Araziler, maaşlar, imparatorluk bağışları, miras yoluyla elde edinilen mallar, *pronoia* gibi çeşitli kaynaklar taşra aristokratları için ekonomik güç sağlayan ana araçlar olmuştur.

Anahtar sözcükler: Bizans Küçük Asyası, taşra aristokrasisi, idari görevler, isyanlar, ekonomik güç kaynağı.

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To the protesters,
who resisted for days
at Gezi Park, Taksim
(May-June 2013)

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ABBREVIATIONS

B	*Byzantion*
BF	*Byzantinische Forschungen*
BMGS	*Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*
Bsl	*Byzantinoslavica*
BZ	*Byzantinische Zeitschrift*
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
GRBS	*Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*
JÖB	*Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen*
REB	*Revue des Etudes Byzantines*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Byzantine socio-cultural history started to become more of a concern for the Byzantinists especially after the 1970s, when they felt the need to conduct the *Annales* model in Byzantine studies.[1] The shifting focus has been expressed by Alexander Kazhdan and Giles Constable:

> The subject of modern Byzantine studies must therefore be the *homo byzantinus* in the sense of Byzantine people and their place in society, and all traditional topics –politics, diplomacy, and the like– must be reconsidered in the light of the interests, intentions, and hopes of these people. The attention of previous generations of historians was concentrated above all on the activity of the Byzantine state, and it was hardly by chance that the best survey of Byzantine history –Ostrogorsky's classic work– was entitled *The History of the Byzantine State*. Earlier generations believed in the rational background of state organization and saw in it the real instigator of historical development. The accent has now shifted from the state to the individual, and man's reaction to the machinery of the state now seems more important than the activity of the machinery itself. The material conditions of human existence, the social organization of people, their collective psyche or mentality, their hopes, fears, and beliefs, their highest personal achievements–these are the topics that are attracting the attention of Byzantine researchers today. [2]

Setting out from such a need in Byzantine studies, the present study aims to fulfill similar goals in the field of the provincial aristocracy. The subject will be investigated under three main leitmotivs: career of the individuals within large family groups, their familial links, and their local power base.

In order to understand provincial society, it is essential to look at how the power relations were established within economic, political, and social life in

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[1] Alice-Mary Talbot, "Byzantine Studies at the Beginning of the Twenty-first Century," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 105/1 (2006), p. 32.

[2] Alexander Kazhdan and Giles Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1982), p. 16.

Byzantium. The provincial aristocrats occupied key points, undertaking vital roles in the management of administrative affairs. Beside their political basis of power, economic roots of their power were also noteworthy. How they accumulated wealth, what income their positions or power provided them, and how they invested all this capital remain important questions to be answered. The two main contents of the present thesis, being political and economic basis of power, have come out as an inspiration from Nevra Necipoğlu's division in one of her studies,[3] with an addition of a third one (Appendix) reflecting the military basis of power, encompassing features from both but also bearing different points.

This study aims to highlight the provincial aristocracy's role in rural society with its political, economic, and military aspects. At first glance, just to draw an overall view of how Byzantine social structure changed through time until the rise of the Komnenian dynasty, it will suffice for the moment to quote Angeliki E. Laiou's words: "[Byzantine society] was a relatively flat society in its heyday, with a rising aristocracy forcefully opposed by the state in the tenth century, engaging in struggles for control of the state in the eleventh century, and assuming a dominant position at the end of that century."[4]

Provincialism is a term which needs a clarification. The Byzantine Empire was a centralist state; all the high governmental offices were held by the Constantinopolitan aristocracy. Constantinople, being the single center of the Empire, carried out ruling the country via offices responsible for the running of affairs in the provinces. The capitals of these provinces represented minor

[3] Nevra Necipoğlu, "The Byzantine Aristocracy during the Period of Ottoman Conquests," in *Halil İnalcık Armağanı* (İstanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, forthcoming). She notes that the transformations that the Byzantine aristocracy had experienced fall into two aspects: the economic basis and the political basis.

[4] Angeliki E. Laiou, "Review: Michael Angold, ed., The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII Centuries. (B.A.R. International Series, 221). Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1984," *Speculum* 62/2 (April 1987), p. 382.

administrative centers in the periphery. The term provincialism expresses the notion that embraces the state of being provincial and all conditions being the characteristics of the provinces. The term brings about *sui generis* the social, economic, and cultural structure of the provinces; therefore, it illuminates different aspects of Byzantine society apart from Constantinople.

A neater distinction has to be made between the Constantinopolitan aristocracy and the provincial aristocracy. The Constantinopolitan aristocracy connotes a group of notables whose economic power basis was situated largely within and/or around Constantinople, who were mostly the inhabitants of the City, and who belonged to the upper ranks of the society (high aristocracy). Constantinople also included other notable individuals from the middle and lower ranks of aristocratic society who shared common characteristics with the high aristocrats except for incomparable wealth. There were members of the bureaucracy serving in the provinces, appointed from Constantinople with high dignities and posts, who were members of the high echelons of the Constantinopolitan aristocracy. This group is left outside the scope of this thesis. On the other hand, there was the provincial aristocracy, whose power -both political and financial- lay in the countryside or in the provincial cities. The members of that group may have been inhabitants of several regions of the Empire. They could be from the capital but invested their wealth in the provinces, but the common picture revealed that the substantial ratio had provincial origin. What is under consideration in this thesis will be the middle and lower administrative office-holders, native individuals who rose up the ladder of their career and succeeded in holding one of these positions, either coming from the surrounding region or somewhere else in the Empire.

This thesis encompasses the provincial society of Asia Minor in general within a certain period of history, 1081–1261. In that period, the Byzantine provincial aristocracy went through transformations while sometimes the *status-quo* was preserved in certain aspects. The choice of the period reflects an intention to substantiate the duration in which one can trace the 'change' throughout the Empire. It reflects major political, social, and military changes in Byzantine history, such as the reformation of the theme system, new organization of the army and emergence of new titles and offices, apart from drastic shifts in political formations in the region as well as change of dynasties in the fluid and slippery political ground of the Near East. These can be attested in Asia Minor more than in any part of the Byzantine Empire, since dramatic changes occurred in the political environment of the region and the provincial aristocracy had always been powerful on a regional basis in Asia Minor. This last point always constituted serious troubles for the state authority. The provincial aristocrats and the aristocratic families will provide evidence to understand how the provincial aristocracy located itself in the unstable environment of Asia Minor between 1081 and 1261.

Literature on the Byzantine Aristocracy

Studies on the Byzantine provincial aristocracy have not been scanty, yet, they show a dispersed nature. The nature of the aristocracy, which was generally termed as 'nobility' in Byzantine sources, the social groups in the Byzantine countryside, the economic aspects of the provincial society, and some particular provincial families have been some major topics that the modern Byzantine historians tended to pick up and ended with substantial monographs and articles. For the period I am going to

investigate, there are three fundamental studies: Alexander P. Kazhdan, *Social'nyj sostav gospodstvujuscego klassa Vizantii XI-XII vv*.;[5] Jean-Claude Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)*;[6] Michael Angold (ed.), *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII Centuries*.[7] Although these studies provide a general though valuable picture about the aristocratic culture of the eleventh–thirteenth centuries, they give highlights for local notables. It has been argued that the earlier studies focusing on the existence and structure of the aristocratic groups followed a methodological way that almost merely depended on prosopographical research.[8] Modern scholarship has contributed a lot to the studies of Byzantine prosopography and aristocratic families. Although some families have been researched through their historically identifiable and detectable evidence, some others necessitated further research due to scarce and much dispersed evidence. No attempt has yet been made to gather together all prosopographical data until Cheynet's *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)*. Beforehand, some families were already specifically studied: Anthony Bryer's study on the Gabrades[9], Demetrios I. Polemis' study on the Doukai[10], Stirios Fassoulakis' book on the *Raoul-Ral(l)es* family.[11]

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[5] Alexander P. Kazhdan, *Social'nyj sostav gospodstvujuscego klassa Vizantii XI-XII vv*. (Moscow: n. p., 1974). Kazhdan's book was elaborated by a collaborative work of both himself and Ronchey, published as an extensive survey on the topic: Alexander P. Kazhdan and Silvia Ronchey, *L'aristocrazia bizantina dal principio dell'XI alla fine del XII secolo* (Palermo: Sellerio editore, 1997).

[6] Jean-Claude Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1990).

[7] Michael Angold, ed. *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII Centuries* (Oxford: B.A.R., 1984).

[8] Demetrios S. Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries* (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1997), pp. 1-6.

[9] Anthony Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades, c. 979-c. 1653," *University of Birmingham Historical Journal* 12 (1970), pp. 164-187; Anthony Bryer, et al., "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades," *Bsl* 36 (1975), pp. 38-45.

[10] Demetrios I. Polemis, *The Doukai: A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography* (London: Athlone Press, 1968).

[11] Stirios Fassoulakis, *The Byzantine Family of Raoul-Ral(l)es* (Athens: n. p., 1973).

Regarding the time span under consideration here, studies are rare in the field of the honorary titles and the structure/offices of administrative system in the provinces. Although the ninth century was highlighted still by the help of J. B. Bury's work[12] and Catherine Holmes' article,[13] and the Palaiologan period well studied after the pioneering works of Ljubomir Maksimović[14] and Angeliki E. Laiou,[15] there has not been any sweeping study worthy of notice so far. For before and after the time limit of the thesis, modern Byzantine historians are lucky since there are important Byzantine sources informing them about offices and administrative mechanisms. To give some instances, Philotheos' *Kletorologion* provided basic knowledge for administrative offices at the turn of the ninth century,[16] likewise Pseudo-Kodinos' *Traité des offices* did for the fourteenth century.[17] The present thesis, though its aim would not be ambitious filling the gap, by using several sources, may draw people's curiosity to Komnenian, Angelid and Nicaean governmental offices held by the provincial aristocrats.[18]

If a general census of literature may be drawn, one should begin with George Ostrogorsky. His article, "Observations on the Aristocracy in Byzantium," can be considered as the first attempt raising the issue of aristocracy in Byzantine studies. Giving a broad historical background of the rising of the aristocracy in Middle

[12] J. B. Bury, *The Imperial Administrative System in the Ninth Century, with a Revised Text of the Kletorologion of Philotheos* (London: British Academy Supplemental Papers I, 1911).

[13] Catherine Holmes, "Political Elites in the Reign of Basil II," in *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, Paul Magdalino, ed., (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 35-69.

[14] Ljubomir Maksimović, *The Byzantine Provincial Administration under the Palaiologoi* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1988).

[15] Angeliki E. Laiou, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Palaiologan Period: A Case of Arrested Development," *Viator* 4 (1973), pp. 131-151.

[16] See fn. 12.

[17] Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des offices*. Jean Verpeaux, trans., (Paris: Éditions du centre national de la recherché scientifique, 1966).

[18] This has been partly fulfilled by Kyritses' extensive PhD thesis. See fn. 8.

Byzantine context, Ostrogorsky showed that the aristocrats had social and economic basis within the Byzantine society as they held governmental offices as well as financial sources by their lands. In its initial stages the Byzantine aristocracy, as he indicated, split into two factions: military nobility of the provinces and the civil nobility of the capital. Ostrogorsky's article became the initiator of the academic interest for the Byzantine aristocracy, chronologically drawing the main lines and uttering the key points in its structure. Our attention was drawn to the undeniable rise of the military aristocracy with the reign of Alexios I Komnenos. Ostrogorsky's intention was to evaluate the issue in relation with the institution of the *pronoia,* thus the feudal relations became the basis of his approach in explaining the Byzantine aristocracy. For him, holding the lands represented a *sine qua non* for the Byzantine aristocracy.[19]

Since Ostrogorsky, the Byzantine aristocracy has been illuminated by several scholars. Angeliki E. Laiou became the next scholar who dealt with the phenomenon of aristocracy in Byzantine history. Her article, entitled "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Palaeologan Period: A Story of Arrested Development," focuses on the last centuries of Byzantium as its title may indicate.[20] She initially questions the notion of nobility in Byzantium and reaches the conclusion that there was no noble caste in Byzantium. Then, various aristocrats are analyzed in relation with their links with the imperial family. Intermarriages gain significance at this point in Laiou's article. Along with the familial links that brought in political power, the author tries to explain the power of the aristocracy also with reference to its economic basis of power, and concludes that a gradual increase can be attested in the power of the Byzantine aristocracy throughout the Palaiologan period.

[19] George Ostrogorsky, "Observations on the Aristocracy in Byzantium," *DOP* 25 (1971), pp. 1-32.

[20] Angeliki E. Laiou, "The Byzantine Aristocracy …," pp. 131-151.

Alexander P. Kazhdan published a monumental book on the subject in 1974, in Russian. Its title was *Social'nyj sostav gospodstvujuscego klassa Vizantii XI-XII vv*. and was printed in Moscow. The book shed considerable light on the civil and military aristocratic families' influence by investigating their frequency in the sources, the stratification of these families within the Byzantine society, and their roots as well. Kazhdan reserves some parts for explaining the provincial aristocracy as a minor group of the elites. All the families that can be attested as the holders of positions are mentioned in his book.

Another significant contribution to the subject was made by Michael Angold in his *A Byzantine Government in Exile: Government and Society under the Laskarids of Nicaea (1204-1261)*. The author first used the term "household government" to describe the Nicaean government, by which he meant a new bureaucratic structure that was composed of the emperor's relatives and the aristocratic families holding positions in the government.[21] This study is especially vital to understand bureaucratic (political, financial and military) administration of the provinces of Asia Minor, the governmental offices, and the relationship between the emperor and the aristocracy.

In 1984 Michael Angold edited a book composed of articles by different scholars in the field of the Byzantine aristocracy: *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*. The book is still assumed one of the piers of the subject for researchers. Thanks to the studies in the book, the development of a powerful aristocracy can be followed throughout these centuries. Considering the limits of the present thesis, some of these articles are worth to mention. Alexander Kazhdan's "The Aristocracy and the Imperial Ideal" seeks to frame the ideal qualities that a

[21] Michael Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile: Government and Society under the Laskarids of Nicaea (1204-1261)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 4.

Byzantine aristocrat should have had, particularly focusing on how the Byzantine sources described these ideal virtues.[22] Paul Magdalino has two articles in the book. The first one entitled as "Byzantine Snobbery" explains the Byzantine authors' tendencies in identifying themselves and their contempt for the provincial people.[23] His second article is "The Byzantine Aristocratic Oikos" in which he states that aristocrats' status came from his familial connections, his *oikos*, which was the social and economic organism embodying the aristocratic residences along with the dwellers within the aristocratic *oikos*.[24] Another article in the book, Donald Nicol's "The Prosopography of the Byzantine Aristocracy" teaches the way the prosopography generates traces for figuring out the structure of Byzantine aristocratic families.[25] Vera von Falkenhausen's article entitled "A Provincial Aristocracy: The Byzantine Provinces in Southern Italy (9th–11th Century)" indicates the power bases of the provincial aristocrats in one of the Byzantine provinces and how they shaped the area.[26] The last related article in the book is written by the editor, Michael Angold: "Archons and Dynasts: Local Aristocrats and the Cities of the Later Byzantine Empire." In this path breaking article, the author explains how some Byzantine provincial families gained influence in their regions and how they turned it into political and economic power which can be observed in various offices

[22] Alexander Kazhdan, "The Aristocracy and the Imperial Ideal," in *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries* , Angold, ed., pp. 43-57.

[23] Paul Magdalino, "Byzantine Snobbery," in *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*, Angold, ed., pp. 58-78.

[24] Idem, "The Byzantine Aristocratic Oikos," in *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*, Angold, ed., pp. 92-111. The term "*oikos*" will be broadly analyzed in the following chapters.

[25] Donald Nicol, "The Prosopography of the Byzantine Aristocracy," in *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*, Angold, ed., pp. 79-91.

[26] Vera von Falkenhausen, "A Provincial Aristocracy: The Byzantine Provinces in Southern Italy (9th-11th Century)," in *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*, Angold, ed., pp. 211-235.

and positions that the aristocrats possessed. Angold also mentions the residential places of the aristocrats.[27]

As one of the piers of the literature in the field, Jean-Claude Cheynet's *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)* lists the aristocrats who rebelled against the Byzantine state. That study presents comprehensive data about the power bases of the local power holders in Byzantine Asia Minor. His main emphasis is on the territorial and geographical influence of those local aristocrats; therefore, he analyzes the state's politics in times of sheer oppositions against the central government. What Cheynet basically considered is the aristocracy who one way or another entered into an antagonism/contestation with the state. The members of that group usually raised an opposition that ended with rebellions. This is partly incorporated in the thesis, but still remains subsidiary, since our study considers all the groups that possessed certain power base not only through military capacity but also through other means of power, and consisted of middle and lower aristocracies. Cheynet's work, nevertheless, is quite useful, and the maps he presents enable the reader to figure out the individuals' or the families' areas of influence.

More recently Demetrios S. Kyritses submitted a PhD thesis to Harvard University, which is another main source of the present thesis. The title of his study is *The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries*, in which the author basically discusses the distinctive features of the group of aristocrats, the structure of that group, its geographical distribution and the sources of aristocratic financial power. The parts related to the Nicaean period are relevant to the frame of our study. What Kyritses exactly proposes in the thesis is that contrary to the conditions in Western Europe, the power of the aristocrats did not go beyond

[27] Michael Angold, "Archons and Dynasts: Local Aristocracies and the Cities of the Later Byzantine Empire," in *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*, idem, ed., pp. 236-253.

the power of the state in Byzantium. He also investigates how the new milieu between the state and the aristocracy was formed, and concludes that the aristocrats did not reach or did not try for a level of power that made them ascendant over the imperial authority. They were rather seeking for imperial guarantee for their privileges in collaboration with the Byzantine state. The state, thus, preserved its authority over the aristocratic groups.[28]

There are some supplementary fields that can contribute to a study on the provincial aristocrats. Prosopographical studies give us the chance to use the 'atoms' of history in order to construct the human past by pointing out individuals and their place in society. Prosopography is useful for a total understanding of the historical context.[29] The field helps the historian to be provided with some clues about personal identity, which may sometimes be multiple, such as ethnic origin or background.[30] Prosopographical studies have been useful for the late Roman-early Byzantine and the Palaiologan periods.[31] Unfortunately, we do not have a reference study in this field for the eleventh and twelfth centuries. There is an ongoing project aiming to

[28] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, pp. 392-394. For a discussion of this work and others on the Palaiologan period, see Dionysios Stathakopoulos, "The Dialectics of Expansion and Retraction: Recent Scholarshipon the Palaiologan Aristocracy," *BMGS*, 33/1 (2009): 92-101.

[29] Paul Magdalino, "Prosopography and Byzantine Identity," in *Fifty Years of Prosopography. The Later Roman Empire, Byzantium and Beyond*, Averil Cameron, ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 46. Magdalino emphasized the use of prosopography: "…the essence of prosopography is to establish identity; the identity of an individual within a group, an individual identity as a part of group identity. The prosopographer's card index is like a police file in which the historian can search, not only for the usual suspects, but also for the highly unusual and unlikely ones– including the perpetrators of the crime that remains as yet unreported or undetected." Ibid., p. 47.

[30] Ibid., pp. 55-56.

[31] John Robert Martindale, *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971 and 1992), vols. 2-3. Volume 2 covers the period between 395 and 527. Volume 3 covers from what the previous volume left until 641, and is composed of two separate volumes (A and B). For the Palaiologan era, on the other hand, there is an extensive study held by a group of scholars under the direction of Erich Trapp. See Erich Trapp, ed., *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit* (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1976-1996), 15 vols.

publish middle-Byzantine prosopography, but only study of an early period has yet been published.[32]

Cheynet wrote an article illustrating the way the aristocrats took family names. He reconstructed the formation of names by different social groups.[33] The state of the provincial aristocracy, however, "cannot be easily defined with simply prosopographic elements, even though the latter generally suggest the most probable hypotheses."[34] Cheynet, at this point, reminds us of the peculiar structure of the Byzantine Empire: "One must never forget that in the Byzantine Empire, in spite of the Roman heritage, the division between public and private was never as clear as it is in modern states."[35] These statements support the idea that prosopography should be part of the researcher's investigation.

Apart from prosopographical studies, some sources can increase our knowledge about the provincial aristocracy. The fruits of sigillographic studies –and of course through a true-dating of seals– can help the Byzantine historian to draw a picture of Byzantine social life and most importantly the individuals.[36] Sigillography occupies an important place. Especially the seals of the eleventh and twelfth

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[32] Friedhelm Winkelmann and Ralph-Johannes Lilie, (eds), *Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit, Abteilung I: 641-867* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998-2002), 5 vols.

[33] Jean-Claude Cheynet, "Aristocratic Anthroponimy in Byzantium," English translation of "L'anthroponymie aristocratique à Byzance," *L'anthroponymie, document de l'histoire sociale des mondes méditerranéens médiévaux*, M. Bourin, ed., J.-M. Martin and F. Menant (Rome: École française de Rome, 1996), pp. 267-294, published in idem, *The Byzantine Aristocracy and its Military Function* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006), No. III, pp. 1-30.

[34] Jean-Claude Cheynet, "Official Power and Non-Official Power," in *Fifty Years of Prosopography. The Later Roman Empire, Byzantium and Beyond*, Averil Cameron, ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 151.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Jean-Claude Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries: A Review of the Book by A. Kazhdan and S. Ronchey," English translation of "L'aristocrazia bizantina nei secoli X-XII: a proposito del libro di A. Kazhdan e S. Ronchey," *Rivista Storica Italiana* 63, fasc. 2 (2001), p. 11, published in idem, *The Byzantine Aristocracy and its Military Function* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006), No. II.

centuries provide vast evidence in terms of family names and individuals' titles.[37] Unfortunately none has been found with an official position written on it.[38] We do not have very many seal examples for the twelfth-thirteenth centuries as much as we have from the ninth–tenth centuries. A Byzantine seal reveals its owner's name, office(s) and title(s) through abbreviations-monograms and writings. It sometimes encompasses depictions mostly bearing holy figures (Virgin, Christ, or saints), sometimes animals for ornamentation, and rarely the portrait of the owner.[39] More seals from the tenth-eleventh centuries have come down to us indicating specific individuals with their exact positions-offices compared to the ones belonging to the later centuries of Byzantium.[40]

Primary Sources

Historical accounts constitute the basic sources in this thesis. They will illuminate the subject matter of the study and will constitute the backbone of it. The relevant ones for a historical background are works of Michael Attaleiates, John Skylitzes, Nikephoros Bryennios (the younger), John Zonaras, and Kekaumenos. For the chronicles contemporary to the time span of the present study, there are four fundamental historians: Anna Komnene, Niketas Choniates, John Kinnamos and

[37] For some catalogues, see Vitalien Laurent, *Le corpus des sceaux de l'Empire byzantine* (Paris: Editions du Centre national de la recherché scientifique, 1963-1981); John Nesbitt and Nicolas Oikonomides, *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art* (Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1991-2001), 5 vols.

[38] Cheynet, "Official Power …," p. 140.

[39] John W. Nesbitt, "Seals and Sealings," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Alexander P. Kazhdan et al. (eds) (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), vol. 3, pp. 1859-1860. (*The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* will be abbreviated as *ODB* hereafter).

[40] As one of the studies done for particular families' seals, see John Nesbitt, "The Seals of the Saronites Family," in *Siegel und Siegler. Akten des 8. Internationalen Symposions für Byzantinische Sigillographie*, Caludia Ludwig, ed., (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005), pp. 115-121; On the subject a catalogue was published recently: Jean-Claude Cheynet, Vera Bulgurlu and Turan Gökyıldırım, *Les sceaux byzantins du Musée Archéologique d'Istanbul*, (İstanbul, 2012).

George Akropolites. Another source of the thesis is a collection of first-hand sources including documents of monasteries, letters and so on, compiled by Franz Miklosich and Joseph Müller.[41] Concerning the Nicaean era, on the other hand, there are two other major sources among others. These are Theodore Skoutariotes' *Synopsis Chronike* and George Pachymeres' account.[42] Yet, the thesis does not cover them at all. There are, of course, various other sources that can be taken into consideration for such a topic. Historical accounts of some Byzantine authors such as Zonaras, Pachymeres, Gregoras, and literary sources (such as *Timarion*), imperial documents, and other genres are excluded because partly of the language obstacle of the present author.

The nature of the written sources deserves particular attention for they represent the viewpoint of their authors. One should keep in mind that each source just mentioned came out of the pen of either the members of the imperial family and high aristocracy, or of the bureaucrats. While some were defending aristocratic interests, others took more of an anti-aristocratic stand such as Michael Italikos and John Kinnamos.[43] There were hostile critics of state politics among these authors such as Zonaras, criticizing the introduction of corvée labor, over-taxation, and heavy burden on peasantry which was used to finance the military expenses.[44]

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[41] Franz Miklosich and Joseph Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana* (Vienna: n. p., 1860-1890), 6 vols. (Hereafter, MM).

[42] See Ruth Macrides, "The Thirteenth Century in Byzantine Historical Writing," in *Porphyrogenita: Essays in Honour of Julian Chrysostomides*, Charalambos Dendrinos, et al., (eds), (London: n. p., 2003), pp. 70-72.

[43] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries …," pp. 3-5, where the author is referring to A. P. Kazhdan and S. Ronchey's ideas put forward in their book titled *L'aristocrazia bizantina dal principio dell'XI alla fine del XII secolo* (Palermo: Sellerio editore, 1977).

[44] Erich Trapp, trans., *Johannes Zonaras: Militär und Höflinge im Ringen un das Kaisertum: Byzantinische Geschichte von 969 bis 1118* (Graz: Styria, 1986). On the other hand, for some authors' despise to provincials, see Magdalino, "Byzantine Snobbery," pp. 58-78.

As other example for such critics, one should turn to Niketas Choniates.[45] In his harsh criticisms of the emperors Andronikos I, Isaac II, and Alexios III, he finds them responsible for the sufferings of the Empire before 1204. He blames Andronikos I for the emperor's anti-aristocratic policies (i.e. persecution of the nobility).[46] Niketas Choniates creates a dichotomy by placing the ecclesiastical aristocracy versus the Constantinopolitan aristocracy. Niketas sees the main problem for the empire's fall in 1204 as the Komnenoi:

> It was the Komnenos family that was the major cause of the destruction of the empire; because of their ambitions and their rebellions, she suffered the subjugation of provinces and cities and finally fell to her knees. These Komnenoi, who sojourned among the barbarian nations hostile to the Romans, were the utter ruin of their country, and whenever they attempted to seize and hold sway over our affairs, they were the most inept, unfit, and stupid of men.[47]

[45] Niketas Choniates' (born in ca. 1155 in Chonai-died in ca. 1215-1216 in Nicaea) family was from Chonai (Chonai situated in a prosperous area. For its flourishing state, see Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 131-132), which was a border town during the twelfth century and was in control of Manuel Maurozomes by 1206 and later of the Turks occasionally until Byzantine recapture in 1258. (The Byzantine recapture was not a long-lasting one. Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniatēs* trans. by Harry J. Magoulias (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), p. xi. (Hereafter, Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*). The Choniates family did not have a single locality; on the contrary, as Niketas tells, the members of the family were dispersed. Some had good education indeed and reached important positions in the bureaucracy just like erudite Michael (who became the archbishop of Athens (1182-1204) at the peak of his career) and Niketas brothers. Their father, who was a member of the lesser ecclesiastical aristocracy (bishop of Chonai), encouraged and supported them to take further steps in their education and consequently sent them to Constantinople. Niketas was an enlightened man, who had interest on ancient Greek and Roman cultures. Ibid., p. xxvii. Being a native of Western Asia Minor, his eye-witness account contributes to our knowledge of the area. Niketas has, in particular, worked in provincial administration (in Pontos and possibly Paphlagonia) early in his career. Then, he occupied more important offices in the court secretary. Ibid., pp. xi-xii. Sometimes he occupied several offices simultaneously. At the top point of his career, apart from some other crucial offices, he had the service of *logothetes ton sekreton* (grand logothete). Niketas Choniates lost all of his offices and his assets by his dismissal in 1204. He was sent to exile first to Selymbria and then to Nicaea. Ibid., pp. xii-xv.

[46] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 12. N. Choniates, yearning for the old glorious days, criticizes conditions at the turn of the twelfth century. For him, neither political power holders nor ecclesiastical authorities directed the public to "truth." People ought to take precautions against wrath of God and regain God's mercy. Political and ecclesiastical power holders should have taught that to the public. Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 259.

[47] Ibid., p. 290.

The historian praises 'nobility' throughout the text.[48] He uses and relates the 'nobility' with reference to bravery, manly power, abilities, and physical and mental capacity of an individual.[49] As Magoulias points out, Niketas mentions the masses with a contemptuous tone. "His special concern with noble birth and the whole Byzantine scale of offices betrays a man," Magouilas writes, "who can claim nobility but, because he does not belong to the great families himself, is sparing in mentioning the fact."[50]

Furthermore, in the writings of Michael Choniates, the brother of Niketas Choniates, one can easily realize the tone against the Constantinopolitan aristocracy. He obviously condemned the Constantinopolitan aristocracy in his writings. For him, the state of the provincial society did not bother Constantinopolitan high aristocrats.[51] Here it should be remembered that Michael was a bishop, thus, his thoughts reflect an ecclesiastical aristocratic point of view of the time. Michael Choniates' views were in line with his brother's thoughts.

Anna Komnene was another author who contributes to our knowledge of the Byzantine aristocracy. In her *Alexiad* she assumed an expression which can be identified as an imperial point of view throughout the book. That approach would be normal if one reckons with her position as being the daughter of Alexios I Komnenos. The book is a personal interpretation (intrusion of the Byzantine author into the text–"self-insertion") of the history, which has turned out to be an imperial (dynastic) and individual propaganda in the whole book and a general expression of

[48] For example see ibid., p. 109, #193.

[49] Ibid., p. 14.

[50] Ibid., p. x; On Niketas Choniates literary style, see Alexander Kazhdan and Simon Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Litarature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 256-286.

[51] Michael Angold, "Administration of the Empire of Nicaea," *BF* 19 (1993), p. 127.

classical tradition in style and vocabulary.[52] *Alexiad* provides important information about the rebellions held by 'provincial aristocrats' and the state's attitude towards them, the Komnenian system of title-giving, imperial perception of "the nobility," and certain individuals with or without their imperial affiliations.

John Kinnamos is another author that narrated the history of the period. He wrote a history book encompasses the reign of John II Komnenos (r. 1118-1143) and the reign of Manuel I (r. 1143-1180) to whom the author served as a historian at the court. His narrative available to us today ceases when the events of 1176 is being told. He does not seem to be interested in aristocratic virtues in contrast to Niketas Choniates or Anna Komnene's writings. Military issues are treated with great detail in his history, from which one can collect evidences about the rebellious provincial aristocrats of Byzantine Asia Minor. The author informs about the imperial attitude in such provincial problems, and on the other hand, he gives valuable information on the power of these provincial aristocrats.[53]

Finally, George Akropolites' account is very important concerning the period after 1204. Having been a civil official he performed various duties at the Nicaean court including *grammatikos*, *logothetes tou genikou*, and *praetor*. Beside his official positions he wrote a history of the Nicaean Empire, with considerable parts eye-witnessed. His work remained the most valuable for the period between 1204 and 1261. He was a member of an old aristocratic family of Constantinopolitan origin. Although he asserted that he sought impartiality in his account, some cases contradict

[52] Roger Scott, "The Classical Tradition in Byzantine Historiography," in *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition: University of Birmingham, Thirteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies 1979*, Margaret Mullett and Roger Scott, (eds), (Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine Studies, 1981), pp. 61-74.

[53] John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, trans. by Charles M. Brand (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976). (Hereafter, John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*).

his argument. But still for most of the part of his *History*, the historian's objectivity seems apparent.[54]

On the other hand, as hagiography declined in the period of the Komnenoi, for earlier years hagiographical sources may provide information about the relations between the church and these local military governors. Furthermore, the lack of *taktika* in the eleventh and twelfth centuries constitutes a disadvantage for researchers.

Definitions

Terms used for identification of what we name 'aristocracy' have not been consistent so far in Byzantine studies. In order to delineate a frame for 'aristocracy' in Byzantine provincial society between 1081 and 1261, it is necessary to mention different approaches. The original Byzantine sources provide good deal of attempts for identification of the aristocracy. The descriptions of Kekaumenos, Psellos and Attaleiates, Nikephoros Bryennios, Prodromos, Zonaras, Niketas Choniates, Anna Komnene, and so on are all attempts to portray an idealized image of "nobility."[55] On the other hand, the terms "nobility" and "aristocracy" have been used interchangeably in earlier modern studies. This approach has not been esteemed by later scholars, who mostly preferred the term "aristocracy" in order to identify the wealthy, socially and economically powerful people in the Byzantine Empire, since

[54] For an extensive introduction to Akropolites' work and his style, see the part written by Ruth Macrides in George Akropolites, *George Akropolites. The History*, trans. and com. by Ruth Macrides (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 'Introduction,' pp. 3-101. (Hereafter, George Akropolites, *The History*).

[55] Alexander P. Kazhdan and Ann Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 104-110.

under the light of later studies scholars are more tended to accept that there was no Byzantine 'nobility' whatsoever in the sense of the hereditary Western nobility.[56]

For contemporary conceptualization of the term or the notion that refers to the 'privileged' or the 'élite' groups –not necessarily has been called as nobility– modern Byzantine historians have developed some explanations hitherto. Although we do not find a well-defined juridical explanation (or legal definition) of the word "aristocracy" (or nobility) in Byzantine sources, Byzantine historians of today tried to frame it by extracting some definitions. There are several terms attributed to the "wealthy" class of Byzantine society by modern historians. Alexander P. Kazhdan and Michael McCormick define a variety of words, which sometimes have in common with each other. They are 'aristocracy,' 'the ruling class,' 'elite,' and 'courtiers.' For their definition, the aristocracy would meet the social group that was "theoretically hereditary stratum of society which bears certain privileges."[57] As Alexander P. Kazhdan and Silvia Ronchey argue, there were four points that a member of the aristocracy may have had his status: birth, positions and functions that were held, wealth, and aristocratic virtues.[58] Ronchey, in her translation, on the one hand, tended to associate military aristocracy with the term 'nobiltà,' on the other hand, attributed more political aspect (i.e. bureaucracy) to the term 'aristocrazia.' Cheynet rejects this very view on the basis of a fundamental argument. He contends

[56] Laiou, "The Byzantine Aristocracy…," pp. 132-133.

[57] Alexander P. Kazhdan and Michael McCormick, "The Social World of the Byzantine Court," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, Henry Maguire, ed., (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1997), p. 167. Whereas according to their definition, "*ruling class* designates a legally and economically diverse group wielding actual power; *elite* refers to the upper crust of the aristocracy or ruling class. A *courtier* is a person directly connected with service to the ruler or the ruler's household." Ibid.

[58] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries…" p. 2. Kazhdan and Ronchey have revised Kazhdan's book, *Social'nyj sostav gospodstvujuscego klassa Vizantii XI-XII vv.*, which was printed in Russian. Ronchey translated the work and they both gave the final version of the Italian publication. Ibidem., *L'aristocrazia bizantina…*.

that "the same families are to be found in both groups and land tenure is of the same type in each of them."[59]

"*Dynatoi*" (οἱ δυνατοί: powerful) is a general term designates the powerful individuals in Byzantine society. The term has been identified that it was used to refer to the "prominent office – or titleholders potentially capable of using their positions to aggrandize themselves at the expense of weaker neighbors."[60] Various groups of people from different socio-economic levels would fall into that category: high members of the military officials, officials of the state bureaucracy at the centre –including the senatorial class– and in the provinces (provincial officials), administrators in the ecclesiastical hierarchy and foundations.[61] Their common characteristic is apparently belonging to higher crust of society. The *dynatoi* sometimes had a multiplication of different positions in the state. Ostrogorsky argues that the *dynatoi* could exercise in two fields together, such as they could be a landholder and a government official at the same time. That made them compact groups which possessed both an economic and social capacity/power.[62] Ostrogorsky describes the term with reference to its potential inclusion of authorities (ἀρχαῖς) over other people in a wide range. They were rising above the 'poor' owing to their influence or position.[63]

Nicolas Oikonomides, on the other hand, proposes another view. He mentions a term "*prosopa*," which means powerful persons, individuals whose domains were

[59] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries…" p. 2.

[60] Andrew J. Cappel, "Dynatoi," *ODB*, vol. 1, p. 667.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ostrogorsky, "Observations …," p. 7.

[63] "They were the glorious magistri and patricians, persons invested with authorities (ἀρχαῖς) and military commands (στρατηγίαις), with a civil or military rank, members of the senate, acting or former archons of the themes, and likewise metropolitans, archbishops, and bishops beloved of God, abbots, ecclesiastical archons, the supervisors of charitable and imperial houses. In a word, they were the powerful of this world who, by virtue of their position and influence, exerted pressure on the 'poor.'" Ostrogorsky, "Observations …" p. 6.

large enough to be considered as separate fiscal units. For him, a *dynatos* was supposed to be a *prosopon* (i.e. a landowning individual or institution, such as a monastery).[64]

Apart from these definitions, there is the term "élite" used by some scholars. What John Haldon calls 'élite' is not a certain group of people enjoying privileges and conducting official duties, which were bestowed because mainly of their proximity to the imperial court.[65] His definition of "elites" reminds the *dynatoi*. The term 'social élite' represents the powerful persons consisting of provincial, ecclesiastical, state official groups and courtiers at the upper ranks of the social hierarchy. The power base of the élites originated basically from their economic power, yet there were also other factors –social and political– leading to monopolize the authority.[66] Since one can clearly talk about a culture ascribed to the élites of the capital, members of the administrative and ecclesiastical aristocracy had similar lifestyles and cultural values, even if they were appointed to distant regions of the Empire. The obvious distinction between these groups and the general public including merchants, peasants and so on requires a thorough explanation of the social strata of the Byzantine society.

[64] Nicolas Oikonomides, "The Social Structure of the Byzantine Countryside in the First Half of the Xth Century," *Symmeikta, Institute for Byzantine Research* 10 (1996), p. 107.

[65] John Haldon, "Social Élites, Wealth, and Power," in *The Social History of Byzantium*, John Haldon, ed., (Singapore: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 173.

[66] John Haldon believes the necessity to distinguish the concepts of 'ruling' or 'power' groups/ élites from the 'élite' in general. He states as follows: "The latter notion has historically been applied to an economically distinct group, whose access to and greater degree of control over the basic means of production in a society ensures their exercise of political power and implies also an increasing exclusiveness and inaccessibility with respect to those with restricted or no such access at all. The definition of power élite requires, in contrast, that while remaining exclusive in its control of political authority, it needs to remain open to the influence of other groups and even recruit new personnel therefrom, in order to safeguard its dominant position." Ibid., pp. 170-171.

Another term that has been in use is *archon* (ἄρχων), which literally means 'magistrate' or 'ruler,' holding an *archē*.[67] Having quite significant role in the imperial administration system, an *archon* was a holder of an imperial commission, which actually shared all in common with the *dynatos*. An *archon* was any official who was supposedly holding the power at hands within a certain city. The term, for the eleventh and twelfth centuries, connotes a holder of official power in relation with its links with the imperial family without embracing the other aspects such as the rebellious power-holders lacking either honor or connections with the court.[68] Angold identifies the *archon* as "little more than the holder of an imperial commission," defining it a member of a wide group from the members of the imperial court to local landowners.[69] The provincial *archontes*, on the other hand, are described as "local landowners, who played an important part in local government and military organization," for whom Michael Choniates used occasionally the name 'thematic *archontes*.'[70] The definition of the term *archon* somewhat changed at the beginning of the thirteenth century. The term had a wider meaning, that is, a person possessing any sort of influence. This was a larger definition comparing to the previous one as the holder of official power. Leaving aside some other definitions for an *archon* gathered together by Cheynet, there were three different categories that should be emphasized for the sake of our concern: the directors of a department (e.g. *chrysoklabōn* [embroidery workshop] or the *zabareion* [arsenal]), the *archontes* of

[67] Kazhdan and Epstein, Change in Byzantine Culture…," p. 62; Cheynet, "Official Power…," pp. 148-149.

[68] Alexander Kazhdan, "Archon," *ODB*, vol. 1, p. 160.

[69] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, p. 71.

[70] Ibid., p. 71, fn. 49 citing Michael Choniates, *Μιχαὴλ Ἀκομινάτου τοῦ Χωνιάτου τὰ σωζωμένα*, Sp. Lampros, ed., (Athens: n. p., 1879-80), vol. II, p. 227, l. 2, p. 278, ll. 10-12, p. 280, ll. 1-2. He gives an example for Michael's description: "One Chalkoutzes is described as τὰ πρῶτα ὢν τῶν ἐκεῖσε [i.e. Euboea] θεματικῶν καὶ κτηματικων ἀρχόντων." Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, p. 71, fn. 49.

the themes and the *archontes* of the cities.[71] Furthermore, John Haldon describes the *archontes* as a group of office-holders or title-holder and intends to call them "lords."[72]

Byzantine society included two groups of aristocratic class in the thirteenth century: *dynatoi* including high aristocracy and provincial aristocracy, and small *pronoia*–holders.[73] Similarly, Kyritses argues that the term "*dynatoi*" did not have the same meaning in the Palaiologan period that it had in the Middle Byzantine period. Instead, the term is used to refer to the notables in provincial cities in that context.[74] Nevra Necipoğlu, on the other hand, prefers to use *archontes* referring to the middle and lower ranks of aristocracy, not elites nor nobles, since the former was a larger group and for the latter, there was no distinctive nobility in Byzantium. She also points out the misuse of the term 'gentry,' which has been used to refer to 'aristocracy.' She frames the term *archontes* as a group of local officeholders.[75] Therefore, the *archon* denotes a prominent individual who is assigned an administrative and/or military offices (e.g. governor, *strategos*, etc.). This very term is an umbrella term for officials having power.[76]

How and in what terms did the Byzantine authors view 'aristocracy'? Birth as a member of high aristocratic family gained importance under the Komnenian dynasty, whereas the other parameters of an aristocratic nature (positions and

[71] Cheynet, "Official Power…," pp. 148-149.

[72] Haldon, "Social Élites…," pp. 190-191. For the *archontes'* economic conditions, he writes as follows: "Their income came from both land as well as from town property – the recovery of urban markets and economies meant that town properties increased in value, with the result that substantial incomes could be drawn from urban rents and the commercial activities that may have been associated with many of them." Ibid.

[73] Laiou, "The Byzantine Aristocracy…," pp. 131-151.

[74] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy…*, p. 9.

[75] Nevra Necipoğlu, "The Aristocracy in Late Byzantine Thessalonike: A Case Study of the City's *Archontes* (Late 14th and Early 15th Centuries)," *DOP* 57 (2003), p. 135, fn. 8.

[76] See Kazhdan, "Archon," p. 160.

functions held, wealth and aristocratic virtues) remained secondary throughout the period. The period before and during the Komnenian dynasty, however, show different character at this point.[77] For the pre-Komnenian period, to be a member of the aristocracy, aristocratic virtues were more considered as a determining factor. This was the prevailing custom for the tenth and the most part of the eleventh centuries, in which noble origin was not the primary issue even for the imperial family. The conception of 'noble virtues' in Byzantine sources reflects the way the "nobility" was perceived and given meanings in Byzantium.[78]

Sources do reveal many descriptions of 'nobility' from the early centuries onward. According to the *Strategicon* of pseudo–Maurice of the early seventh century, for example, "a commander ought to be a good Christian and a just man, and no more."[79] The office of the commander apparently required some sort of social background. Furthermore, in the *Book of Ceremonies*, there is a part celebrating the noble birth/origin of the appointed patrician.[80] Earlier conceptualization of 'nobleness' was based on merit rather than blood relations. The prevailing view has changed in the tenth and eleventh century context. Sources of nobility were discussed by later authors: Eustathios of Thessalonike,[81] Nikephoros Chrysoberges, Michael Attaleiates, Niketas Choniates. These were all commenting on the issue confirming a developed social hierarchy in Byzantine society.

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[77] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries…," p. 3.

[78] Some notices should be made on the subject. The traditional view of the imperial virtues (i.e. fortitude, righteousness, chastity, intelligence) began to give way to the prominence of the image of warrior-emperor and military prowess in the Komnenian rule. The image of the emperors rising on a shield, often attested in art of the era, represented how the ideal qualities of an emperor transformed. There were accepted parameters about the nobility. For more information on noble origin, 'ideal qualities' for nobility, imperial virtues, Komnenian militarization, etc., see Kazhdan, "The Aristocracy and the Imperial Ideal," pp. 43-57.

[79] Ostrogorsky, "Observations…," p. 4.

[80] Ibid., p. 5.

[81] Kazhdan and Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature*…, p. 144.

How did the Byzantine sources mention/name the aristocrats? How were the people, whom we intend to group as 'the aristocrats,' treated in Byzantine sources? In Akropolites' account, the *archontes* appeared as 'chief bureaucrats,' owing to their governmental-administrative positions (i.e. *noblesse de robe:* the nobles who owed their status to the governmental positions that they held within the administrative system).[82] Various terms were used in Byzantine sources to denote "aristocracy." Actually, some of these were representing different segments of society, thus, did not point one thing. They were, nevertheless, in use. The κρείττονοι is the term meaning "more fit," identifying small landowners and/or prosperous landowners. The εἰκοδέσποτοι means "householders" and has similarity with the κρείττονοι.[83] The following two designations carry military connotations: προνιάροι means "*pronoia*–holders," whereas στρατιώτοι was more general term meaning "soldiers," including the *pronoia*-holders.[84]

The term 'nobility' has all by itself problems of its own. When the twelfth century is considered, the idealization was more favored in descriptions of "nobleness." Noble origin is a common subject also in Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*. Anna occasionally talked about her "noble" birth and Nikephoros Bryennios' noble origin.[85] She exalted Byzantine concept of "nobility," which is clearly interrelated with a primary notion: "*eugeneis*" (good birth). This very term gained a special place with the Komnenian dynasty.[86] Moreover, George Akropolites used the word

[82] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile…*, p. 71.

[83] See MM, IV, pp. 128-129; 147; vol. 6, pp. 153, 187; *Actes de Zographou*, W. Regel, E. Kurtz, and B. Korablev, (eds), (Amsterdam: n. p., 1969), No. VII, p. 50.

[84] See Georg Ostrogorskij, *Pour l'histoire de la féodalite* (Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves, 1954), p. 93.

[85] Anna Komnene, *The Alexiad of Anna Comnena*, trans. by E. R. A. Sewter (London: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 38 and p. 500. (Hereafter, Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*).

[86] Nicol, "The Prosopography…," p. 80.

"*eugeneis*." He identified high origin–noble birth (*eugeneis*) as "εὐγενεῖς καὶ πρώτης … τάξεως" (nobles and of the first rank).[87] Byzantine sources reflect almost a common tendency centered around the term *eugeneis*. The term had a major role in the formation of the Byzantine aristocracy. Sources sometimes represented some particular families possessing the *eugeneis*. For example, the Rhaoul family was attributed '*eugeneis*' by Pachymeres.[88]

In the thirteenth century Byzantine society, an opposing view against the old-established understanding of nobility of blood was raised by Theodore II Laskaris. The Nicaean emperors tried to eliminate old aristocratic families by injecting a new aristocratic group which was not depended on hereditary basis. It was contrary to what was existed in Western aristocracy.[89]

The term chosen as a focal point in this thesis is "provincial aristocracy," which appears as a restriction in terms of geographical concerns. The term requires elucidation. It is necessary to distinguish the high aristocracy of Constantinople and the aristocrats of the provinces, who were appointed to conduct certain missions out of the capital, and who were the notables possessing some sort of power in the countryside and in the provincial cities (i.e. provincial aristocrats) either through their offices or their local power base deriving from any sort. The "provincial aristocracy" is a broad term that embraces local officeholders, provincial individuals or families possessing any sort of economic power that sufficed to make them the

[87] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile…*, pp. 68-69. For family backgrounds of *eugeneis*, and its "inherited" character, see Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, pp. 320-323.

[88] Donald Nicol, "Symbiosis and Integration: Some Greco-Latin Families in Byzantium in the 11th to 13th Centuries," *BF* 7 (1979), pp. 130-131 referring to George Pachymeres, *De Michaele et Andronico Palaeologis libri tredecim*, I Bekker, ed., (Bonn: n. p., 1835), vol. 1, pp. 64-65. See also Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile…*, pp. 68-69.

[89] Dimiter Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium (1204-1330)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 422. It should be reminded that Theodore II Laskaris was favoring the 'Anatolian' aristocracy. For the nature of nobility and blood nobility in the Nicaean state, see Angelov, *Imperial Ideology…*, pp. 226-234.

patrons/masters of some other lower social groups, thus the individuals holding any source of influence. It may have been political, social or economic.[90] Since the aim of the thesis is to highlight the provincial aristocracy's power bases, great power holders (imperial family members and the high aristocracy) do not take part in the thesis. Moreover, ecclesiastical aristocracy is intentionally excluded since both it requires another research as it reflected an institutional character of the Church, otherwise, the text of the thesis would be too load.

Furthermore, the term *archon* is also used in cases that the sources preferred to use it, referring to the notable of a city. On the other hand, the reader will see the use of the term 'local' very much. It connotes the regional aspect of certain individuals or families and also aims to give a geographical meaning.

Framework of the Thesis

Asia Minor neither consisted of a monolithic ethnic group nor was composed of a single culture. On the contrary, various groups were living in an increasingly cosmopolitan society, which was especially accelerated after the recession of the Empire's territories by the latter half of the eleventh century, and continued all the way until the complete annihilation of Byzantine authority from Asia Minor. The density of people differed in each region, which was formed by a variety of ethnic groups. While the eastern parts of Asia Minor contained an Armenian population obviously more densely than other ethnic groups especially in Cilicia and Lesser Armenia, the Greeks dominated the population in western Asia Minor. This situation partly derived from transfers of human population. Not only the Armenians but also

[90] See also p. 3 above.

the Slavs and other ethnic groups were subjected to extensive population transfers from the earlier times onwards.[91] The transfers of population had been on purpose and had begun long ago, even in the third century and during the reign of Maurice (582-602), for instance, Armenian groups were called into the Byzantine territories due to Persian extension. Transportation or resettlement of the Armenians continued in later centuries. The ethnic diversity in Asia Minor is exemplified in the office-holders' ethnic origin in all the Empire's territories.[92]

Asia Minor apparently constituted one of the two largest territorial elements of Byzantium, which was composed of different provinces varied in dimension. The provinces of the region were redesigned for several times between 1081 and 1261, yet, resumed the distinguished place in administrative and military terms. Still huge number of Christians were living in Asia Minor, and seeking to be guarded by the Byzantine state. The pressure of the Turkish masses, moving back and forth into the heart of Asia Minor, created a constantly changing social character. Other than Asia Minor, the Byzantine Empire had European territories, including Balkans, Thrace, Peloponnesus, as well as the islands in Aegean Sea. These regions did not reflect such a high level of social heterogeneity.

[91] An example can be proposed from the *Historia* of Niketas Choniates. The author mentions John II Komnenos' efforts for resettling the Slavs and the emperor's assignment of lands to them around Nikomedia. Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 11. In the thirteenth century, the evidences testified the Slavs settling in Asia Minor. See Peter Charanis, "The Slavic Element in Byzantine Asia Minor in the Thirteenth Century," *B* 18 (1946-1948), pp. 69-83 [Reprinted in idem, *Studies on the Demography of the Byzantine Empire: Collected Studies*, (London: Variorum Reprints, 1972), No. VII]. For the Armenian existence in the Byzantine Empire, see, for example, idem, "Armenians and Greeks in the Byzantine Empire," *The Armenian Review* 25 (1972), pp. 25-32 [Reprinted in idem, *Social, Economic and Political Life in the Byzantine Empire*, (London: Variorum Reprints, 1973), No. VIII]. For extensive part reserved for transfer of population, see Appendix.

[92] For a general history of the period in early seventh century referring to that topic, see George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. by Joan Hussey, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1969), pp. 110-140.

The Outline of the Thesis

As it is already pointed out, the main aim of this thesis is to express the power bases of the provincial aristocracy in order to contextualize its involvement in the political, economic, and social life of Byzantine Asia Minor. In the second chapter of the thesis, I attempt to present the historical background upon which the Komnenian aristocracy found the chance to flourish. A chronological development and the reemergence of the Byzantine aristocracy should be examined in Middle Byzantine context. This chapter also serves a key point to understand the structure of Byzantine society. For that purpose, the social changes mainly in the tenth and eleventh centuries will be mentioned briefly and then, the state of the aristocracy and its relation with the state will be put into target on the eve of the Komnenian period. Afterwards, what was actually in the making will be analyzed. The causal factors such as financial burden over the provincial society can provide a reasonable ground for that change. The Komnenian era represents the peak of the military aristocracy. Moreover, the period brought a new system of government, titles, and also witnessed a wide range of reforms by the hands of Alexios I Komnenos. The new environment and the position of the provincial aristocracy will be investigated under the light of original sources. Then, the Angelid and the Nicaean eras will be treated in the same way in order to see the continuities and breaks within time. Lastly for the second chapter, the structural features of Byzantine aristocratic society and in relation to that the residential areas of the provincial aristocrats will illustrate the capacity of the Byzantine provincial aristocracy.

The third chapter is reserved for the provincial aristocracy's political basis of power. The target of that part is multifocal. The first thing is how the Byzantine

provincial aristocracy gained political power. There were civil, military, and fiscal administrative offices held by the individuals which eventually made them the members of the provincial aristocracy. These governmental posts will extensively be investigated in this chapter with reference to the holders of these offices. In addition, the political basis of power enabled some provincial aristocrats to create their own domains. The question of how far the provincial aristocrats' power went will be answered by the analysis of local rebellions. This chapter will try to find out the bases of the rebels' political power.

In the fourth chapter of the thesis, the focus will be the economic basis of the provincial aristocrats' power. After an introduction drawing main lines for the structure of the Byzantine economy, the feudal features will briefly be touched upon. Urban centers of the Empire, then, will be put into the target, which indeed necessitates a considerable deal of background. At that point, the expansionist economy and in connection with that the demand of the aristocracy accelerated the production come to the fore. Afterwards, the Byzantine system of land-owning and the aristocratic sources of wealth will broaden the topic by referring to particular cases from the experiences of the local aristocrats. In order to embrace aristocratic means for power, one should have in mind that the Byzantines had a distinctive household pattern, which was called *oikos*. That term will also be explained in the chapter. Moreover, whether the provincial aristocrats engaged in trade and commercial activities will constitute another concern for that chapter. Their tendency in investing money or wealth and their donations will show us how their wealth returned to the economy in general. And finally, other agents in the Byzantine provincial economy require some concern in order to contextualize the provincial

aristocrats' economic power. The Byzantine village will be examined in the sense that it served as the nucleus of the Byzantine economy.

In the final chapter, the reader will find conclusions including general observations and an evaluation of all the chapters to see 'the big picture.' This last chapter is followed by an Appendix, which concerns another basis of power for the provincial aristocracy. The military basis of power will shed some light on the issue of the sources of political and economic aspects of the power in provincial politics, and how interrelated it was with other means for power for the provincial aristocracy.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

There are several arguments on the birth of the aristocracy in the Byzantine context. Firstly, Kazhdan's suggestion marks the beginning of the hereditary aristocracy in the second half of the eighth century depending on the first appearance of family names. For him, the initial phases of it reflect a rather military character.[1] Governmental posts constitute the basis of privileges for the hereditary aristocracy. Secondly, for another view, the emergence of the aristocracy in the Middle Byzantine context can be securely dated to the ninth century.[2] The influence of some clans upon the court had slowly begun in the ninth century, thus, one can start this phenomenon from the tenth century, when the process was undertaken by the rather influential family of the Phokai.[3] As one of the earliest (covering 813-961) sources on the reemergence of the aristocracy in Byzantium, the manuscript, which has been named as Theophanes Continuatus, contained in one of its four parts the life of Basil

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[1] Ostrogorsky, "Observations…," p. 4 referring to A. P. Každan, "Ob aristokratizacii vizantijskogo obščestva VIII-XII vv.," *Zbornik radova Vizant. Inst.* 11 (1968), pp. 47ff.

[2] Ostrogorsky, "Observations…," p. 5; John Haldon, "Military Administration and Bureaucracy: State Demands and Private Interests," *BF* 19 (1993), p. 55. Family names had its first appearance in the ninth century. See Cheynet, "Aristocratic Anthroponimy…," p. 8. Later in that century, seals show names followed by family names used for designation of family's importance. They were especially observed among the military aristocracy. The civil aristocracy adopted the family name in the eleventh century. See Paul Stephenson, "A Development in Nomenclature on the Seals of the Byzantine Provincial Aristocrats in the Late Tenth Century," *REB* 52 (1994), pp. 186-211. The eleventh century witnessed the extension of family names to all segments of the aristocracy. It was developed more in the following century. See Cheynet, "Aristocratic Anthroponimy…," pp. 10-12.

[3] Haldon, "Social Élites…," p. 185. Especially the great aristocrats of the Eastern territories had developed considerable power. Some of them, for example, the landholding aristocracy of the Cappadocian houses of Phokas and Maleinos, whose estates were very large, revolted against central state. Ostrogorsky, "Observations…," p. 7. For the revolts of Skleros and Phocas families in the tenth century, see Catherine Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976-1025)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

I (*Vita Basilii*). In the first sections of the work, there is the part mentioning Constantine Porphyrogenitus' story in which the large estates and prosperity that Danelis had is referred.[4] The *dynatoi*'s power began to reach considerable and threatening state for the central administration at the beginning of the tenth century so that the first dated state reaction against the *dynatoi* is an edict in 934. It was aimed to avert the 'powerful' from gaining the lands of the peasants.[5] Tribal affiliations were important for the early aristocrats of the ninth-tenth centuries. They tended to identify themselves with their clans, hence using patronymics and surnames from the ninth century on.[6]

The Byzantine aristocracy, in its early phases (before the reign of Herakleios), had different parameters distinguishing this group. It was extensively based on function and included the people bound to the emperor. The norm that defined the aristocrat as the doer of a certain function(s) did not disappear until the eleventh century.[7] The "Dark Ages" of the Byzantine Empire (roughly late sixth-seventh centuries), as it was named due to the rarity of the written documents, make the historians desperate in commenting on the state of the aristocracy in those years. Therefore, whether the Byzantine aristocracy was a continuity of the late Roman Empire or reemerged as a medieval phenomenon seems not definite. In the ninth and the tenth centuries, the high aristocracy (*noblesse d'epée*: the nobles who owed their

[4] Ostrogorsky, "Observations…," p. 4 referring to Theophanes Continuatus, ed., (Bonn: n. p., n. d.), pp. 227ff. and 316ff. For the tenth century, Ostrogorsky made the following statement: "The 'powerful' (οἱ δυνατοί) quickly expanded their landholdings by absorbing the plots of petty owners. The peasants and *stratiotai* became dependent *paroikoi* on the estates of big landowners, while the government lost its most reliable taxpayers." Ostrogorsky, "Observations…," p. 6.

[5] Cappel, "Dynatoi," p. 668.

[6] Nicol, "The Prosopography…," p. 80.

[7] Jean-Claude Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy (8th-13th Centuries)," English translation of "L'aristocratie byzantine (VIIIe-XIIIe siècle)," *Journal des Savants*, (July-December, 2000), pp. 281-322, published in idem, *The Byzantine Aristocracy and its Military Function* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006), p. 41.

positions to the military role and familial links) was composed of the emperor's relatives that he placed people from among his (extended) family to major positions of the most important themes. Cheynet's shortlist illustrates the point.[8] The author lists some relatives of the emperors appointed to Thrakesion, Anatolikon, or Opsikion. Thus, giving away the highest positions to the imperial relatives did not only start with Alexios I Komnenos.

Moreover, one gets to see the structure of the aristocracy changing. The aristocracy became sustained by the imperial grants and the efforts of some families to preserve their status through intermarriages made this change in the ninth-eleventh centuries. Family backgrounds remained always important for an individual climbing up the ladder of fame and wealth in Byzantine society. Through time, changes became also observable in the way the land was managed. The increasing conversion of lands into tenancies and commitment of the peasants to landlords and dealers of the state lands in the late eleventh century accelerated the aristocracy's growth. That process also means the loss of fiscal resources of the state giving away to the control of the central and the provincial aristocracy.[9] All of these sub-structures led the way to the triumph of the military aristocracy and the Komnenian oligarchy at the end.

Physical settings on the eve of the rise of the provincial aristocracy should also be pointed out.[10] They included the difficulties of overland communication, which caused insufficiency to take action immediately for any opposition against the central government; the increase in mercenary groups, which brought about financial

[8] Ibid., p. 13.

[9] Haldon, "Social Élites…," p. 187. On the other hand, the Church's and the state's land (*epi tôn oikeiakôn)* were increasingly expanding against peasants' interests. The latter's financial power began to worsen especially after the late tenth century on. Haldon, "Military Administration and Bureaucracy…," p. 60. Also see, Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy (8th-13th Centuries)," pp. 2-30.

[10] For all of these points, see Haldon, "Military Administration and Bureaucracy…," pp. 44-45.

drain; the abuse of authority by the imperial officials, and their economic and political empowerment in the provinces that led even to their rebellion against the government;[11] the demographic analysis of the previous centuries and the period between 1081 and 1261.[12]

In its infant phases, the aristocracy split into two factions: the military aristocracy of the provinces and the civil aristocracy of the capital (Constantinopolitan).[13] While the former was described as the leading aristocrats of Asia Minor having either positions in the government or intimate relationship with the imperial household, the urban civil aristocracy was undertaking the leading position within the Senate, in which the limits for participation were absolutely widened.[14]

Throughout the early phases, the Byzantine aristocracy had more a military character, and was almost exclusively composed of notables from Asia Minor. Apart from the high members of the army, whose position began to be stabilized in the ninth century, new families grew rapidly in the Empire, such as the Choirosphaktai, the Monomachoi, the Morocharzanioi and the Genesioi, in that century. Besides the wealthy Greek aristocrats, Armenian families were integrating into the politics of the Byzantine state and its structure in the tenth and the eleventh centuries, when Byzantium's central authority was overwhelming the power of the aristocracy within

[11] Various examples can be given from the *Alexiad*. For example, Ariebes (an Armenian) and Humbertopoulos (a Kelt) were important office holders who were thought that they were preparing a plot. At the end, they were sent to exile and their properties were confiscated. Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, pp. 261-262.

[12] See Peter Charanis, "Observations on the Demography of the Byzantine Empire," *Proceedings of the XIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Oxford, 5-10 September 1966*, J. M. Hussey, D. Obolensky, S. Runciman (eds), (London: n. p., 1967), pp. 1-19, esp. pp. 16-19.

[13] Haldon, "Social Élites…," p. 185.

[14] Ostrogorsky, "Observations…," p. 8. Digenis Akritas may provide a tenable case for provincial aristocracy in this context. As a member of aristocracy on the borderlands, his life, his role may be demonstrative for our subject. Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture…*, pp. 117-119.

the Empire.[15] However, members of some prominent families held administrative positions and military roles in the government. Those families were mainly from the aristocracy of Asia Minor. Some of those individuals rose up to the high administrative levels in either government or in army, and even usurped the throne. Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963-969) and John I Tzimiskes (r. 969-976) are worthy of mention among them. The families of these two emperors had already aristocratic power before they came to the throne. Their families were among the prominent aristocratic families in the Byzantine Empire. In tenth and eleventh centuries, the aristocracy in Asia Minor rose mainly due to its military power. The emperors Nikephoros II Phokas and John I Tzimiskes are two figures as members of the elite of Asia Minor. This is a proper example on how such local aristocrats were integrated into the high aristocracy and eventually became leading families in Byzantium.[16] There appeared new structure of aristocratic class, whose members were coming primarily from the high ranks of the societies in the themes.

The provincial culture in southern Italy may provide a valuable picture for the provincial aristocracy in the ninth–eleventh centuries.[17] For reasons of administration, most of the provincial governors (*strategoi* or *katepan*s or *doukes*) were not from local inhabitants, on the contrary, they were all sent from Constantinople, and as a general practice were not allowed to serve in the same region after four or five years of service at most.[18] For the office-holders below the

[15] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy (8th–13th Centuries)," pp. 5-11.

[16] Ostrogorsky, "Observations…," p. 7; Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy (8th-13th Centuries)," pp. 11 ff.

[17] As Falkenhausen presents, there were three basic groups constituting the class of *archontes* in southern Italy under Byzantine control (late ninth-second half of the eleventh centuries): members of the military and civil administrators (e.g. *stratêgos* and *katepano*), some family members of Lombard principalities of the neighbouring region, and finally provincial elites. Falkenhausen, "A Provincial Aristocracy…," p. 211.

[18] Ibid. The appointed governors of the southern Italian provinces experienced strong resistance from the local Lombard principalities. The Byzantine state tried to establish more control on them and

ranks of governors, the situation differs however. Being a member of the administrative class required some peculiarities. For instance, in southern Italy, most of the governmental offices were occupied by the local people, who were expected to know the local language (Latin at that time) and be acquainted with the local laws and practices.[19] The Latin-born *archontes* in Apulia seemed to be influenced and attracted by the Byzantine culture, while other provincial aristocrats were interested in their neighbors' cultures.[20]

The distance between the emperor and the aristocrats became more deepened during Basil II's reign (976-1025), which testified the emergence of new aristocratic families (Komnenoi, Kontostephanoi, Vatatzai, Gabrades, Diogenai, Tornikoi, Synadenoi, and others). The emperor has been considered as a chief dissident against the landed aristocracy.[21] Thus, the power elites reappeared as a separate group in so-called 'Byzantine golden age' (tenth-eleventh centuries) after mainly senatorial elite of the early Byzantine era. Their social structures differ in various matters. Actually, the more the state lost its central authority the more the provincial powers gained opportunity to challenge it.[22]

The coastlands and the Balkan territories of the state were economically and demographically more important than the regions of the Eastern and inner parts of

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extend its territories towards their lands. Ibid., p. 215. *Strategoi's* and *katepans'* families sometimes stayed in the capital during their appointments. They were looking after the properties and estates in times of the absence of *strategos* and *katepano*. This, one way or another, compelled these offices–holders to be loyal to the state. *Strategos*' or *katepan*'s son was sent to Constantinople as a hostage. By the way, some *strategoi* or *katepans* should have been from the provincial aristocracy, not from Constantinople. Ibid., pp. 213-215.

[19] Examples are given in Ibid., p. 218.

[20] Ibid., p. 223.

[21] Alexander Kazhdan, "State, Feudal, and Private Economy in Byzantium," *DOP* 47 (1993), pp. 94-95. For the emergence of a significant provincial aristocracy in the eleventh century, see Haldon, "Social Élites…," p. 182.

[22] For the eleventh century rebellions (esp. first three quarters of the century) by aristocrats had power base and clients-dependent groups in the provinces.

Asia Minor, which were the areas under constant threat during the second half of the eleventh century. Regarding that span of Byzantine history, demographic growth of a progressive character has recently been admitted among the Byzantinists.[23] That rise in population is also evidenced by the increase of cities and urban centers both in quantity and in size.[24] In all respects, economic conditions (that was attested generally as 'growth' in Byzantine lands) constituted the main factor behind the urban and demographic expansion.[25] The Byzantine Empire never saw a famine or anything seriously demolished the economy according to the information the sources preserved. That, for one aspect, demonstrates the economic prosperity the Empire experienced during the Komnenian era.

The Aristocratic Patronyms Emerging

How can the historian seek for the aristocracy in the sources? Byzantine aristocratic families are attestable by a modern scholar as long as their names and/or surnames are evident among a variety of written sources. For Kazhdan, once a name is encountered in a source, it means that we confront an aristocratic family. However, the ones which are testified by one or some of these sources do not always tell us something about their social ascent. Even, for some families we do not follow a lineage since they did not adopt a transmissible name.[26]

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[23] Cf. 'Demographic decline' literature, cited in Angeliki E. Laiou and Cécile Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 92, fn. 7.

[24] Alan Harvey, *Economic Expansion in the Byzantine Empire 900-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), the chapter on "Demographic growth and social relations", pp. 35-79.

[25] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 96.

[26] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries…" p. 8, where Cheynet refers to Kazhdan's view in the book by Kazhdan and Ronchey, *L'aristocrazia bizantina …*

In many ways, the rise of the Middle Byzantine aristocracy bears clues to understand the structure of Byzantine society. During the period under consideration here, the individuals commenced to use their family names which are well attested on seals in official milieus or other arenas. It means that there was a rather slowly growing aristocracy in the state apparatus. In that context, after a so-called 'golden age,' the second half of the eleventh century stands out as a breaking point in the socio-political atmosphere of the Byzantine Empire.[27]

Each individual was not necessarily in the same social status or within the same family with another individual bearing the same surname.[28] The social status of a family cannot be fully understood only by looking at a certain/single individual belonging to that family.[29] This brings us to the issue of patronymics. The military aristocrats were first to use their surnames compared to the civilian aristocrats of Constantinople. Even for the former, who were initially mostly composed of the ones settled in Asia Minor, family names did not exist on seals until 975.[30] Moreover, family names were not completely stable.[31] They began to be stable with Basil II's reign. The use of the patronymics became widespread in the sources especially in the eleventh century. However, adoption of the patronymics showed inconsistency in Byzantium. An individual could get his patronymic from either his mother's side or his father's depending on nothing strictly formulated.[32] Some members of a family

[27] Paul Stephenson, "The Rise of the Middle Byzantine Aristocracy and the Decline of the Imperial State," in idem, ed., *The Byzantine World* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 22. Stephenson explains the change in the 1070s in his article. He emphasizes the symptomatic function of Mantzikert. It actually coincided with a period (the 1070s) in which the Empire was at fire from all sides.

[28] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries…," p. 11.

[29] This was especially very problematic in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, pp. 9-10.

[30] See Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries…," pp. 8-9; Stephenson, "A Development in Nomenclature…," pp. 187-211.

[31] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy (8th-13th Centuries)," pp. 5-10.

[32] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 102-103.

had different patronymics, combining two separate ones, as in the case of Manuel Erotikos-Komnenos.[33]

A patronymic could be adopted in a variety of ways: from geographical location (city, village, or a province), from father's name, profession, or ethnic origin. The family names could also be related to person's deficiency or hurdle.[34] Individuals were inclined to take family names increasingly in the twelfth century, rather than deriving another name which was associated with regional attributions.[35] Marcus Rautman gives some instances for similar cases: Laskaris (which may have been a derivation of a Persian word meaning 'warrior'), Pediasmos (meaning 'inhabitant of a valley'), etc.[36] Long surnames such as John Doukas Angelos Palaiologos Raoul Laskaris Tornikes Philanthropenos Asan[37] or Eirene Komnene Branaina Palaiologina Laskarine Kantakouzene (the *sebastokratorissa*, floruit 1260)[38] also existed. Moreover, the compound names were used among the aristocrats such as Komnenos-Angelos; Komnenos-Vatatzes.[39]

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[33] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries…," p. 10.

[34] See Cheynet, "Aristocratic Anthroponimy…," pp. 16-17. For derisive nicknames of some families (e.g. Tessarakontapechai), see Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries…," p. 25.

[35] See Cheynet, "Aristocratic Anthroponimy…," p. 28. "The emergence of an awareness of lineage, the feeling of belonging to a family honored by its illustrious ancestry, also explains the adoption of family names." Ibid.

[36] Examples can be multiplied for the patronymics of the villagers. In general, they "were called by their trade: Chalkeos (metalworker), Gounaras (furrier), Kalligas (shoemaker), Kerouras (gardener), Mylonas (miller), Raptes (tailor), Tzykalas (potter). A son usually took the family name of his father, but in some cases might adopt his mother's name. A daughter was expected to assume the name of her husband, yet might retain her own if she came from a well-known landed family. Passed down over many generations, such venerable patronymics were hallmark of later Byzantine society. Many are still used today." Marcus Rautman, *Daily Life in the Byzantine Empire* (London: Greenwood Press, 2006), pp. 19-20. Also see Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 63.

[37] Fassoulakis, *The Byzantine Family of Raoul-Ral(l)es*, no. 72.

[38] Donald MacGillivray Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus) ca. 1100-1460: A Genealogical and Prosopographical Study* (Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1968), No. 11.

[39] Michael F. Hendy, "'Byzantium, 1081-1204': The Economy Revisited, Twenty Years on," in idem, *The Economy, Fiscal Administration and Coinage of Byzantium* (Northampton: Variorum Reprints, 1989), pp. 28-29.

The quality of evidences prevents us to end up with absolute results about those families' origins.[40] Yet, one has to admit that these families did not appear at the scene of history all at once, on the contrary, each had bases, which were gradually being gained in time. Some of these aristocrats dwelled in cities or in urban contexts or they were landowners and dwelling in villages, while at least a part of them were both city dwellers and landowners in rural areas together.[41] The new commonality of using patronymics turned into a more complex issue by the establishment of familial links. In larger point of view, individuals may have had ties with other individuals through marriages, thus, it requires more caution to detect family connections and place of certain individuals in an extended family tree.[42]

On the Eve of the Komnenian Regime: The State of the Aristocracy and Its Relation with the State and Rural Community

Relations between the *paroikoi* and the landlords were changing on the eve of the Komnenian era. Due to immense source of incomes derived from the land, promising quite amount of profit, it seems that 'the intendants of the estates' had their eyes on the peasants' lands. Despite the fact that the villagers were left to the mercy of their landlords, the relation between these entrepreneurs and common peasants sometimes revealed collaborations in some public works such as repairing a mill. The development of the group in rural areas supplied a ground for financial base. Their

[40] For the origins of aristocratic families, see Cheynet, "Aristocratic Anthroponimiy…," pp. 1-30.

[41] See, Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 80, fn. 12.

[42] Marriage alliances also cast light on the Byzantine state's intent to overcome powerful provincial families. The provincial families tended to identify themselves with at least one of the names of famous families of the time (e.g. Angelos, Doukas, Komnenos), if any familial connection –no matter how close it was– was evident. As Vryonis shows in an example, the marriage alliance between Synadenos and Kastorissa reinforced both of their social, political and economic power in late eleventh century. Speros Vryonis, "The Peira as a Source for the History of Byzantine Aristocratic Society in the First Half of the Eleventh Century," in idem, *Byzantine Institutions, Society and Culture* (New York: Aristide D. Caratzas, Publisher, 1997), p. 140. In order to maintain authority over the families, these kinds of alliances were largely preferred by the emperors.

efforts, therefore, flourished the rural areas.[43] The aristocrats had already got advantageous situation via familial links and "networks of patronage and influence." Yet, on the other hand, the 1030s and the 1040s witnessed the appearance of middle class at Constantinople as a counterweight opposite to the dominant aristocrats. [44]

Already in the middle of the eleventh century, during the reign of Constantine IX Monomachos, tensions arose between the state and various landed aristocratic groups. Rebellions of regional character troubled the Byzantine state in all its territories. These oppositions should be understood as earlier forms of antagonism between the provincial aristocracy and the state. In Sicily, George Maniakes' revolt would be one example for those provincial aristocratic reactions. He had a gradual rising to the upper ranks of the aristocracy, and consequently reached the possible top career for a soldier, becoming the commander of a legion. His military position ensured him great strength that made him even challenge the emperor's authority.[45] Michael Psellos narrates other serious aristocratic rebellions such as that of Leo Tornikios.[46] The Byzantine army enhanced different strategies to be vigilant in times of threats in its borders. Physical limits head the list of the obstacles in front of it. The difficulties of overland communication caused insufficiency to immediately take action against a political opposition.[47]

Furthermore, in the short reign of Michael VI (1056-1057), a considerable disagreement to his emperorship in the province always existed although the civil

[43] Jacques Lefort, "Rural Economy and Social Relations in the Countryside," *DOP* 47 (1993), pp. 112-113.

[44] Haldon, "Military Administration and Bureaucracy…," p. 55.

[45] Michael Psellos, *The Chronographia of Michael Psellus*, trans. by E. R. A. Sewter, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), pp. 142-147. George Maniakes had possessions in Asia Minor, for which he entered into a severe conflict with Romanos Skleros. Therefore, his military prowess was accompanied with remarkable wealth. See, Michael Psellos, *The Chronographia*, p. 143, fn. 104 (p. 300).

[46] Ibid., pp. 147-164.

[47] Haldon, "Military Administration and Bureaucracy…," pp. 44-45.

aristocracy faithfully supported the emperor. That was the time the civil aristocracy came to power in Constantinople. The military aristocrats were unsatisfied with that, since actually they were not granted with titles and rewards, and they were not given deputy in the new government as opposed to the civil party. Consequently, this tension between civil side of the aristocracy and prominent generals of the Empire has brought uprisings, such as the one led by Isaac Komnenos, an aristocrat who had estates in Kastamon. The military aristocracy supported Isaac Komnenos and proclaimed him emperor in Paphlagonia, where the local power holders evoking the rebellion against Michael VI's government enforced the emperor to negotiate with the rebels.[48] Among those were Bourtzes, Botaneiates, Basil Argyros' sons, and Romanos Skleros, who were leading military commanders. They lived in the province, particularly in the Anatolikon theme as told by John Skylitzes.[49] Thus, that indicates how interest groups of some strata of the society formed a kind of solidarity among themselves for their benefits. All these may show us the limits of aristocrat members of Byzantine society on the eve of the Komnenian regime and their demands to keep/gain social power as opposed to central authority of state apparatus.[50]

The Byzantine state entered into a long-term change in its economic, political, social and military aspects in the second half of the eleventh century. Byzantine society was gradually transforming to a wealthy community. This is evident in Odo

[48] Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, p. 358.

[49] John Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History 811-1057*, trans. by John Wortley, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 455-456.

[50] Haldon, "Military Administration and Bureaucracy…," p. 60.

of Deuil's description of Constantinople, which conveys clues about the aristocratic society growing in the twelfth century and mentions the high number of rich men.[51]

There were several sources describing aristocratic society of the first half of the eleventh century. As an important source, the *Peira* can throw some light on our subject matter since it serves best for an explanation of how the provincial aristocracy gained power. The *Peira* consisted of several cases and decisions of law, which were collected by the *magistros* Eustathios Rhomaios, the judge responsible for all of these decisions.[52]

The *Peira* belongs to the mid-eleventh century. The main participants of suits belonged to the aristocratic class. The struggle among provincial aristocrats represented cases for ignorance of imperial law. During the conflict between Romanos Skleros and George Maniakes, for example, both sides acted as if they had their own law.[53] Vryonis preferred to point out especially the suits including the Skleros family, but he also includes Bourtzes and Synadenos families respectively with a less focus. It is seen in those decisions that the Skleros family was challenging the power of the state by rejecting to obey its rules. Some Skleroi served prominent positions in the ninth and tenth centuries, for instance, Leo Skleros occupied the post of the governor of Peloponnesus in ca. 811. Members of that family tried to dominate the economic life of the countryside by taking the lands/properties of villagers, or even the members of the ecclesiastical community. Besides these two groups, the

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[51] Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione Ludovici VII in Orientem [The Journey of Louis VII to the East]*, Virginia Gingerick Berry, ed., (New York: W. W. Norton&Company Inc., 1948), pp. 64-65.

[52] The *Peira* preserves many things revealing transmission of wealth among the aristocracy. For that argument, see Jean-Claude Cheynet, "Aristocratie et heritage (XIe-XIIIe siècle)," in *La transmission du patrimoine*, G. Dagron and J. Beaucamp (eds), (Paris: De Baccard, 1998), pp. 56-58. Alexander Kazhdan, "Do We Need a New History of Byzantine Law?" *JÖB* 39 (1989), pp. 19-21; Nikolas Oikonomides, "The 'Peira' of Eustathios Romaios," *Fontes minores* 7 (Frankfurt, 1986), pp. 169-192, [repr. in idem, *Byzantium from the Ninth Century to the Fourth Crusade. Studies, Texts, Monuments* (Norfolk: Variorum, 1992), no. XII.]

[53] Cheynet, "Official Power…," p. 141, citing *Ioannis Skylitzae Synopsis historiarum*, I. Thurn, ed., (Berlin and New York: CFHB 5, 1973), p. 427.

estates of the local aristocrats were also exposed to intervention of the economically 'aggressive' family. A case of the *patrikios* Paniberios would serve an appropriate instance. He lost most of his wealth and was not able to recover it. He had debt to a member of the Skleros family (a *protospatharia*), who in return demanded the properties of the monastery of St. Mamas.[54] The tenth and eleventh centuries testified to the tendency of the aristocracy to extend its landed estates whereas the state was trying to stop it.[55] Therefore, the Byzantine government felt very uncomfortable with the Skleroi's economic expansion. By counteracting the law, the aggressive opposition of the Skleros family signals the possible capacity of a privileged group in the absence/weakness of the state authority. On the intrepid Skleros family, Vryonis marks as follows:

> [the Skleroi] were condemned in practically all of the decisions rendered by the *magistros*. But one is left to wonder how effective the actual execution of his decisions was. The complicity of a *krites* with Skleros in one of the cases would seem to suggest that Skleros was probably also able to find officials who would be just as lax in carrying out other judgments of the court. The mere recurrence of the Skleros name in these decisions indicates how fearless of the laws and the courts the family was.[56]

Bardas Skleros rebelled against the Byzantine government, which became obvious when he marched against Constantinople in 977 after the army proclaimed him *basileos* in the preceding year. Towards the end of the tenth century, the Byzantine state reconciled with Bardas Skleros, and granted him lands. After mid-eleventh century onwards, one can rarely attest a Skleros. The family almost terminated after the Komnenians' reign.[57]

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[54] Vryonis, "The *Peira*…," pp. 137-138. Also, Alexander Kazhdan, "Skleros," *ODB*, vol. 3, p. 1911.

[55] Vryonis, "The *Peira*…," p. 133.

[56] Ibid., p. 138.

[57] Kazhdan, "Skleros," pp. 1911-1912. Also, see Werner Seibt, *Die Skleroi. Eine Prosopographisch-Sigillographische Studie* (Vienne: Byzantina Vindobonensia, 1976).

The elite of the tenth and eleventh centuries was not able to create collective consciousness as regarding themselves a separate "class" until the introduction of the new "elite" of the Komnenian era with Alexios I Komnenos.[58] As John Haldon contends "it should not surprise that the tensions between the centre and the provincial elite are concentrated on the appropriation and more particularly on the distribution of surplus wealth."[59] The system of levying surplus was mainly in the hands of the administrative cadre, which considered its self-interests and reflected a corrupted character. For the late eleventh century, the exploitation of peasants by state officials was extensively mentioned by Theophylaktos of Ohrid.[60]

Financial Burden on the Provincial Society and in the Late Eleventh and Twelfth Century

The exploitation of peasants by state officials, which was expressed in Theophylaktos of Ohrid's letters, had long been a problem for Byzantine provincial society.[61] Over taxation and abuse of power over the civilians, including the Church, became already apparent during the early ninth century. Ignatios of Nicaea, in the 820s, was bemoaning about the *synone*, which was charged to the lands of the

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[58] Haldon, "Military Administration and Bureaucracy…," p. 46.

[59] Ibid., p. 47.

[60] Haldon, "Social Élites…," pp. 187-188; "The state competed with landowners for the services of the peasantry, as more land was brought into production. In a free society this would have been to the advantage of the peasantry, but their dependent status told against them. To meet the demands made upon them by the state and their lords they were forced to bear an increasingly heavy burden of taxes and rents." Michael Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204. A Political History* (London and New York: Longman, 1984), p. 260. There is an extensive bibliography on Theopylaktos of Ohrid. For a few famous ones, see Alan Harvey, "The Land and Taxation in the Reign of Alexios I Komnenos: The Evidence of Theophylakt of Ochrid," *REB* 51 (1993), pp. 139-154; Dimitri Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), the chapter titled as 'Theophylact of Ohrid,' pp. 34-82. On Theophylaktos' letters and his arguments, see Margaret Mullett, *Theophylact of Ochrid. Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop* (Aldershot: Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies, 1997).

[61] See Haldon, "Military Administration and Bureaucracy…," p. 54, fn. 20; Haldon, "Social Élites…," pp. 187-188.

Church in his control twice a year, in his letter to an imperial official.[62] Moreover, it was also evident in the cases containing the complaints of the churchmen about the rarity of tax exemptions in the same period. This was relatively different when we come to the eleventh century since Church properties were increasingly benefitting from tax exemptions.[63] There was a small part of society benefitting from large privileges as a bequest from the state.[64]

Theophylaktos of Ohrid sought for the assistance of his ecclesiastical colleague, bishop of Semnea in Asia Minor, against the fisc.[65] He wished to overcome the common financial problems, for which he diligently sent letters to various parts of the Empire. However, as a general phenomenon, the state, acquiring more lands of the peasants and placing high tax burden on them, caused a fatal situation for the peasantry.[66]

Similar to Theoplylaktos of Ohrid's claims, later on, complaints were posted also by Michael Choniates. He specifically talked about the *praktor* Tessarakontapechys' extreme demands and burdensome policies on the inhabitants

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[62] Haldon, "Military Administration and Bureaucracy…," p. 49. The *synone* was "forced sale of commodities to government officials at a prescribed price." Andrew J. Cappel, "Synone," *ODB*, vol. 3, pp. 1994-1995.

[63] Haldon, "Military Administration and Bureaucracy…," p. 54.

[64] Laiou attracts attention to the negative social and political effects of the privileges released for officials, aristocrats, and Italian merchants. Angeliki E. Laiou, "The Byzantine Economy: An Overview," in *The Economic History of Byzantium, from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, Angeliki E. Laiou (editor-in-chief), (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002), vol. 3, p. 1151. (Hereafter, *The Economic History of Byzantium, from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century* is abbreviated as *EHB*).

[65] Mullett, *Theophylact of Ochrid…*, p. 185. See also eadem, "The Imperial Vocabulary of Alexios I Komnenos," in *Alexios I Komnenos. I Papers*, Margaret Mullet and Dion Smythe (eds), (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations, 1996), pp. 359-397.

[66] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204…,* pp. 277-278. Furthermore, provincial public had to face several exploitations by the hands of the local aristocrats. Kekaumenos testimony reveals that the local aristocrats had sometimes carried out legal jurisdiction (e.g. punishment) on the local people. It reveals one aspect of the limits/extensions of the local aristocrat's power. Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, pp. 53-54.

of Athens in 1182.[67] Michael Choniates was a mere 'claimant' of the local interests. He also mentions false practices of *anagrapheus*, who was responsible for measuring the land to be taxed.[68] The last attempt had been made by Andronikos I to correct abuses in provincial administration. His orders, which were sufficient payment of officials and appointing them according to merits and qualities, were not obviously followed by his successors, Isaac II and Alexios III.[69]

The imperial service and the rewards it provided were the two parameters for a way of understanding an individual's aristocratic status, if we are not provided with any familial links of that individual with the imperial family. These are, in other words, tools enabling the historian to determine the middle and the lower aristocracy.[70] The former one basically began with the appointment of an official to a provincial office by the emperor. Since one's accession to a status of an aristocrat became a difficult thing in the late eleventh century, the appointment to administrative positions gained more prominence in provincial society.[71] These positions were sometimes exploited by the office-holders. Such cases especially occurred either in times of decentralization of power or as a result of the appointed officers' power. He may have had the means to establish his own space of authority before his appointment to a certain region. The imperial rewards, on the other hand,

[67] Judith Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government: Hellas and Peloponnesos, 1180-1205," *DOP* 29 (1975), p. 271, citing Michael Choniates, I, 146 and II, 48.

[68] Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," p. 271.

[69] Charles Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West 1180-1204* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 51-75; Judith Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," pp. 267-268. In the tenth century, a man could hold a title appropriate to his office, thus according to his rank in hierarchy. This changed as time went by. In the middle of the fourteenth century ranks and offices could match without any consideration of suitability. A hierarchy covering the titles of office and rank was created. Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile…*, p. 63, referring to Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des Offices*, pp. 133-140 and R. Guilland, "Observations sur la liste des dignitaires du Pseudo-Codinos," *REB* 12 (1954), pp. 58-68.

[70] Kyritses thinks that this approach excludes the women aristocrats, who were the daughters or wives of the men aristocrats. Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, pp. 11-12.

[71] Haldon, "Social Élites…," p. 182. The decentralization started from the Komnenian period, yet there was still a strong central power in Byzantium.

as they are also framed as 'grants,' form another important phenomenon designating the privileged position of an individual in provincial society.

Change in the Eleventh Century and the Birth of the Komnenian Aristocracy

In order to set the pattern of the Komnenian era, a background for the Komnenian household government should be emphasized. The civil and the military aristocracy already began to emerge as distinct groups in the tenth century.[72] Favoritism (nepotism) was gradually penetrating into the Byzantine imperial tradition under the dynasty of the Doukai.[73] The policies of Nikephoros III Botaneiates heralded Komnenian practices. As Nikephoros Bryennios narrates:

> He [Nikephoros III] did not grant the highest honors to the most notable among the aristocracy, the military, or members of the senatorial class, or to those showing some favor towards him, but to all those who asked for them. He did the same with what the Romans called *offikia*, so that as a consequence expenditure (*exodoi*) exceeded revenue (*eisodoi*) by several times. And so, for this reason, within a short space of time, money (*khrēmata*) was lacking, the *nomisma* was debased, and the gifts (*dōreai*) of money attached by the emperor to such honors and offices were brought to an end. For the influx of money which derived from Asia and which went to supply the treasury ceased because the whole of Asia fell into the possession of the Turks, and since that deriving from Europe also decreased drastically, because of its ill-use by earlier emperors, the imperial treasury (*basilikoi tameioi*) found itself in the greatest want of money.[74]

The monetary status was experiencing disorder; the tax system was almost completely out of control during the initial years of the Komnenoi. Komnenian family acquired the throne in an environment in which the ground was suitable for

[72] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture…*, p. 63.

[73] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th centuries…," pp. 5-6.

[74] Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy: c. 300-1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 235 citing Nikephorus Bryennios, *Historiarum Libri IV*, IV.I; P. Gautier, ed., (Brussels: n. p., 1975), pp. 257, 259.

favoritism. The Komnenos family had its origin from Asia Minor; therefore, a provincial character may well be attributed to the dynasty's earlier years. Other provincial connections of the Komnenian house can presumably be argued as Alexios I's grandfather's town, Kastamon connotes the Komnenians' probable links with the Paphlagonians.[75]

The Komnenian dynasty came to power after a revolt which was launched as a result of their provincial power.[76] The future holders of the Byzantine throne were already very rich before they became emperors. The first emperor of the dynasty gained the throne as a result of solidarity among the aristocratic families, which was occurring for the first time throughout the Byzantine history, with the participation of the military aristocracy, the families of the Komnenoi, the Doukai, the Palaiologoi, and the Melissenoi.[77] Thus, Alexios I Komnenos became a ruler of a new dynasty that was born out of a reaction by the military aristocracy.[78] This is an important point because it shows the capacity of the aristocracy's power. Once they received the Empire, the Komnenians let the military aristocracies grow, which reached, however, such a considerable extension that the government turned out to be a "household government," accelerated with Alexios I's special treatment for his relatives by placing them in key points in governmental administration.[79] The

[75] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 36, fn. 11.

[76] 'The revolt of the Komnenoi' begins at p. 73 in Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*.

[77] Timothy E. Gregory, *A History of Byzantium*, (Hong Kong: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), Second Edition, pp. 290-291. For the crucial support of the Doukai for the Komnenoi, see Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, pp. 90-91.

[78] Hélène Ahrweiler, *L'idéologie politique de l'empire byzantin* (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1975), p. 67.

[79] This is the Komnenian household government, which Zonaras informed us about. If we use Zonaras' terminology, Alexios I Komnenos felt himself as the master of people, rather than the administrator, which provides clues about new Komnenian understanding of rulership. Ostrogorsky, "Observations…," p. 9 referring to Zonaras, ed. (Bonn: n. p., n.d.), III, 766. 14-16. See also Ostrogorsky, "Observations…," p. 10.

dynasty established the government exclusively through blood relationships and kinship. The state, now, became a state of a single dynasty.

The military aristocracy reached its triumph with the Komnenoi. The Byzantine Empire entered into an epoch in which political power relations were in change with the reign of the dynasty.[80] A 'change' would be observable also in the structure of the military aristocracy in the same period. The Komnenian court appointed members of the dynasty to the prominent civil and military administrative offices. The new military aristocracy, which was exclusively dominated by the Komnenians caused the ex-military aristocrats to be embedded to the civil aristocracy (inclusive attitude) or totally erased (exclusive attitude). A clear distinction was made by Alexios I Komnenos between the military commanders, who engaged into high aristocratic circles, and the aristocrats with civil service, some of whom have been among the big aristocratic families of the Empire during the eleventh century. He tried to establish a balance between the power groups and the state, thus, attempted to make the state remain challenging in the region.[81] The state grants have certainly been proliferated under the Komnenoi, and did not disappear until the end of Byzantium.

As already stated, the Komnenian dynasty's rule can best be described as "the rise of the household government," which was well argued by Michael Angold as a basic feature of the Komnenian politics and its vision of governance. Alexios I Komnenos' introduction of new reforms, such as the one about the honors system and *pronoia* system, basically can be understood as a token of new approach in imperial politics.[82] In his reign, the key posts/positions and the highest offices were

[80] Haldon, "Military Administration and Bureaucracy…," p. 63.

[81] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204…,* pp. 133-134.

[82] Ibid., p. 133.

held by the people who were in one way or another related with the imperial family, whereas before his reign they were given according to fidelity and other merits in general. In other words, the high aristocracy was formed according to its blood connections with the ruling dynasty. Yet, appointing relatives "from among … blood relatives" (ἐκ τον καθαιμα)[83] to the significant offices had already started long before the Komnenoi, in the tenth century.[84] It has been suggested that Alexios I Komnenos may have intended to repair the wealth of his family once lost to the Turks in Asia Minor.[85] That probably clarifies why he preferred such kind of politics.

The government reserved the highest positions in the administrative ranks always for a few famous families of Byzantium. That is, the Komnenian emperors were conservative in the sense that they distributed all important titles to the relatives and important aristocratic families respectively.[86] In the Komnenian system of title-giving, the title became improper and unequal with the offices that an individual occupied. It was rather the proximity to the emperor (kinship) which was concerned. The latter, being mostly members of the military élite, developed their links with the ruling dynasty through intermarriages.[87] In this way, these families strengthened their positions. The bureaucratic monopolization of state system allowed the local

[83] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 7. "John appointed the administrators of public affairs from among his blood relatives (…)." Nicetas Choniates, *Historia*, I. Van Dieten, ed., vol. 1, (Berlin: n. p., 1975), p. 9; Hendy, "'Byzantium, 1081-1204': The Economy Revisited…," p. 30.

[84] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy (8th–13th Centuries)," p. 14. For example, Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963-969) had his brother Leo given the title of *kouropalates* and his father Bardas the title of *caesar*. Ibid., p. 25.

[85] Alan Harvey, "Financial Crisis and the Rural Economy," in *Alexios I Komnenos. Papers*, Margaret Mullett and Dion Smythe (eds), (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations, 1996), p. 170.

[86] Angold rightly puts emphasis on Alexios I's aim: "He did everything to root the aristocracy in the foundations of the state and thus transform it." Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, p. 133.

[87] "The highest military elite were consolidated in a close body of powerful families connected by intermarriage and forming a 'clan' around the ruling Komnenian dynasty." Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 69.

aristocracy on local affairs (administrative-military-ecclesiastical) to grow on which other factors also prevailed (e.g. economic growth of the rural society).[88]

The Komnenian emperors delivered honorary titles to the aristocracy. The excessive and unduly adoption of these titles reflects the government approach in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries. The favoritism of the Komnenians provided a firm/strict system of administration. Identification such as *doulos* and *oikeios* took meanings which signified a close link with the emperor himself either through blood relation or not. These epithets were by no means above all civil–administrative offices.[89] With Alexios I Komnenos' administrative reforms, "officials who combined the civil and military powers replaced the old purely military governors of themes."[90] Favoritism as part of the Komnenian politics, thus, evoked different situations. Anna Komnene mentions a commander who never held a sword.[91]

The high offices were almost always reserved for close relatives or a few famous and old-established families, whereas the lower offices were held by the families whose position could not compete with the former. However, one ought to look at each individual and his office(s), since this correspondence was a definite and unchanging one. In some instances, the public offices became honorific dignities. The important thing is that being totally honorific their titles such as *despot* and *sebastokrator* could only be held by the emperor's relatives and imperial *oikeoi*.[92]

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[88] Haldon, "Social Élites…," p. 189.

[89] Cheynet, "Official Power…," p. 139.

[90] Judith Herrin, "The Collapse of the Byzantine Empire in the Twelfth Century: A Study of a Medieval Economy," *University of Birmingham Historical Journal* 12/2 (1970), p. 194.

[91] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 163.

[92] As mentioned in a fourteenth-century Byzantine source, Pseudo-Kodinos, the situation seems to have been similar for the later centuries. Although there remained some titles which kept their functions, there were several others which eventually became just 'titles.' Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*, p. 38 referring to Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des offices*, p. 178.

An example of title-giving would be a certain Tatikios (one of the most illustrious admiral) and Landulf, an Italian. They were both given the title of *megas doux*.[93] Moreover, Michael Taronites, the husband of the emperor's sister, can be another exemplar. He was rewarded with a title (i.e. *panhypersebastos*) on account of his proximity (i.e. blood relations) to the emperor.[94]

The new Komnenian system of administration brought a change also in hierarchical structure. The shift became evident by the beginning of the abandonment of old titles, such as *magistros, patrikios, protospatharios,* from the early twelfth century onwards.[95] Instead, new high-sounding titles, such as *sebastokrator*, *protosebastos*, *sebastos,* and even more complex ones such as *protopansebastohypertatos, protonobilissimohypertatos,* were formed, heralding a new period.[96] 'Function' became almost unnecessary in granting titles to the individuals. Yet, one should have in mind that there are somewhat contrary cases such as rewarding of an individual due to his military achievements.[97] Relatives or close environment of the imperial family were preferred the most and before all other candidates.

The inflation of titles, military and administrative posts granted to the emperor's relatives and the members of prominent families may be read as an ultimate consequence of administrative centralization of the Empire. Alexios I Komnenos' hesitation was due possibly to the way he came to throne. As it is known

[93] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, pp. 360-361.

[94] Ibid., p. 282.

[95] For the creation of titles under the Komnenoi, see in general Cheynet, "Official Power…," p. 139.

[96] The Komnenian emperors bestowed titles also to the foreigners. See also Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, pp. 325-326.

[97] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 52.

he usurped the throne, so it is why he distributed extensive grants to mask that situation.[98]

The Byzantine Empire became so centralized in such an environment that territorial losses led the ruling dynasty to build up a new form of government. During the early twelfth century, there were three different aristocracies: the ruling 'clan' (the Komnenoi) as a military aristocracy which had military commands and provincial governorship, the old families who were in the bureaucracy and tried to make their positions hereditary, and finally the provincial aristocracy active and dominant in the countryside.[99]

As another aspect, the political vacuum in the eastern part of Anatolia after the battle of Mantzikert created an environment out of which several local authorities (i.e. Byzantine officials) popped up in border areas such as Theodore Gabras in Trebizond and Philaretos Brachamios in Antioch.[100] Alexios I Komnenos gave positions to the provincial aristocrats as one way of keeping the remote areas within imperial control to the effect that he has appointed Theodore Gabras as the *doux* of Trebizond. Since the Gabras family has already been well-established in the region, the emperor probably could not neglect Gabrades' local authority, therefore, adopted such a policy.[101]

[98] Harvey, "Financial Crisis…," p. 184.

[99] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, pp. 210-213; Mark C. Bartusis, "Aristocracy," in *ODB*, vol. 1, p. 170.

[100] John W. Birkenmeier, *The Development of the Komnenian Army: 1081-1180* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), p. 91.

[101] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, p. 130.

Imperial service may provide a family a chance to flourish. For instance, the Kontostephanoi's ties with the imperial family were so developed, that they became a distinguished family with their great estates in the Maeander valley during the twelfth century.[102] Having managed the commandership in the naval campaign of John Vatatzes to Rhodes in 1233, Theodore Kontostephanos reached up to the rank of *protosebastos* in 1241-1242.[103] After the death of that family member the Kontostephanos family vanished probably.[104] To benefit from a privileged position among other families, loyalty was the most important component in that process. The provincial aristocrats received honorific titles such as 'brother of the emperor' from the Emperor John Vatatzes. That particular title, for example, was given to some local aristocrats, such as the Tornikoi.[105] There was absolutely an imperial authority upon the acquisition and transmission of official epithets/positions of the families. "Kyr(-os, -es)", "*doulos/oikeios* (slave/familiar) of the emperor" and "(relative) of the emperor" were some other epithets.[106]

On the other side of the Aegean, in Epiros for example, the attribution of exaggerated titles turned into a common practice during the period of 'exile.' Epirote officials had benefited from that 'inflation of titles.' A certain member of the Gabras family, Gregory Gabras, according to Bishop Demetrios Chomatianos of Epiros'

[102] Alexander Kazhdan, "Kontostephanos," *ODB*, vol. 2, pp. 1148-1149. The Kontostephanos family appeared first in late eleventh century, received prominent positions especially in military organization of the Empire. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*…, pp. 129-130 referring to Skylitzes, p. 331; George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 218, fn. 15.

[103] Ibid., pp. 215-216, and p. 247; Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, p. 62.

[104] Ibid., p. 71.

[105] Ibid., p. 64.

[106] See Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, pp. 12-20.

testimony, was bestowed the title '*megalepifanestatos*' (the great, most high-appearing one).[107]

Selling off the offices to people regardless of their skills and over-extension of titles were also attested during Alexios III Angelos' reign (1195-1203). The problems in administrative structure had already been alarming by the Angelid period. Isaac II Angelos extensively sold imperial offices as if "he put up offices for sale just as men of the marketplace hawk their fruits for sale."[108]

The Angeloi have retained the custom that the state servants or the relatives of the emperors were donated lands. The Komnenian emperors generously donated lands to these persons no matter how that policy (the spread of giving away state property as grants) would be the main reason for the upcoming financial crisis. The situation was not healed for the sake of the state up until Theodore I Laskaris' attempts to obtain state property back.[109]

What was the tradition under the Nicaean Empire? For the great aristocrats of Constantinople, who were forced to leave the city or obliged to find land possessions upon which they reestablish their former wealth, Nicaean state grants became the only source for a revival after 1204. The local family members, despite their lesser ranks in social hierarchy, had more advantageous situations such as they possessed fully-owned land properties.[110] Most of the land-possessors or property-owners in

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[107] Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen Through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 54-55 citing Demetrios Chomatianos, *Synoptikon*, J. Pitra, ed., *Analecta sacra et classica* (Paris: n. p., 1891), vol. 6, col. 785 ff.

[108] Geanakoplos, *Byzantium*…, p. 54 citing Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, I. Van Dieten, ed., vol. 1, (Berlin: n. p., 1975), p. 444. See also: "Not only were the baseborn, the vulgar, the moneychangers, and the linen merchants honored as *sebastoi* , but Cumans and Syrians found that they were able to pay money for the dignity of *sebastos*, which was held in contempt by those who had served previous emperors." Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium,* p. 265. The topic is broadly examined in Chapter 3.

[109] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, pp. 165-166.

[110] Hélène Glykatzi Ahrweiler, "La politique agraire des empereurs de Nicée," *B* 28 (1958), p. 57.

Europe had their wealth thanks to the state grants. Nicaean conquests of European territories provided the Nicaean state to give off lands/properties to the aristocrats, soldiers, and public functionaries.[111]

Moreover, border areas reveal a more complicated picture. The titles of individuals present a different nature. As far as sigillography can tell us, there existed individuals who received both Byzantine and Seljuk titles. As in the case of Gabriel of Melitene, who possessed two positions –at least– *doux* and *emir* at the same time and the honorific title of *protokouropalates*, this double allegiance reflects a regional aspect. Another interesting case is from the late eleventh century: an individual named Theodore Hetoum bears titles of *emir* and *kouropalates*.[112]

The Seljuk state developed a strategy enabling financial benefits to continue. Concerning Sinope, a city on the Black Sea coast, the Seljuk ruler Kaikaus appointed an Armenian Muslim convert, Hetoum by name, to the city as the *archon*. He was "an ex-Christian [who] would surely guarantee safety for the Christian sailors and tradesmen who frequented the Pontic ports at that time."[113]

The issue of foreigners integrated into the empire's administrative mechanism should be illuminated at this point. The foreign elements were incorporated into the system of bureaucracy, aristocracy, and various layers of the society through different ways: marriages, prisoners of war, and/or mercenaries, who later became part of the Byzantine society.[114] Armenians were the ones who extensively took part

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[111] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, pp. 181-182.

[112] Cheynet, "Official Power…," pp. 150-151.

[113] Alexis G. C. Savvides, *Byzantium in the Near East: Its Relations with the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum in Asia Minor, the Armenians of Cilicia and the Mongols A. D. c. 1192-1237* (Thessalonike: Kentron Byzantinon Eregnon, 1981), p. 129.

[114] Cheynet mentions the first two in his article "Du prenom au patronyme: les étrangers à Byzance (Xe-XIIe siècles)," *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography*, Nicolas Oikonomides, ed., (Washingon, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1987), p. 58. Angeliki E. Laiou asserts that one form of marriage among the aristocracy was in the form of "uncle and niece to aunt and nephew." Eadem, "Marriage Prohibitions, Marriage Strategies and the Dowry in Thirteenth-Century

in state positions. The consciousness of belonging to an ethnic group was non-existent among the Byzantine families. Hence, the old families who have come under Byzantine service seemed to be ignorant of their ethnic origins.[115] The Komnenian emperors encouraged reception of titles for other ethnic communities as long as the latter adamantly accepted the Byzantine sovereignty above them. Various surrounding political figures (such as the Danishmendid *emir* or Serbian *župan*) recognized the Byzantine emperor's sovereignty, and thus occupied a minor position as opposed to the latter. These individuals identified themselves the *douloi* of the Byzantine emperor.[116] The cases such as Ibn Mousaraf (an *archon*) clearly provide evidence for the integration of other *ethnikioi*.[117] Therefore, some rulers of the neighboring regions to the Byzantine Empire followed a vassalage policy towards the Byzantine emperor. The Danishmendid Emir Yaghibasan was the ruler of Caesaraea and Amaseia,[118] whose seals from 1143-1146 demonstrate his status under the Byzantine emperor. He named himself as the emperor's *doulos*.[119]

Appointments of the foreigners to significant positions or conferring titles were basically legitimization of power within the Empire. That was a part of Byzantine provincial policy. The growing insecurity in rural areas was evident from the eleventh century onwards.[120] The Empire needed the foreigners in provinces, as

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Byzantium," Joëlle Beaucamp and Gilbert Dagron (eds), *La Transmission du patrimoine. Byzance et l'aire méditerranéenne* (Paris: De boccard, 1998), p. 134.

[115] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries…," p. 26.

[116] Cheynet, "Official Power…," p. 148.

[117] Ibid., p. 150.

[118] John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, p. 151.

[119] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 77 referring to Oikonomides, "Les Danishmendides entre Byzance, Bagdad et le Sultanat d'Iconium," *Revue numismatique* 25 (1983), pp. 189-207.

[120] Lefort, "Rural Economy…," p. 113.

they had a crucial role in the maintenance and security of border areas.[121] For example, Theodore I Laskaris was using the Latin mercenaries against the Turks.[122] Furthermore, the admission of the foreigners included another point which constituted deliberate attitudes of the states. A mutual tolerance was often appropriated. On that matter both the Byzantine state and the Seljuks shared an inclusive attitude, which opened the way to the newcomers as political refugees.

The Structure of Byzantine Aristocratic Society

The structure of Byzantine society was basically tripartite (rich, *mesoi*, and the poor people) until the mid-fourteenth century when it became bipartite (rich and poor). Yet, concerning the wealthy part of the society, for which more subdivisions are made by Kazhdan, these groups may be added within this frame: the families of the imperial house, court dignitaries, diplomats, ecclesiastical nobility, merchants, and small provincial landholders. These were all represented in Byzantine provincial aristocratic society. Apart from these provincial aristocratic groups, there were several ranks that constitute the Byzantine rural community in total, including simple peasants, *stratiotai*,[123] and clergy members.[124]

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[121] Cheynet, "Official Power…," p. 149.

[122] See Savvides, *Byzantium in the Near East*…, p. 97; also see idem, "Late Byzantine and Western Historiographers on Turkish Mercenaries in Greek and Latin Armies: the Turcoples/Tourkopouloi," in *The Making of Byzantine History. Studies dedicated to Donald M. Nicol*, Roderick Beaton and Charlotte Roueché (eds), (Aldershot: Variorum, 1993), pp. 122-136.

[123] *Strateia* existed in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The *stratiotai* (soldiers, holders of *strateia*) were giving their fiscal burden still in kind by providing logistics (animals, food sources, etc.). The budget that the state had to reserve for various items, such as building and maintaining castles, roads, etc., or providing the needs of the army, were increasing due to mainly military purposes. On the other hand, increase in mercenary groups brought about a financial drain more than hitherto. As Haldon proposes, between 1044 and 1088, it might have been a rise in mercenary groups of local landlords and local communities. Hence, all these constituted a permanent and growing imposition on the rural society, that is, the supplier of required goods. Haldon, "Military Administration and Bureaucracy…," pp. 53-54.

Ethnic diversity constituted another dynamic of the social structure of the Byzantine society in Asia Minor. There existed variations and complexities in the ethnic texture for the period between 1081 and 1261. In these centuries, for example, some parts of the Empire, especially the eastern territories, such as Cilicia, and further east and north-east around Melitene, etc. ethnic awareness already found ground among the Armenians, who long-existed in the region. Armenian presence in Byzantine Empire did not end in the following centuries. The Tornikios family, who were descending from an old Armenian family, the Taronites, resumed its involvement in aristocratic groups. Some of its members (e.g. Demetrios Tornikes, served as the judge of the velum) were occupying prominent offices in the last quarter of the twelfth century.[125]

Families appeared as political or social actors, depending on the circumstances that they utilized. Each family or an individual certainly fulfilled some requirements that necessitated the ascension of a family well into the bureaucratic and aristocratic environment. No one would appear on the scene of history without having sufficient background that makes him the subject of the Byzantine history books. Therefore, one should bear in mind that the emergence of a family was a result of a progress.

Some families maintained power both at the court and in the provinces. These families made their wealth and positions inheritable for their future generations,

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[124] Iu. Ia. Vin, "The Problem of the Social Structure of the Rural Community in Late Byzantium (Thirteenth–Fifteenth Centuries)," in *Acts XVIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies. Selected Papers: Main and Communications. Moscow, 1991*, Ihor Ševčenko, et al. (eds.), (Shepherdstown: Byzantine Studies Press, Inc., 1996), vol. 2, p. 165. Ostrogorsky's view on the hierarchy in Byzantine society: "The presence of free men in the retinues of Byzantine noblemen shows that persons not belonging to the peasant class could have their own lords from whom they depended instead of being directly subject to the emperor. In other words, there existed within Byzantine feudal relations a certain hierarchy of power, though certainly the feudal ladder did not have as many rungs as it did in the West." Ostrogorsky, "Observations...," p. 15.

[125] Nicholas Adontz, "Les Taronites a Byzance," *B* 11 (1936), pp. 36-38.

which created a kind of continuation of a wealthy aristocratic family preserving its privileged place within the social hierarchy in the Byzantine Empire. They sought long-running advantageous positions through establishing marital links. Intermarriage among aristocratic families formed a common strategy for such a need. It inherits the property-holding positions and became an overwhelming factor that facilitates the provincial aristocracy to keep its wealth. Entering into the circles of government via the assumption of titles, on the other hand, serves the same purpose.

There was transfer of authority by the provincial aristocrats. Whether it was a widespread phenomenon or not, that is we do not know. Yet, in some circumstances the provincial aristocrats could transfer their authorities to someone else. Kyritses gives an example from the middle of the fourteenth century. In the *kastron* of Phanari in Thessaly, there were some *archontes* fulfilled some duties for the local landowner.[126]

As illustrated by the two Byzantine chroniclers (John Kinnamos and Niketas Choniates), there was no feudal hierarchy in Byzantine society. The absence of legally defined social classes in Byzantine society is different from what has been observed in Western societies.[127] Byzantium had a bureaucratic hierarchy, which was something different from the social hierarchy of Western European feudalism.[128] Therefore, vassals of the Western aristocracy did not exist in the Byzantine Empire, a

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[126] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, pp. 213-247.

[127] David Jacoby, "From Byzantium to Latin Romania: Continuity and Change," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 4 (1989), pp. 3-5. See John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, pp. 59-60 and Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, pp. 225-226; also see Kazhdan and Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium*, p. 24f; Kazhdan, "State, Feudal, and Private Economy in Byzantium," p. 90, fn. 32.

[128] Kazhdan, "State, Feudal, and Private Economy in Byzantium," p. 90. For the hierarchy in Byzantine bureaucratic system see N. Oikonomides, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles* (Paris: n. p., 1972).

sign of dependency on the state mechanism.[129] What ought to be attributed to the state-aristocracy relationship in Byzantium seems a systematic and reciprocal. Different from the West this couple (the state and the aristocracy) was intricately bound to each other, each of which could not survive without one another.[130]

The attitudes of some Byzantine authors illuminate the 'hierarchical' structures of the society, despite their subjectivity. John Kinnamos's perception of the hierarchy of the Crusader's army is illustrative at that point. Furthermore, from the other side of the coin, Frederick Barbarossa's perception of Byzantine society is deprived of hierarchy. Hierarchy did actually exist in Byzantine society, yet rather in a looser form compared to its Western counterpart.[131]

One of our major questions in that context arises about the internal structure of the Byzantine provincial aristocracy: Was this class a closed 'caste' or not? The structure of the Byzantine aristocracy was inclusive. Neither caste system nor strict regulations setting a system of the order or succession existed within the aristocracy. However, to be a member of the aristocracy did not totally depend on one's social–cultural background. True that, the blood connections were considered as a key to enter the aristocracy, but it does not mean that it was the only requirement.[132]

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[129] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries…," pp. 7-8.

[130] Haldon, "Social Élites…," p. 182.

[131] Paul Magdalino mentions a contradiction between bureaucratic and centralized feudalism on the one hand and provincial feudalism on the other. It seems probable that there may have been provincial authorities competing with the central state and maintaining their own power grounds. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 171.

[132] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy…*, p. 51. On the aristocracy of birth and the aristocracy of culture, see Romilly Jenkins, *Byzantium and Byzantinism* (n.p.: The University of Cincinnati, 1963), p. 8: "…there was in all ages at Byzantium an aristocracy of birth (though this was not based on racial stock), and an aristocracy of culture. The aristocracy of birth established itself in landed property and military experience. The pretence was certainly made in some noble families that their lines went back to the early days of senatorial and republican Rome; but by the eighth century this claim could not be substantiated, and was often manifestly false. The majority of the military and landed clans which dominated Asia Minor during the Middle–Byzantine age were in fact of Armenian origin, and their local authority had in most cases not existed before the seventh century. This aristocracy, while it cultivated the military virtues, was grasping and arrogant, and exerted a centrifugal and disruptive tendency on a society which was by definition single and united. Far different was the aristocracy of

That point leads us to the social mobility in Byzantium. Vertical mobility in society can help the viewer to figure out Byzantine social structure and career opportunities of a Byzantine citizen.[133] In every part of Byzantium, vertical mobility was evident. Cases from Italian peninsula approve it that any Italian subject could continue their career and become officials in other parts of the Empire. The example of the *doux* Argyros can well be a representative for social mobility in Italy around the middle of the eleventh century. Beforehand, he was occupying several lower administrative positions, such as imperial guard and *strategos* in Paphlagonia.[134] However, the Constantinopolitan aristocracy seems to have had advantages rising hierarchical steps. A man of the Constantinopolitan aristocracy could be appointed to a provincial or ecclesiastical office (e.g. Theodore Choumnos).[135]

Beside his noble family background, the deeds of the individual were also considered important. The qualities of a military commander are told in Leo VI's *Taktika*:

> They [army officers, commanders] should all be extremely competent, faithful, and loyal to our Roman state; they should also give evidence of bravery that is above average. There is nothing to prevent their being very wealthy or noble as far as their birth and virtue of soul is concerned. If they should be of noble birth, at crucial moments they will be quick to put into action what they have been ordered to do; if they should be wealthy, then, when

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culture, which was centered in Constantinople itself. We have already noted the chief of the bonds which held together that polyglot and heterogeneous populace: the bond of Christian imperialism, the feeling of 'belonging' to the elect of God. But there was also the bond, equally strong but much more exclusive, of initiation into Hellenistic culture." Also see Vryonis, "The Peira…," p. 139: "This involved not only the acquisition of economic wealth but also–and this was very important–political power. The sentiment of nobility by birth was growing stronger and spreading throughout the provincial aristocracy of the empire. This phenomenon was somewhat parallel to the development of the dynastic concept during the period of the Macedonian dynasty."

[133] See Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, pp. 158-159; Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 63.

[134] Falkenhausen, "A Provincial Aristocracy…," pp. 218-219.

[135] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 152.

> called for, from their abundance they will often be able to devote some funds to the soldiers.[136]

Thus, one can mention two decisive factors of becoming a member of aristocratic class: requirement of good work and noble birth. The Byzantine aristocracy was open to the individuals from the outside; it was not a kind of a caste system until the late eleventh century. Under the Komnenoi, social mobility did not disappear, but it was not in its previous state either. In the twelfth-century Byzantium, people from humble origins could still have the chance to rise to the upper aristocracy/high positions.[137] However, the Komnenian aristocracy had a closed structure, though never fully an exclusive one. In general, the Byzantine aristocratic groups remained open to newcomers in the whole late period.

There were basically three channels for the individuals seeking to rise up to the high positions: army, intelligentsia and the fiscal administration. Moreover, individuals were even able to have access to the high aristocracy, which actually necessitated to be experienced in the army and the imperial bureaucracy.[138] The boundary between the aristocracy and the low ranks in society did not present a clear separation; it was more of an ambiguous/vague nature.[139] This is a suggestive argument to our point here.

High officials did not have to be from the aristocratic families. Gregory Kamateros represents a characteristic instance for that, he having reached the utmost office of the government (*logothetes ton sekreton*) in 1094 without possessing a

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[136] Leo VI, *The Taktika of Leo VI*, trans. by George T. Dennis, (Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2010), Constitution 4, 3, pp. 47-49.

[137] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. x. "It is noteworthy that Niketas speaks with a certain disdain of such persons in his history; he is particularly contemptuous of the masses. His special concern with noble birth and the whole Byzantine scale of offices betrays a man who can claim nobility but, because he does not belong to the great families himself, is sparing in mentioning the fact." Ibid.

[138] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy…*, p. 9.

[139] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries…," p. 5.

noble background. Before in his career, he worked as a tax collector in the provinces. There, he accumulated a great wealth via the opportunities that his office provided him.[140] Niketas Choniates presents another case of humble origin had the access to the upper level of imperial government: John Axouch. That Turk became John II's playmate after he has been taken as captive and presented to Alexios I Komnenos. Niketas Choniates, however, attributes him a noble character although John Axouch lacked a distinguished family background.[141]

Moreover, the mobility existed in administrative appointments, too, this time on the other way round: from the center to the provincial, from the highest echelons of Constantinople to a mundane position in the province. A man of lower background was able to follow the steps to achieve a brilliant career in the government or in the army, in that way; he could receive the rank of the *stratiotes*. It is certainly an indicator of social mobility that the aristocracy of provincial cities may have included individuals from non-noble background, such as Manuel Tagaris (governor of Philadelphia, ca. 1309-1327).[142] An official of humble origin can reach high up to the levels of administration; he could even occupy the office of *megas stratopedarches*.[143] A certain Constantine Angelos, who comes from Philadelphia but not a noble family, was appointed to the commandership of the navy by Manuel I

[140] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium,* p. 7. Kamateros was also linked with the imperial family through marriage. The Kamateros family, later, in the twelfth century, served in highest positions in imperial government. See Alexander Kazhdan, "Kamateros," *ODB*, vol. 2, p. 1098. Basil Kamateros reached up higher ranks, after whose death the family vanished from the sources. Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile…*, pp. 70-71. The Kamateros family existed from the ninth century on, and its members occupied judicial and fiscal offices between the ninth and twelfth centuries. No Kamateroi functioned administrative role thereafter. Kazhdan, "Kamateros," p. 1098.

[141] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium,* pp. 7-8. We see later in Choniates' text that he also served as the grand domestic. Ibid., p. 24. For more on John Axouch, see Ibid., p. 24, #41; p. 46, #77.

[142] The Tagaris family was influential especially during the fourteenth century. See, Eric Trapp, "Tagaris," *ODB*, vol. 3, p. 2006.

[143] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy…*, p. 45.

Komnenos.[144] People of low birth could also be prominent commanders (*strategoi*) even if they did not have a glorious ancestral background. Niketas Choniates mentions a humble man coming to an imperial office. He was Constantine Angelos, a Philadelphian appointed as a commander in 1154.[145]

Social mobility existed also in the Nicaean Empire, where some aristocratic families, which fled from Constantinople, could climb up the hierarchical ladder by having been appointed to imperial services. It brought remarkable prosperity and thus enhanced family interests. The Kontostephanoi and the Tornikioi, seizing the opportunity, were some of those families who reversed their destiny.[146] Kyritses presents a striking example, a member of the Tzamplakon family in John III Vatatzes' reign and his offspring occupied some offices:

> [He] becomes *domestikos ton scholon* (not a military office, but one that permits the creation of an important fortune since it pertains to the fiscal administration). His children obviously exploited the father's influence and affluence and followed military careers at the middle level: One son became *megas hetaireiarches* and another (or perhaps a grandson) ended up as *megas papias* (with the monastic name Antonios). One of the two, or a brother, held the office of *tatas tes aules* in Andronikos II's shadow court in 1272. [147]

The Tzamplakon family appeared in the mid-thirteenth century context, the members of which was holding important titles and estates around Serres and Thessalonike granted by the emperors. A third generation followed a similar line of career and two

[144] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium,* p. 55.

[145] Ibid., p. 55, #95.

[146] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile…*, p. 62. The Tornikes family's prosperity obviously increased after Demetrios Tornikes' appointment as Theodore I Laskaris' chief minister late in his reign. See Gudrun Schmalzbauer, "Die Tornikioi in der Palaiologenzeit," *JÖB* 18 (1969), pp. 115-135.

[147] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, pp. 45-46 citing G. I. Theocharides, "Οἱ Τζααμπλάκωωνες. Συμβολὴ εἰς τὴν Μακεδονικὴν προσωπογραφίαν τοῦ ΙΔ΄ αἰῶνος", *Makedonika* 5 (1961-1963), 125-183. Highest aristocrats of humbler background ("not noble") continued to exist in Palaiologan period. For that, see ibid., pp. 41-42.

family members reached the top offices, *megas doux* and *megas stratopedarches*.[148] Alexios Tzamplakon, flourished in late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, held the governorship of Serres. The family established familial relations with distinguished aristocratic families of Byzantium (e.g. the Palaiologoi, the Tornikioi, and the Kaballarioi) in the fourteenth century.[149]

The members of the civilian and the military aristocracy were sometimes changing positions/occupations (i.e. from military to civilian or the other way round), which is named as "metamorphic families" by A. Kazhdan.[150] Some of the military aristocrats became engaged in civilian sphere of society and joined the civilian cadre of the aristocracy in the mid-eleventh century;[151] or they supported each other in times of an alliance against the Byzantine government.[152] These examples confirm that horizontal mobility also existed in Byzantine aristocracy.

On the other hand, during the middle of the eleventh century, some civil officers held both civilian and military positions together. People devoid of any special capacity or advancement in a usual line of progress in administrative hierarchy levels were extensively appointed to positions beside their offices that were already held. Civil and military factions of aristocracy were not all the time distinguishable, they were often intermingled.[153] The provincial aristocrat could be a

[148] Ibid.

[149] Alexander Kazhdan, "Tzamblakon," *ODB*, vol. 3, p. 2135.

[150] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries…," p. 17. For more information, see Kazhdan and Ronchey, *L'aristocrazia bizantina…*, pp. 269-277.

[151] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries…," p. 23.

[152] Ibid., pp. 16-17.

[153] John Haldon, *The State and the Tributary Mode of Production* (London and New York: Verso, 1993), p. 198.

holder of a land and an office at the same time. These economic and social positions made him "a compact front" for the state.[154]

For the Byzantine aristocracy's connection to certain areas, three factors were important: Geographical connections (local ties), which is the most significant, professional activity and kinship. Some individuals/families flourished in some particular regions of the Empire around their homelands. Kyritses attempted to indicate that "the higher stratum of the aristocracy expanded its connections to several geographical locations." Their nominal centers were neither the provincial areas nor the Byzantine capital.[155] For my view, they were the groups who once grew their fame/wealth in the capital and extended their properties towards the countryside/provinces. For most cases, they were not the natives of the areas that they held estates in. There lived families having provincial roots, but never attained a high place in higher aristocracy. An example from Thessalonica clearly illustrates the point that the Kabasilas family could not place itself within upper strata of society, though remained as middle class member.[156] Some were not locals, but were appointed to the periphery as state officials.

Some groups bearing the title *oikeios* are found in rural society. A certain Machrames from Skamandros region seems to have been an *archon*, probably carrying that title in 1232. Imperial appointment may have given an individual the epithet of *oikeios*. Besides being a sign of prestige, this means an elevation to the aristocratic class in local sense unless no considerable high aristocrats were around.[157]

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[154] Ostrogorsky, "Observations…" p. 7.

[155] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 3.

[156] Ibid., p. 18.

[157] That seems to have changed in the prominent Palaiologan urban centers in European territories, where handful super-aristocrats dominated almost every aspects of life. Ibid., p. 20; also look at ibid.,

Byzantine countryside certainly sheltered the Westerners, among whom there were Greco-Latin families fully integrated into Byzantine society such as Rogerios, Raoul, and Petraliphas.[158] The Latin families could enter into a symbiotic relationship with the Byzantine society or be integrated into the Hellenic culture through several ways.[159] Participating into the Byzantine army as soldiers stands out as one of them that such soldiers are named *Phrangopoloi* in Greek sources. That group must have been Hellenized before the end of the twelfth century since a certain John Phrangopoulos was a teacher (*grammatikos*) in the patriarchal school of Constantinople prior to the turn of the century and another one as holding the same position at the Theodore II Laskaris' court.[160] As it can be anticipated, Latin-origin individuals reached prominent offices in the army just like in the fields of education. Manuel Kontophre, for instance, was commanding the triremes in John III's navy around 1240.[161] All of the Latin families who entered a relationship of symbiosis or integration with Greek families could not preserve their names except for the Raoul family.[162]

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p. 20, fn. 55 referring to MM, IV, pp. 189-190. For the explanation of the term *oikeioi* and other terms corresponding Western feudal terminology, see Ostrogorsky, "Observations…," pp. 12-13.

[158] See Nicol, "Symbiosis and Integration...," pp. 113-135.

[159] This last situation necessitated three fulfillments: the adoption of Greek, the adoption of Orthodox Christianity and intermarriage. Ibid., p. 119.

[160] Ibid., pp. 113-115; see also Robert Browning, "The Patriarchal School at Constantinople in the Twelfth Century," *B* 33 (1963), p. 22.

[161] George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 203 and p. 215. He served as *pansebastos sebastos* and *doux* consecutively in 1237 and 1240 in the Thrakesion theme. See ibid., p. 206, fn. 17 and Hélène Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne entre les deux occupations turques (1081-1317) particulièrement au XIIIe siècle," in *Travaux et mémoires du Centre de Recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de byzantines*, 1, (Paris, 1965), [Reprinted in eadem, *Byzance: les pays et les territories* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1976), No. IV], pp. 143-144.

[162] Nicol, "Symbiosis and Integration...," p. 135.

Residential Areas of the Provincial Aristocrats

Where did the local aristocrats live? Did they live in their fortresses? Was there any connection between the residence of provincial aristocracy and the land where their estates were situated? These questions need responses in order to comprehend physical presence of the provincial aristocracy, and thus, their social positions. The common practice, however, actually varied depending on the ranks of local aristocrats among some other factors such as familial links, proximity to the center, security, etc.

Concerning the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, provincial aristocrats were not living in their fortresses. They dwelt generally in the cities or towns close to their estates such as Thebes and Athens in Europe, but rarely on their estates in the countryside, only occasionally went to their lands –or *proasteia*– usually in order to collect taxes.[163] In both cases, they lived in some distance from their estates.[164] Later in the twelfth century, a *chrysobull* of Alexios III serves us a similar case about the location and estates of the landlords. The situation was quite different for high aristocrats of the capital. Most of the great landowning families controlled their territories in Asia Minor not from their country estates, but from Constantinople.[165]

The power of the provincial aristocrats lied on local administrative positions and large estates in the provinces. The owner of the lands did not necessarily reside

[163] See Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," pp. 253-284 and Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy (8th-13th c.)," p. 37.

[164] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*, p. 57 and p. 60. On the other hand, the *pronoia*-holder soldier lived in the *kastron*. His priority was to provide the condition that made his men 'productive' and to maintain security in the locale he resided. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 176.

[165] Ibid., p. 163. Paul Magdalino and Michael Angold present good deal of information on aristocratic residences in Constantinople. See Angold, "Archons and Dynasts…," pp. 236-253 and Magdalino, "The Byzantine Aristocratic *Oikos*," pp. 92-111.

in the region where his lands were located. There was a network between cities of each province. That network enabled the local aristocrats of different cities to create ties of interest.[166] However, proximity to landed estates enabled freer and more suitable area of movement that the Constantinopolitan aristocrats were lacking. This actually cleared the way for the provincial aristocrats' investments in local trade and created a challenging competition against rich Constantinopolitan aristocrats. Their local power, therefore, may have been beyond their provinces. For example, the family of Vatatzes and the one of Glabas[167] were prompted to go over to the Bulgarians, while their power base was actually in other parts of the Empire. Aristocratic lands provided great power for the Byzantine aristocracy despite the fact that they were exposed to imperial intervention, and did not become as big as Western baronial lands.[168]

The residential areas of provincial aristocrats did not change much in the thirteenth century, they showed diversity. Byzantine landholding class, now, had their residences in towns or in cities. They generally preferred to reside in closer places to their estates. However, contrary cases did also occur. In 1216, a member of the Gabalas family[169] had an estate far from the city center of Ephesos at Phygella. Since the property was not close to his residence, he had some problems collecting the receipts. He found difficulty in logistics and in controlling the estate. Thus, he had to sell it and buy another one not far away from Ephesos. Although it seems to be a total ownership of territories in the countryside of Smyrna, there was certainly a

[166] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, p. 238.

[167] A Macedonian military aristocratic family, who fell out of favor under the Komnenian regime, remained as landowners in provinces, yet, in the thirteenth century we see them taking civil positions. Alexander Kazhdan, "Glabas," *ODB*, vol. 2, pp. 851-852.

[168] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Empire…*, p. 60.

[169] For more information on that family, see Alexander Kazhdan, "Gabalas," *ODB*, vol. 2, p. 811.

phenomenon of Nicaean aristocratic power putting down the prevailing local powers in some regions.[170]

Another example for the provincial aristocrats, who had also properties outside the cities, can be given from a later date. An inventory of aristocratic property from 1294 illustrates that a certain Goudeles Tyrannos, who was the *archon* of Nymphaion, possessed agricultural lands and estates in rural areas of the city, among which there were shops, houses that he collected quite amount of revenues from the annual rents of them.[171] The quality of evidences prevents us to end up with final words about those families' origins. Beside the provincial aristocracy, there were some higher groups of aristocrats who were influential in the provinces sometimes without residing in the periphery. High aristocrats may have lived close by to the Nicaean court at Nymphaion.[172]

Residing tendencies of the provincial aristocrats did not change much after 1261. Byzantine aristocrats perpetuated their lives mostly in cities. Similar to their former practice, a small part continued to spend some of the year on their estates, yet kept in contact with their urban dwellings. Late Byzantine cities functioned as

[170] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, p. 108.

[171] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, pp. 239-240. The movement of the capital in John Vatatzes's reign may have been caused by the presence of the local magnates of the Western Asia Minor, and emperor's intention for elimination of possible rising of especially the ones owned lands-properties around Smyrna region.

[172] For example, the *protosebastos* Manuel Laskaris (Theodore I's brother) probably lived in Proussa, although some parts of his lands and properties remained remote from his residence, around Miletos. Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 84, fn. 34: Iviron III 57, 85 and fn. 35: Pach.I.i, 113; Patmos I 14, 129; 27, 248. On the other hand, another group of high aristocrats, ecclesiastical aristocrats, were not able to reside in their sees in Asia Minor due to permanent insecurity of Anatolian territories; therefore, they had to live in Constantinople. Cheynet, "Official Power…," p. 138. This is an issue also taken into consideration extensively by Speros Vryonis, Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

centers of state and church administration as well as centers for economy. They remained significant in demand for -and consumption of- goods.[173]

Kyritses mentions the impossibility to attribute residing places of the high aristocracy in Asia Minor precisely, whereas he admits that it is not the same for the middle and low aristocrats.[174] As far as we are provided with the sources, the more the aristocrats had local links or belonged to middle or lower ranks of the provincial aristocracy, the more they tended to reside in provincial cities.

In short, some of these aristocrats dwelled in cities or in urban contexts or they were landowners and dwelling in villages while at least a part of them were both city dwellers and landowners in rural areas together.[175] On the other hand, due to the offices that they occupied, high aristocrats centered in Constantinople had been the actors in provincial cities' socio–political set up. They resided there and took part in provincial administration with some other local aristocratic families.[176]

Moreover, the institutions were able to be landowners in countryside. For instance, the Great Church in Constantinople had large estates in various parts of the Empire. The Lembos monastery close to Smyrna is one example to its country estates (*proasteia*).[177] Another example would be Myrelaion, which owned extensive estates close to Ephesos and Miletos.[178] Yet, it is evident at least for the period before Manuel's re-conquest of Asia Minor that the large domain units (*episkepseis*), which sometimes may have been composed of the town(s) and its surroundings, did not

[173] Klaus-Peter Matschke, "The Late Byzantine Urban Economy, Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries," in *EHB*, vol. 2, p. 464. For the major elements of late Byzantine urban economy, see in general ibid., pp. 463-495.

[174] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 139.

[175] Ibid., p. 80.

[176] Ibid., p. 10.

[177] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 164 referring to MM, IV, pp. 62-63.

[178] Ibid., p. 165.

abound in Asia Minor. In the early Komnenian era, as Magdalino once noted, "… Alexios and John would have been reluctant, on the one hand, to endow their relatives and religious foundations with unreliable sources of income, and, on the other hand, would have given priority to the settlement of soldiers in the reoccupied areas. In any case, the Pantokrator did acquire more property in Asia Minor after the *typikon* was drawn up–perhaps a reflection of the extent to which conditions improved subsequent to 1136."[179]

[179] Ibid., p. 166.

CHAPTER 3

POLITICAL BASIS OF POWER

Introduction

The course of history gave an opportunity to provincial notables. After a tighter control by the hands of the state under the early Komnenoi, during the second half of the twelfth century, they benefitted from a looser authority on behalf of their status in the provinces. The inevitable rise of the provincial aristocracy accelerated as the disintegration progressed. Therefore, the Angelid period marks the zenith for the provincial aristocracy's political basis of power. The political rise of the provincial aristocracy continued all the way into the Nicaean period until the reconsolidation of central power under Theodore I Laskaris. This chapter tries to set the ground for the political basis of provincial aristocratic power through a deep examination of the role of administrative offices held by individuals on that basis. Moreover, the reasons behind the disfavoring of some aristocratic families/individuals will be looked at to see how the state developed a stance against the aristocracy. The rising conflict between the ruling elite and the provincial aristocracy created a challenge which inclined the latter to self-defense. Consequently, local aristocratic resistances occurred in the way of rebellions. As the last point in this chapter, three of these rebellions from three different epochs and variant socio-political milieus will be examined in a comparative way.

The new dynasty (the Komnenian dynasty) sought its own interests lying in provincial imperial resources, which were not abundant so that they required continuity in state fiscal structure. This became primary issue which was pursued by the court and overrode provincial society's maintenance. When the central

administration's "apathetic and ignorant" attitude towards the provincial governance combined with the provincial aristocracy's local authority, provincial politics were shaped accordingly. The manipulation of state power emerged unavoidably in provincial affairs.[1] This brings about the issue of the means of provincial aristocratic power, which can be summarized as affinity to the imperial family (the high aristocracy of blood-kinship relationship with the emperor); and local power, acquired through other means. These two continued to be the leading factors throughout the Komnenian, Angelid and Laskarid periods. Since the first requires another focus of interest and remains beyond the limits of the present study, the "local power" will be incorporated in this chapter.

As already stated in the introduction, various parameters played a determinant role for the political power of the local aristocrats in Byzantium. Among them governmental position, bestowed on the local aristocracy in various areas, formed a crucial part. The Byzantine government could confer administrative duties on a provincial aristocrat. These were in three different ranges: civil-administrative, military, and ecclesiastical.[2] This chapter especially focuses on the first range by pointing out political connection and asks the following questions: How did the local aristocrats take part in provincial politics? What kinds of responsibilities were reserved for these aristocrats? How did these positions affect their social status, if they did?

The Komnenian era became a new stage for the aristocratic members of society. John Haldon points out the two factious character of the new dynasty in the

[1] Haldon, "Social Élites…," pp. 179-180.

[2] In this study, in general, civil-administrative and military aspects will be put into target. They are connected somehow with each other since both of these were state-oriented power bestowed on the aristocrats. However, Chapter 4 is partly different. It signifies personal wealth not just the one mostly gained in respect to the positions-offices held.

way that it seized the throne. On the one hand, the seizure of the throne was a gradual result of the rising opposition between the interests of the ruling elite and the aristocracy. And on the other hand, Alexios I Komnenos' clan favoritism made the Komnenos family so wealthy throughout the Empire.[3]

The prominence of family links in governing the state became the distinct nature of the Komnenian government. That was the major part of a systematic policy. Throughout almost a century (1081-1180) the provincial administrative cadre was almost exclusively composed of either relatives of the emperor or members of his household. The situation was valid for high administrative positions which were rarely filled with officials having local links. The Byzantine Empire managed its provincial politics through officials either appointed directly from among the high aristocracy of the capital or some from among distinguished members of powerful families in the provinces (*archontes*). What those magnates were charged within governmental organization were rather "high" works. Of course, there were many other lower administrative positions in the provinces. Occupying one of these offices would contribute to –with the general meaning of the word– one's 'power' and wealth consequently. The provincial aristocrats were usually chosen for those minor offices. It is predicable that the provincial appointments in governmental duties were quite 'hierarchical.' The more the aristocrat possessed fame and power, the more prominent tasks were given to him in provincial politics. 'Power' was acquired also by other means without possessing governmental appointments, such as the merchants, who accumulated wealth through trade. However, merchants remained beyond the limits of the 'provincial aristocracy' since they bore only financial power. The provincial aristocrats had to have economic power along with some sort of

[3] Ibid., pp. 184-185.

social-political power. It actually brought them opportunity to participate in provincial government.

By the eleventh century the provinces were more or less left with responsibilities and rights on their own affairs. The provincial aristocrats were integrated into the decision-making process on the issues concerning provincial politics. "The *archontes*", Paul Magdalino says, "became used to being looked up to by their inferiors as the spokesmen for local interests in the face of central government and its often oppressive demands."[4] State authority sometimes got strong as the state became more centralized. This was obvious in the Komnenian and Nicaean periods, with a relative absence or enigmatic situation in between (roughly last the two decades of the twelfth century) and first few years of the thirteenth century.

During the Komnenian and Nicaean periods, except for the loose control under the Angeloi, officials were appointed by the emperor (*dia logou*) and conferred with powers to conduct specific duties. In the provinces the individuals acquired authority in three different ways: the ones appointed from Constantinople by the emperor with certain duties, the locally powerful ones appointed by the emperor with duties, and finally the ones who appeared as challenger to the imperial authority and held regional authority without the emperor's consent, which usually resulted in rebellions.[5] This last group also contained the provincial aristocrats holding power without holding certain positions in any sort of administrative affairs. For the period before the Komnenoi, Kekaumenos gives examples of some aristocrats who were not assigned any office, yet possessed strong power over the local people. A particular power-holder named Noe was so influential over his townsmen that he drew them to

[4] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 152.

[5] Cheynet, "Official Power…," p. 141.

organize a fair held with the Arabs outside of the city of Demetrias, in the east of central Greece.[6] Therefore, there were, on the one hand, the officials appointed from the center by the emperor; and on the other hand, the officials who had local power and whose authority were limited but recognized by the emperor. The office-holders in such cases were especially chosen from the border areas of the Byzantine Empire, where the state needed locally strong actors and the prevalent power was obviously not the Byzantine state.[7]

A particular letter of Theophylaktos of Ohrid has revealed that John Attaleiates, who was the *protonotarios* of the *doux* of Attaleia and to whom the letter was written, was at his office at the end of the eleventh century.[8] It shows how the provincial governmental structure of Byzantium was firmly reestablished remarkably shortly after the Battle of Mantzikert (1071). The system hardly suffered from problems; on the contrary it worked well indeed after the reforms of Alexios I Komnenos. However, in the absence of the central authority in the later part of the twelfth century, different powers acquired authority at the local level. Sometimes there is the evidence that the metropolitan administrative members (e.g. Michael Choniates) even took initiatives to defend the cities (example of Michael Choniates

[6] Ibid., pp. 140-141 citing G. G. Litavrin, *Sovety i rasskazy Kekavmena (Cecaumeni consilia et narrationes)*, Moscow, 1972, pp. 184-186.

[7] Moreover, political and military powers (provincial office-holders, provincial military aristocracy, etc.) sometimes found gaps in the government and made use of them in favor of their independence. On the other hand, ecclesiastical authority had a more dependent character regarding its relation with the state. Beside religious duty, members of the ecclesiastical groups were also assigned to hold some kind of authority in provinces, and their responsibilities were given to them indirectly by the emperor– through the church. Provincial ecclesiastical aristocracy will not be discussed in this thesis. The bishops and ecclesiastical aristocracy were influential in provincial administration. Angold's brief statement would suffice for an overall view on the subject: "Alongside the *archontes*, the bishop and the officers of his cathedral played an important part in local administration. The notarial organization was annexed by the Episcopal administration and the Episcopal archives served as a local registry of deeds and legal documents." Angold, "Administration of the Empire of Nicaea," p. 135.

[8] Margaret Mullett, "1098 and All That: Theophylact, Bishop of Semnea and the Alexian Reconquest of Anatolia," *Peritia* 10 (1996), pp. 248-249. [Republished in eadem, *Letters, Literacy and Literature in Byzantium* (Aldershot: Variorum, 2007), Article V.]

defending the city of Athens during the siege).[9] This may show how the provincial aristocrats established a powerful ground in provinces. However, the state seemed to have had drawbacks to include local aristocrats into privileged title-holding group. The state may not have relied on the local aristocrats; its tendency was towards the individuals who had links with the state through civil service. Yet, the last quarter of the twelfth century witnessed an expansion of the *provincial sebastos* as a dignity.[10]

During the Angelid era, state's military power in Greece had totally gone; this made the advancement and settlement of the Crusaders easier.[11] Also, there had been local 'support' providing Latin troops more suitable ground to go further in Byzantine Greece. Some individuals competing for authority in provincial government proliferated in that period. Leon Sgouros, Leon Chamaretos, Manuel Kammytzes were some local landowners who were opposed to central authority and its official administrators.[12] Some of these local aristocrats as well as others such as Chalkoutzes and Doxapatres, and some fortified cities such as Acrocorinth and Larissa, although they had the means to withstand the Latin pressure, preferred the Latin rule instead of the Byzantine.[13]

The relationship between the capital and the provinces deteriorated in the eleventh and twelfth centuries since the former was able neither to meet even the chief needs of the local inhabitants nor to provide efficient military support. "Constantinople was no longer seen as the source of concerned paternalistic government;" Herrin notes, "the benefits of living under Byzantine rule as 'Rômaioi,' once an index of civilization, had gone. The capital had developed a

[9] Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," pp. 258 and 266.

[10] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th–12th Centuries…," p. 22.

[11] Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," pp. 269-270 and 277-278.

[12] Ibid., p. 283.

[13] Ibid., p. 270, fn. 81.

parasitic relationship with the provinces."[14] That "parasitic" relationship became one of the parameters on the limits of the provincial aristocrats' social-political power. Thus, the provincial aristocrats became no longer controlled by the state at the end of the twelfth century, but rather self-sufficient and self-governing political actors by the last two decades of the twelfth century.

In the post-1204 period, the provincial administrative system almost remained the same as it was in the twelfth century whereas the character of administrative offices changed in the Nicaean household government. Cities and landowners became the powerful authorities in provincial administration. This change, fundamentally depended on the releasing of immunities to different segments of the society, has for some time been in a process begun long before 1204. According to Angold:

> The circumstances that followed the fall of Constantinople allowed these to crystallize into a different kind of system of government. The bureaucracy had been the bearers of the theory and practice of Byzantium as a state. After 1204 the theory may have survived, but the practice did not. It is thenceforward impossible to talk about Byzantine Empire as a state. This was the major change.[15]

All in all, the Nicaean Empire was a restructuring of the Byzantine government.[16] Provincial administration had already lost its order and gone from bad to worse before the capture of Constantinople by the Latins, whereas Theodore I Laskaris accomplished to maintain a restoration of the theme system (military and civil administration of the themes), which continued to be the main organ of the province. In order to maintain imperial order in provinces, Theodore I Laskaris followed a

[14] Ibid., p. 282.

[15] Angold, "Administration of the Empire of Nicaea," pp. 136-137.

[16] Ibid., p. 137.

household government model of the Komnenoi.[17] He reserved the key positions in the provinces for his relatives and close family. The thematic organization continued to be the basic element of provincial administrative mechanism. As a civil-administrative and judicial official, the *doux* was the utmost authority in the province. He was always appointed from among either the emperor's relatives or his *oikeioi*.[18] On the other hand, some high administrative posts were reachable to the *archontes*. The power of the *archontes* remained to be significant. The *archontes* maintained a position prevalent in cities, played a major role in urban affairs. They sometimes occupied the positions, which often required an imperial consent and were traditionally filled by imperial appointments under the Komnenoi, such as *prokathemenos* and *kastrophylax* in the provincial cities.[19]

Considering Asia Minor of the thirteenth century, lower administration affairs of the provinces were exercised by the local individuals, who were appointed among the less prominent aristocrats of those regions. Due to the constant Turkish danger upon the territories of Asia Minor, higher aristocrats tended to possess lands and establish their wealth in European provinces. Therefore, they probably chose to be the administrators of these provinces.[20] That was an obvious shift of interests evident in higher aristocratic families. A man of the Constantinopolitan aristocracy (imperial inkstand keeper), John Kamateros, at a later stage in his career, was appointed to a

[17] Theodore I Laskaris, who was the husband of the daughter of Alexios III Angelos and had already been despot, was declared emperor in 1205 by an assembly in Nicaea consisting of more likely Constantinopolitan aristocrats and prominent men among the ecclesiastical aristocracy. He was crowned by the newly elected patriarch, Michael Autoreianos. George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 119 and Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 280. The role of notables in proclaiming someone an emperor had been a prominent factor in dynasty shifting processes. But it seems rather the support of the high aristocracy, almost nothing considerable from the provincial aristocrats.

[18] Angold, "Administration of the Empire of Nicaea," pp. 131-132. Yet, the terms of service differed. "At least, in the case of the theme of Thracesion, we know that not only was the duke appointed for a limited term, perhaps as short as a year." Ibid., p. 132.

[19] Ibid., p. 135. For Palaiologan counterparts see Maksimović, *The Byzantine Provincial Administration under the Palaiologoi*, pp. 168-177.

[20] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 81.

provincial/ecclesiastical office (archbishop of Bulgaria). This instance bears significance since it indicates the shift in career as well as a possibility that an aristocrat, once holding positions at the court, could be entrusted with a provincial duty.[21]

Several names from different ranks of the society appeared to be the *doukes* or the governors of cities/themes in Asia Minor from the 1250s on. The names like Kalothetos, Krybitziotes, Syropoulos, Autoreianos, Broullas, Kalampakes, Selagites have been attested. These are the names which are not familiar to us beforehand.[22] Some families maintained their households in particular regions for a long time. According to Kyritses, a particular Kontophre has been attested in Mesothinia holding the governor office in 1329. It is obviously a sign of families continued their existence in a particular region that this office–holder's family might have existed in the same region also in the first half of the thirteenth century.[23] Examples are vast on this issue. As Kyritses suggests, some family names such as Monomachos and Gabalas did exist in Smyrna region for the first half of the fourteenth century, which may be interpreted as the continuation of different groups from the same family or the result of the Turkish incursions pushing those to the Byzantine–held lands.[24]

The aristocrats fulfilling their duties in the military or administrative system of the Empire might have chosen to settle on the conquered territories with their families. That, on the one hand, would make them the new 'aristocrats' of the new territories; and on the other hand, would make us think that they continued to be the possessors of their old territories in their homelands, or some other places. Since the

[21] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 152, #274.

[22] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 146ff; Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 81.

[23] Ibid., pp. 81-82.

[24] Ibid., pp. 83-84.

Nicaean emperors were usually on campaign in the West between the 1240s and 1261, the high aristocrats, accompanying the emperors with military tasks, stayed at the newly-held areas even after the emperors returned to Asia Minor. That may have been interpreted as they were the new settlers, and therefore, became new aristocrats of the newly-gained territories.[25]

The Provincial Aristocracy and Administrative Positions

Byzantine honorific titles should not be confused with administrative posts, although they are sometimes juxtaposed. The Komnenian emperors did not see any inconvenience in front of the inflation of titles extensively distributed no matter the receiver was lack of administrative function or experience at all. Title-giving system obviously lost its previous form during their reigns. This, of course, has to be understood with its links to Komnenian priorities and political understanding. Their aim was to reinforce the Komnenian power through the prominent men to whom these titles were bestowed, thus they attributed an instrumental role to this system.

The hierarchical order of high positions of the Byzantine court differed from one period to the other. During the Komnenian period the court titles, as already pointed out, inflated remarkably, depending on kin proximity to the emperor. Old titles were changed with the new ones and all were given to individuals accordingly. Some of the new titles had sounding names: *Sebastokrator*, *protosebastos*, *sebastos*, and *despotes*. The given order represents also the real hierarchical order during the Komnenian period. It changed slightly in the following century. The new order became respectively *despotes*, *sebastokrator*, *megas domestikos*, *protovestiarios* in

[25] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 84.

the 1220s.[26] This order of ranks among high aristocratic groups was preserved throughout the thirteenth century.

The higher aristocracy, thanks to the testimony of Pachymeres, can be grouped into senators, imperial family members or blood relatives of the emperor, *archontes*, military aristocrats and chief magistrates during the Nicaean era.[27] Hierarchical order did not change much for the upper ranks during the late Nicaean Empire, and even in circa 1350.[28]

However, administrative posts meant more than honorific titles, since they enabled the holders to establish some sort of authority over the inhabitants of settlements. Byzantine sources are abundant in the sense that they reflect some light on administrative ranks within the state organization. This was actually evident for the earlier periods.[29] Historians are provided with a few similar sources for the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Yet, some of them represent an apparent difference about the ranks among the aristocracy. The authors distinguish men of the moderate aristocratic groups from the ones belonging to the higher aristocracy as it can be observed in Akropolites' *History*. He identified the 'distinguished' aristocrats from the rest: "…those who were notable and known were Spartenos and Kampanos, Iatropoulos[30] and Koutzoulatos, while the distinguished ones were Michael Laskaris

[26] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 69, and for a table on that order see p. 238; Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile...*, p. 64.

[27] Ibid., pp. 67-68.

[28] Ibid., p. 64. Angold presents top hierarchical positions in the Byzantine court in three different periods with reference to Akropolites, Pachymeres and Pseudo-Kodinos.

[29] For example, the *Kletorologion* of Philotheos, compiled in the year 899 A. D. presents high administrative posts as well as various highest dignities. As J. B. Bury points: "We may say that for the institutional history of the ninth and tenth centuries it holds the same position, in relative importance, which the Notitia Dignitatum occupies for the fourth and fifth." Idem, *The Imperial Administrative System in the Ninth Century…,* p. 9.

[30] Iatropoulos was the *prokathemenos* of Philadelphia. See George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 239, n. 8.

and Tzyrithon, whom the emperor John honored as *megas chartoularios*."[31] These men did not flourish suddenly. All of them belonged to the old aristocratic families whose status continued through generations.[32]

Although administrative posts seemed to be given as a result of imperial backings, these posts perpetuated functional roles of the holders. The provincial office-holders retained regional authority by means of prestige and capacity that their offices provided them. Provincial administration consisted of several offices lined up hierarchically, whose holders were necessarily appointed by two ways. They were either appointed by the central government, or were the local individuals already possessing a local power base and again were appointed by the emperor or incorporated into the system of provincial government as a result of personal achievements.

If an overall picture of Byzantine administrative offices is to be understood, initially a separation should be made. There were central and provincial offices. Central offices were related with either courtly duties or top key positions important in state's political, financial, military, and ecclesiastical administrative system. They were all based on the capital; therefore, their holders represented the Constantinopolitan aristocracy. Beside the capital, on the other hand, an immense system of government was functioning in the provinces via a variety of offices. Although provincial administration was theoretically based on the central government at Constantinople and had to fulfill the instructions directed by the central administration, some office holders established considerable power base (social and economic) and had separatist tendencies at an extreme case. For this last one especially, the state needed to put certain measures. Civic authorities (e.g.

[31] Ibid., p. 236, #45.

[32] Ibid., p. 218, #40, n. 10.

governors) were appointed for at most three years.[33] That policy had functional role on behalf of the state that the office holders were depriving of sufficient time to establish their own power in an area. Yet, it did not always work efficiently.

The provincial offices varied in Byzantine Asia Minor. There were civil, financial, military, and ecclesiastical administrative units. Administrative duties abounded in the provinces. As it was for court offices, provincial high offices were likewise reserved for the 'high' aristocracy, except for some local aristocrats. The system of the Komnenoi, "a super-family, centered in Constantinople," was well established.[34] The administrative system reflected more of a simple structure in the Nicaean Empire than the case beforehand. During the Nicaean era, the system was basically composed of the emperor and the *oikeioi* who were given certain privileges since they were members of imperial household (*oikos*).[35] Therefore, the household government seems to have been more consolidated during the Nicaean Empire. Theodore I Laskaris can serve a proper example that he handed key posts over to his immediate family members. His *sebastoi* received crucial military commands.[36] Civil–administrative offices played the most significant roles in provincial government although the hierarchical order did not stay unchanged in the course of the time.

The Nicaean emperors had to credit provincial aristocrats as the re-conquest was in progress. The cost of regaining the lost territories in Europe became consenting the authority of provincial power-holders on those territories. This

[33] Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," pp. 258-259. The ecclesiastical authorities, on the other hand, held a lifelong service, which actually helped to establish close–and especially permanent-uninterrupted–relationship with the inhabitants. Ibid.

[34] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy…*, p. 76.

[35] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, pp. 151-181.

[36] Ibid., pp. 61-62 and p. 240.

situation obviously contributed to a new group of *archontes* in European cities.[37] At the final stage, however, the Nicaean emperors' achievement can be read as a part of their provincial reforms.

In each province, members/households of the court were extensively placed for administrative officials. Beside these, the aristocrats without having courtly ties were also selected for some provincial positions. Local power derived its ground from one's individual career, familial links or local power base, or combination of these aspects. The instances chosen to illustrate that will be expressing these three points in the following pages.

Ahrweiler wrote a monumental article providing a detailed survey of the administration and administrative officials in the Smyrna region.[38] She also appended a list of effective families raised in the region particularly for the thirteenth century. That list illuminates the importance of the region as it contained a remarkably high number of aristocratic families. Thirty-six families demonstrate the fact fairly enough.[39] In the following part of this chapter the reader will find data mainly but not merely depended on Miklosich and Müller's and Ahrweiler's studies.[40] The accounts of Anna Komnene, John Kinnamos, Niketas Choniates, and George Akropolites are also among the reference sources. On the provincial administration issue, there has been scarcity in modern studies, especially expressing every part of Byzantium in particular periods because of the lack of Byzantine sources. Unfortunately, modern historians are informed about very little area for the Nicaean Asia Minor. For

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[37] Ibid., p. 241.

[38] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 1-204. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Kazhdan's work revealed 161 families which formed the 'elites' of the Empire. Filip Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium: The Empire of Constantinople (1204-1228)*, (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 32-33 referring to Kazhdan and Ronchey, *L'aristocrazia bizantina…*, pp. 248-255.

[39] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 167-178.

[40] The useful ones for Miklosich and Müller's study are the volumes IV and VI.

Smyrna, in particular, we are provided evidences to reconstruct provincial administration in the area, and almost all come from the cartulary of the Monastery at Lembos (Lembiotissa) situated between Smyrna and Nymphaion.[41] Therefore, our conclusion will inevitably be tentative in the silence of other areas for the Empire in exile. On the other hand, we have been provided handful of data speaking about regions other than Smyrna. For the theme of Mylasa and Melanoudion, and Neokastra, there are a few sources on provincial administration, but still they reveal some officials' names.[42]

Civil Administration

The Byzantine state accomplished civil administration of its provinces through distinctive governing system. From the seventh century onward the Byzantine Empire was divided into several –mainly military– administrative units which were called *themata* (themes).[43] A thorough reorganization of the theme system had begun with the Komnenian government as the feudal structure became apparent in Byzantine society. It was somewhat interrupted during the Angeloi, when the themes had simply become small provinces.[44] Nevertheless, it did not totally collapse. The theme system was certainly upheld by the Nicaean emperors that the themes maintained their place in administration.

At the time of the most extensive limits of Byzantine power in Asia Minor, there were several themes. Opsikion, Optimatoi, Boukellarion, Paphlagonia,

[41] Many of them were compiled in MM.

[42] The *stratopedarches* and *paradotes* of Maiander was Stephanos in 1247. MM, VI, p. 190. For Kalotheos, the *doux* of Melanoudion, see MM, IV, pp. 153-154, 208-210 and MM, VI, pp. 201-202.

[43] The Greek singular of the word is 'θέμα.'

[44] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, p. 248.

Armeniakon, Chaldia, Cappadocia, Anatolikon, Seleukeia, Kibyrrhaiotai, and Thrakesion were the themes of Alexios I's Empire. The number of the themes was apparently high compared to the seventh-eighth centuries. The number and sizes of the themes later varied depending on Byzantine retreat from Asia Minor and formations of new themes in time as the circumstances necessitated. When the thirteenth century came, the number of the themes had already decreased seriously.

The civil administration of the themes represented the central authority and had to function within the borders of imperial politics. However, the situation differed in frontier areas. In the later years of the twelfth century, frontier regions reflected some sort of autonomous administration. The *stratopedarches* of Philadelphia and Maeander established autonomy over these districts at the end of the twelfth century. The *stratopedarches* of Philadelphia (1235) and Maeander (1247) still existed in later part of the Nicaean rule, yet not as separate administrative units. These districts were part of the theme of Thrakesion.[45]

The documents of the Lembos Monastery bear witness that the provincial administration began to be reorganized under John II Komnenos' reign (1118-1143). In his reign, Byzantine provinces transformed into strong defensive units, or in other words, there was a huge fortress-construction efforts throughout the territories regained from the Turks. The period, as Ahrweiler notes, also signifies that the military administrators were gaining back civil responsibilities. The changes in the territorial extensions of administrative units marked another aspect of this transformation. The reign of John II Komnenos testified to the division of the Thrakesion and Kibyrrhaiotai themes. While Thrakesion's reorganization falls a little after 1133, Mylasa and Melanoudion including the cities of Miletos and Mylasa in

[45] Ibid. There is the argument that Philadelphia was a separate theme by the end of that century.

the south, partly out of the 'old' Kibyrrhaiotai theme, organized a little before 1143.[46]

In the twelfth century a comprehensive reform took place in the provincial government. It covered restructure of the administrative units and their capacity in the provinces, and was completed by Manuel I Komnenos.[47] Another need for restoration of provincial administration appeared in Theodore I Laskaris' reign when he was reordering government in exile, where it was suffering a lot from the provincial rebellions and absence of state's authority. This last reform in theme system can be realized as early as 1207 when Smyrna was attested with an administrative official.[48] The capital of the Thrakesion theme continued to be Smyrna during the period of Manuel I Komnenos.[49] Over the years changes concerning Thrakesion's borders would not have been in large scale. In the thirteenth century, the theme was comprised of Smyrna, Nymphaion, Ephesos, Philadelphia and Sardis as major centers.[50]

On the other hand, new themes appeared as parts of the alluded transformation. The theme of Neokastra included three significant cities (Adramyttion, Pergamon, Chliara) and surrounding mountainous lands extending

[46] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 124-127. The extension of the theme of Mylasa and Melanoudion is partly explained in the document concerning St. Paul Monastery on the mount Latros: MM, IV, pp. 290-295. See also, Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 129-130.

[47] The whole issue was well treated by Ahrweiler's various studies: Hélène Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, "Recherches sur l'administration de l'empire byzantin aux IXe-XIe siècles," *Bulletin de Correspondance hellénique* 84 (1960), pp. 62-65; Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 123-130.

[48] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, pp. 239-240 referring to MM, IV, pp. 217-218 and F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches* (Munich/Berlin, 1924-1965), 5 vols, p. 1676.

[49] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," p. 129.

[50] Ibid., p. 137.

towards the southeastern side of Adramyttion.[51] Neokastra was created by Manuel I Komnenos on the north of Smyrna and northeast of Magnesia ad Spylum due to the fact that the Turks were threatening the countryside nearby. His precautions, which were basically the construction of fortresses, are mentioned by Niketas Choniates. The historian talks about a governor appointed from the capital and thus reordered the flow of revenues from the region to Constantinople.[52] On the other hand, there was no complete integrity with the Neokastra theme. Adramyttion may probably have been a separate theme for a short period at the turn of the thirteenth century (ca. 1198-1203).[53]

The theme of Thrakesion had been one of the most important and the long-lasting administrative units of Byzantium since the eighth century.[54] Its offices were always appealing because the holders had had crucial roles not only in the administration of the theme but they could also participate in state politics of Constantinople. Before the Komnenian era the limits of the Thrakesion theme as an administrative unit, though they were not exact in every period, extended mainly from the shores of the Aegean Sea to the cities like Sardis and Philadelphia in the east, and from Pergamon and Adrammyttion in the north until the areas including Ephesos, Priene and Miletos in the southern part. The seizure of Western Asia Minor by the Turks had disrupted the Byzantine rule between 1081 and 1093-1094 until Alexios I Komnenos re-conquered Western Asia Minor including Tzachas' territories

[51] On the territorial borders of the theme, see Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 133-137.

[52] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 85. For the fortresses built during Manuel I's reign, see Hélène Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, "Les fortresses construites en Asie Mineure face a l'invasion Seldjoucide," in *Akten des XI. Internationalen Kongresses* (Munich: n. p., 1960), reprinted in eadem, *Etudes sur les structures administrative of socials de Byzance* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1971), no. XVII, pp. 182-189.

[53] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 133-134.

[54] Ibid., p. 123.

around Smyrna, and the city and surrounding of Ephesos where Tangripermes and Marakes were ruling over.[55] A new organization was needed as an adaptation to new conditions. Thrakesion, then on, was restructured as a micro-Asiatic theme and restricted to a bit more than Smyrna and its larger hinterland. This was, as already alluded, very much related with existing Turkish pressure on the frontiers and seems to be applied on the purpose of efficient governing of the provinces.[56]

To begin with civil offices, some offices coexisted and sometimes replaced one another changing from time to time and place to place. Therefore, the hierarchical order of provincial offices did not stay stagnant. The western part of Asia Minor under Alexios I's rule contained several office-holders whose duties were similar to each other: *doux*, *katepano*, and *strategos*. All of these titles were military titles coexisted for a period of time in that region. The documents of the Monestery at Lembos provide evidence for the reign of John II Komnenos, specifically from the year 1133. They suggested the existence of certain officials bearing the title *katepano*: Bardas Lebounes and John Galenos, although by 1100 it was no longer an attribution to governors.[57] Nevertheless, in general between 1081 and 1261 the governor/*praetor* situated at the top of the hierarchy.[58] Alexios I Komnenos seems to have followed patterns in appointing governors that they were selected for particular regions from among a specific family. That practice was also existed in the preceding period. A member of the Aaronios family was governor of Mesopotamia in 1112. The important thing is that some of the members of the same

[55] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 345 and p. 347.

[56] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 124-125.

[57] See MM, IV, pp. 62-63; Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 130-132. See also Alexander Kazhdan, "Katepano," *ODB*, vol. 2, pp. 1115-1116.

[58] Some provinces' governors were named with a particular title: *anthypatos*. It disappeared shortly after the eleventh century. See Alexander Kazhdan, "Anthypatos," *ODB*, vol. 1, p. 111.

family previously held governorship in nearby provinces such as Iberia in the eleventh century.[59]

In the early Komnenian period, the top office of the provincial administration was, of course, the *praetor*. His duties were both judiciary and defense issues of the province. For the Peloponnesian provincial aristocracy, the appointed governors in the twelfth century were often members of the aristocrats of Constantinople.[60] Beside the predominance of Constantinopolitan aristocratic origin of *praetor*s/governors, some of them served at Hellas and Peleponnesos during the Angelid period came from families, who were residing at Constantinople but nevertheless possessing local links. Xèros and Epiphanios Kamatèros were among such *praetor*s.[61]

Praetor or *krites* was the major civil administrator of a province, employed for judicial affairs of a theme.[62] But after the office's heyday in the eleventh century, it never retained its former functions as the basic element of civil administration in

[59] The family fell into disfavor after they were involved in a plot against Alexios I Komnenos, after whose reign no family members were attested from the aristocratic class. See Alexander Kazhdan, "Aaronios," *ODB*, vol. 1, pp. 1-2.

[60] Kônstantinos Choirosphaktès, Basileios Xèros, and Epiphanios Kamatèros were among these governors. Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," p. 267. The provincial aristocracy in different parts of the Empire showed different characteristics during the late eleventh and the twelfth century. Peloponnesian example would clearly be worth to mention. The lands were under the control of the provincial aristocracy at the end of the eleventh through the late twelfth centuries in Peloponnesus. Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 57. In the second half of the eleventh century, the cities like Athens, Thebes, and Monemvasia tended to expand to outside of their city walls. That should be regarded as a sign of economic prosperity and population increase as well as the urban settlements' growing importance in the periphery. Charalambos Bouras, "Aspects of the Byzantine City, Eighth-Fifteenth Centuries," in *EHB*, vol. 2, p. 503. We have been presented with convincing documents on the structure of the Peloponnesian provincial aristocracy. Judith Herrin argues that during the time of disintegration under the Komnenoi, while military and civilian administrators changed their roles and they had very short period of appointments, ecclesiastical administrators' function remained the same and the Church became the only guarantee for the integrity of the state. What is observed in Hellas and Peloponnesus illustrates the common pattern all over the Empire's territories. By discussing three sectors (civilian, military, ecclesiastical) and their relationship to each other, Herrin tries to define each of their durability in late twelfth century. Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, pp. 52-53; Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," p. 258. Herrin states that only the church stayed firm within a period of local and separatist movements. Ibid., p. 284.

[61] It seems to have been a common policy to appoint governors of Hellas and Peloponnesos from among the aristocratic groups of Constantinople. Ibid., pp. 266-267.

[62] For more information on that subject, see Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, "Recherches sur l'administration…, pp. 67-78.

the provincial government of the later eleventh century and thereafter.[63] The *praetor* kept also some parts of the *doux* or *katepano*'s functions in the twelfth century. The term never existed after 1204.

Prokathemenos was another civil official appointed by the emperor. It seems to have appeared in the twelfth century.[64] He served judiciary function, responsible from a *kastron* or a city and constituted one of the piers of provincial judicial system in the twelfth century, above of which the thematic judge prevailed.[65] The judicial system employed many officials both at Constantinople and in the provinces. *Protasekretis* and *dikaiodotes* were some other components of that system. They were responsible for tribunals in Constantinople. *Megas droungarios* was heading these tribunals in Manuel I's reign. These offices were probably responsible for delivering the imperial chrysobulls and supervising the implementation of those orders and they were the institutions complementing one another.[66] In the Nicaean period functions of some of these offices were maintained. *Prokathemenos* was one of them functioned as the governor of a city in the Nicaean Empire, mostly dealt with municipal affairs and primarily judicial ones.[67] In other words, his duties were mostly civil services apart from a single instance illustrating the possibility that the *prokathemenos* had the duties of *strategia* and *krisis*. This particular case is defined

[63] Hendy, *Studies*…, p. 430 referring Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, "Recherches sur l'administration…, pp. 67-78.

[64] Alexander Kazhdan, "Prokathemenos," *ODB*, vol. 3, p. 1729.

[65] Above all of these provincial officials the *mesazon* represented the primary office dealing with governance and judgment in the absence of the emperor, but he was at Constantinople. The office of *mesazon* was held by Demetrios Tornikes for a long time from ca. 1216-ca. 1246.

[66] See Kazhdan, "Prokathemenos," p. 1729.

[67] Sources do reveal cases that the *prokathemenoi* solved judicial problems. For an example held by George Monomachos in 1230 on salt pans between the monastery of Lembiotissa and a family of a monk, see MM, IV, pp. 48-51. The *kastrophylakes* Theophylaktos Vrachionites collaborated with the *prokathemenos* in that case. Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile…*, p. 267 referring to MM, IV, p. 50, ll. 32-34.

in one of the sources mentioning a man called Iatropoulos as the office-holder in Philadelphia.[68]

Beside judicial duties, the *prokathemenoi* could be given other duties. Alopos can be an instance in that respect that he substituted John Kourtikes, the *doux* of Thrakesion theme.[69] The sources revealed some of the *prokathemenoi* from Smyrna, Nicaea, Ephesos or Philadelphia proving the existence of the office of *prokathemenos*.[70] For example, the office in Smyrna was occupied by George Monomachos by 1227.[71] Beside such a position the autochthonous Monomachos family had estates in Smyrna, in the valley of Memaniomenos and in Mantaia, a village near Smyrna.[72] Following George Monomachos a certain John Alopos or Alopekos occupied the office by 1234.[73] Although the individual did not have local origin, he was having a *pronoia* near Smyrna, probably the village called Pauchome.[74] This particular case also shows that it was possible for a non-local aristocrat to accumulate and invest wealth. Another holder of this office in Smyrna was George Kaloeidas, an individual coming from a local family, between the 1250s

[68] He is mentioned by Akropolites among the plotters against Thedore II Laskaris' son Demetrios, who was recognized as the despot of Thessalonike, in 1246. George Akropolites, *The History*, pp. 235-236, #45.

[69] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile…*, p. 265 referring to MM, IV, pp. 43-45, pp. 146-149. The Kourtikios family occupied topmost positions in military in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The following century was a general decline for the family, since a certain member of the family took part in the plot of Anemas against the emperor Alexios I Komnenos in ca. 1105. They reappeared in the thirteenth century as we see some Kourtikioi in fiscal administration. For example, Nicholas Kourtikios served as *kastrophylax* in 1271 on Kos. Prior to that, John Doukas Kourtikes was the governor of the theme of Thrakesion in 1230s. The family had estates around Smyrna at that century. Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 140-141; Alexander Kazhdan, "Kourtikios," *ODB*, vol. 2, pp. 1157-1158.

[70] Maksimović, *The Byzantine Provincial Administration under the Palaiologoi*, p. 169 referring to *Theodori Ducae Lascari Epistulae CCXVII* (Florentiae: n. p., 1898), Nr. 140, p. 197; Also, Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 155-158.

[71] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile…*, p. 265 referring to MM, IV, pp. 44-45.

[72] See Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," p. 156.

[73] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile…*, p. 265 referring to MM, IV, pp. 146-150.

[74] MM, IV, p. 35 and p. 38.

and the 1280s and he was among the local aristocrats regarding his properties in and around the city of Smyrna.[75]

The provincial aristocrats could obtain judiciary offices, too. Some of these offices were transformed or completely changed meaning in the course of time. *Quaestor*, for instance, became simply a title by the twelfth and thirteenth century, even though it was once among the high-ranking offices.

Military Administration

Byzantine military system of government represented the backbone of Byzantium's endurance through the centuries. The officials served the Empire according to a certain distribution of duties. During the Komnenian and Angelid periods *megas domestikos* was the supreme military commander after the emperor. The office was occupied by a Latin-origin man in Andronikos I's reign: Alexios Gidos. He was the *megas domestikos* of the Orient. The family of Gidos held high-ranking military positions in the twelfth as well as the first half of the thirteenth century.[76] Nicaean era, however, testified the decline in hierarchical rank of the office in military system since the titles of *protovestiarios* and *megas stratopedarches* were above it.[77] However, the office of *megas domestikos* continued uninterruptedly. The office of *megas domestikos* had been reinstated by Theodore I Laskaris, who appointed Andronikos Palaiologos to the office. Andronikos Palaiologos stayed at this office

[75] Ibid., pp. 102-103.

[76] Theodore I Laskaris had a general named Andronikos Gidos, who defeated the Latin troops at Tracheiai near Nikomedia in 1206. The Gidos family can be attested in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 352; Alexander Kazhdan, "Gidos," *ODB*, vol. 2, pp. 850-851.

[77] Alexander Kazhdan, "Megas domestikos," *ODB*, vol. 2, pp. 1329-1330. Michael Phokas was *stratopedarches* in 1234. See Alexander Kazhdan, "Phokas," *ODB*, vol. 3, pp. 1165-1166. For that period, *stratopedarches* was also controlling the fleet only in the Thrakesion theme.

for around twenty years until his death in 1247. He was the member of a powerful family and the father of Michael VIII, the first emperor of the Palaiologan dynasty. After him the title was held by his son-in-law, Nikephoros Tarchaneiotes.[78] He occupied the office until ca. 1255 when it passed to George Mouzalon, who had also the titles *protovestiarios*, *protosebastos* and *megas stratopedarches*.[79] The Mouzalon family was among the favored aristocratic families in the Nicaean Empire.[80]

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[78] George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 249, #49 and pp. 252-253, n. 8. The Tarchaneiotai have been attested in high provincial offices. Early Tarchaneiotai were exclusively from the military ranks of the society. Gregorios Tarchaneiotes, is attested as the *katepano* of Italy in ca.998. He was followed by a *strategos* in the second quarter of the eleventh century. Another member was Basil Tarchaneiotes. He was the commander (*stratelates*) of the *tagmata* of the Macedonians, commander of the right wing of the army against Isaac Komnenos' revolt in 1057. John Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History 811-1057*, p. 460. He is considered among the Macedonians. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*…, p. 233. Joseph Tarchaneiotes, on the other hand, undertook similar duty in the army (as a *protoproedros*) with Nikephoros Bryennios as the chief commander. He also fought at the battle of Mantzikert. Michael Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204: A Political History* (London and New York: Longman, 1997), Second edition, pp. 44-45. His achievement seems to have been rewarded as we see him as the *doux* of Antioch (Syrian) at the Orontes. The offices of these aristocrats were permanent as his descendants lived in Adrianople throughout the eleventh century. We can formulize the distribution of the administrative positions of the family members as far as our sources allow. The positions of the family have extensively set in military contexts since late tenth century. For the eleventh century, except for a couple of individuals (Theodoros Tarchaneiotes -3rd quarter of the 11th c. or Gregorios Tarchaneiotes- end of the 11th c.) whose titles were *proedros* and *protoproedros*, the Tarchaneiotai belonged to military aristocracy and occupied mostly military administrative offices. Michael Tarchaneiotes served as *strategos* in the second half of the eleventh century. The following example deserves a close look. Katakalon Tarchaneiotes, who was Joseph Tarchaneiotes' son, occupied a high dignity: *kouropalates*. He was commanding the Chomatenians and the Turks in Alexios I's troops supporting Michael VII and fighting against Nikephoros Bryennios in 1077. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*…, p. 233 referring Nikephoros Bryennios, *Nicephori Bryennii historiarum libri quattuor*, P. Gautier, ed. (Bruxelles: CFHB IX, 1975), p. 223. Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 40. By that time he was a well-established aristocrat of Adrianople. In Byzantine Middle Ages cities were dominated by local aristocratic families beside the administrative officials appointed from Constantinople. We have the evidence. Alexios I Komnenos, during the war against the Cumans in 1094, felt the necessity to have local assistance from Adrianople. For that, he assembled all prominent citizens of the city, since he needed a consultation. The emperor assigned them a task of protection of the citadel in times of Cuman incursion. Adrianople was a city at the centre of the networks of cities in Thrace. Various aristocratic families including the Tarchaneiotes family were strong there, so the emperor should have met their interests. Convention of the leading citizens of the city was obviously in order to maintain their loyalty to the Empire. He assured the provincial aristocrats (of the city) titles and other awards as he gave Katakalon Tarchaneiotes the title of *nobilissimus* for his achievement in the battlefield. Ibid., p. 299. See Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204: A Political History*, Second edition, p. 152. Typically, Alexios I Komnenos sought a policy that was aiming to keep the provincial aristocracy connected to the state through bestowing them several ranks. And he accomplished in that. Through these families bound to the imperial authority, the state made gradually its way on both European and Anatolian provinces. It was much later, after 1204 that they regained fame and can be attested as land-owners around Smyrna. Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, pp. 40-42; Alexander Kazhdan, "Tarchaneiotes," *ODB*, vol. 3, pp. 2011-2012.

[79] George Akropolites, *The History*, pp. 297-298, #60.

[80] For more information about the Mouzalon family, see Polemis, *The Doukai*…, p. 148f.

Apparently, Theodore II Laskaris promoted the highest military titles to his close environment, in this case to his closest friend, George Mouzalon.[81]

The offices in provincial administration were sometimes combined due to a variety of reasons. The combination can be attested driving from simply administrative factors. A series of duties became the officials' responsibility as it is presented in the combined offices of both *doux* and *stratopedarches* at Malagina during the period of the Nicaean Empire.[82] Another reason for the combination of offices can be personal preference of the emperor who apparently favored particular individuals linked to the imperial family. Michael Palaiologos, for example, appointed his uncle, Theodotos Kalothetos, to two offices simultaneously. Kalothetos was holding the office of *doux* both of Thrakesion and of Melanoudion in 1259. These two offices were quite important for provincial administration; this is why the emperor consulted to such a method.[83] He must have wished to place a man whom he could trust to that strategically important office. Furthermore, Constantine Diogenes had a variety of offices at the same time. In 1254 he was recorded as holder of the offices of *doux, apographeus* and *exisotes* of Leros and Kalymnos, the islands in the Aegean.[84]

The *doux* was the head of the Byzantine theme in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, holding the topmost military and civil responsibilities in provinces. He prevailed over all the military offices in the provinces under the Komnenoi and

[81] George Akropolites, *The History*, pp. 294-295, #59, n. 9.

[82] Vitalien Laurent, *Les Bulles métriques dans la sigillographie byzantine* (Athens: n. p., 1932), no. 407; Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile…*, p. 253.

[83] Ibid., p. 251 referring to MM, IV, pp. 153-154, pp. 208-210 and MM, VI, pp. 201-202.

[84] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile…*, p. 249. Also see Ibid., p. 139, fn. 110 referring to MM, VI.

replaced the *strategos* by the eleventh century.[85] The capability and power of the *doux* shared very much in common with the preceding office of *strategos*, although the administrative office of *doux* had been narrowed down in territorial base.[86] The *doukes* were holding both civil and military power at hands. The *doukes*, on the other hand, were appointed similarly from the Constantinopolitan aristocratic circles.[87] This was a result of the efforts held by the Komnenian emperors restructuring provincial administration. The *doukes* were occupying the most prestigious provincial office so that the holders of it often belonged to the high aristocracy. A particular Hyaleas, having a military background, was the *doux* of Smyrna around the end of the eleventh century.[88] In ca. 1127 Michael Xeros was the *doux* of Mylassa and Melanoudion and rose up to high aristocratic class. He received the title *sebastos* from the emperor.[89] This title reflects his prestigious status obviously. The family of Xeros had possessed positions in the judicial administration of the Empire in the eleventh century. The members of the family held civil dignitaries, reached up prominent positions. After the second half of the twelfth century a general decline in its social status may be attested.[90]

[85] The situation was common in all Komnenian provinces, except for the theme of Peloponnese – Hellas where the governor (the *praetor*) still represented the civil authority while the military control was in someone else's hands: the *megas doux*. This remained the case for Peloponnese–Hellas in the Komnenian and Angelid epochs. André Guillou, "Functionaries," in Guglielmo Cavallo, ed., *The Byzantines* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 209.

[86] Hendy, *Studies*…, p. 432 referring Hélène Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer: la marine du guerre, la politique et les institutions maritimes de Byzance aux VIIe-XVe siècles* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), pp. 272-274.

[87] Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," p. 266.

[88] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 347. We encounter another member of the family, Michael, as he was tasked with an ambassadorial duty with George Akropolites sent to the despot of Epiros, Michael II in the 1250s. George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 250, #49 and #49, p. 259, n. 38.

[89] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," p. 129; Alexander Kazhdan, "Xeros," *ODB*, vol. 3, p. 2210.

[90] Ibid.

The office of *doux* has been described as identical with *katepano*.[91] The *katepano* was the military commander of the land forces of a province.[92] During Alexios I's reign, sources reveal many *doukes* of some regions in Asia Minor: Nicaea, Amastris, Ephesos, Smyrna, Melagina, Trebizond, Attaleia, Seleucia, Melitene, etc.[93] Also, Abydos represented a center for a *katepano*.[94] The *doux* lost its prestige after the twelfth century, but continued to exist in the Nicaean era. However, with the second half of the thirteenth century his office was replaced by the *kephale*.[95] The *katepano* also lost its powerful meaning by the 1100s, yet perpetuated as a local office in Asia Minor and Macedonia.[96]

The office of *doux* provided remarkable ground to raise power for its holder. The *doux* was the topmost official controlling all means of power on its own. That favorable situation could occasionally be manipulated by some *doukes*. The *doukes* of the distant lands remained semi-independent or autonomous in the middle of the eleventh century.[97] The *doukes* of Chaldia, Mesopotamia, Antioch, Vaspurakan or Edessa represented exceptional character from the rest of the *doukes*. It must have been due to two factors tantamount to each other: distance from the central government and power of provincial military aristocrats, some of whom created serious troubles for the state (e.g. the Gabrades of Chaldia) because of their

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[91] Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, "Recherches sur l'administration…," p. 64.

[92] Ibid., p. 52; Kazhdan, "Katepano," pp. 1115-1156.

[93] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 452 and p. 455. Anna mentions a particular Eustathios Kamytzes, a governor of the city of Nicaea. Eadem, p. 452.

[94] Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, "Recherches sur l'administration…," p. 63.

[95] Mark C. Bartusis, "Kephale," *ODB*, vol. 2, p. 1122.

[96] Kazhdan, "Katepano," pp. 1115-1116. For the description of *katepanikion*, another term probably used for similar offices in Asia Minor, see Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," p. 126.

[97] See the map 6.4., which is presented by John Haldon in idem, *The Palgrave Atlas of Byzantine History* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), p. 72.

independent or semi-independent status.[98] Moreover, a provincial aristocrat, Gregory Taronites, rebelled against Alexios I Komnenos, when the former was the *doux* of Trebizond in 1104.[99] The Taronitai's Armenian origin was possible efficient factor at the outset of the event. Alexios Gifardos was the *doux* of Thrakesion by the year 1158.[100] His name sake bearing the same title (*doux*) appeared towards the end of the twelfth century, during the reign of Alexios III Angelos (1195-1203).[101]

As it is seen in the case of Constantine Kalamanos of a Russo-Hungarian origin, whose family's mansion in Constantinople was evident, the *doukes* sometimes came from non-Byzantine stock. Constantine Kalamanos was the *doux* of Cilicia between 1163-1164 and ca. 1173.[102] Just before Kalamanos, in ca. 1162, the *doux* of Cilicia was another high aristocrat, Andronikos Katakalon, who was the grandson of the *doux* of Cyprus ca. 1100 and son of the son-in-law of Alexios I Komnenos.[103] The *doukes* were mostly connected with imperial family through marriages. For instance, John Doukas Kourtikes acquired a significant office, the governorship of Cilicia in 1230s, most likely because of his kinship with John III Vatatzes. Here, the Kourtikes family's origin may have played a role in obtaining the position, since the Kourtikai were powerful in the Empire, but also actively held

[98] The separatist character of the Gabrades will be treated later in the chapter.

[99] Alexander Kazhdan, "Taronites," *ODB*, vol. 3, pp. 2012-2013. The Taronites family appeared in the sources from the second half of the tenth century onwards. The members of the family took mainly military positions until the twelfth century, when they held mostly civil functionaries. The family was well integrated with the imperial Komnenos family through marriages. The family did not take political role after 1204. Ibid.

[100] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," p. 131. His position was also confirmed by Georgios Tornikes' letters. See Robert Browning, "The Speeches and Letters of Georgios Tornikes, Metropolitan of Ephesos (XIIth Century)," in *Actes du XIIe Congrè International d'Études byzantines, Ochride 10-16 Septembre 1961* (Belgrad: n. p., 1964), vol. 2, p. 425.

[101] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," p. 131.

[102] John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, p. 164 and p. 214; Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 80; Alexander Kazhdan, "Kalamanos," *ODB*, vol. 2, p. 1091.

[103] Idem, "Katakalon," *ODB*, vol. 2, p. 1113.

positions or estates in other parts of the Empire. One of the family's branches can be found in Cilicia.[104]

John Komnenos Vatatzes served as both *megas domestikos* and *doux* in the Thrakesion theme between 1176 and 1182.[105] It is really a long period that we observe single official at the same position and at the same region. This seems to have been contrary to the common practice, which necessitated a removal from the office every year or every other year.

The Vatatzes family had already consolidated their positions in the government before 1204. The family's place was obviously sealed as a result of a marriage between Basil Vatatzes and Isaac II Angelos's (r. 1185-1195) cousin. Furthermore, Basil Vatatzes' achievement on banishing Theodore Mangaphas' revolt tells that he was a skilled military commander. He received the office of the *doux* of Thrakesion in return for that. His accomplishments may have opened the gate to rising up to the courtly circle. That acquired status may have probably helped his son, John III Vatatzes, on his ascension to the throne.[106]

Another powerful family was the Kantakouzenos family who gained distinguished role during the twelfth century.[107] Members of the Kantakouzenos family took part in governmental organization of the Komnenoi. Andronikos Kantakouzenos (flourished between 1170 and 1190) was the *doux* and *apographeus* of the theme of Mylasa and Melanoudion in 1175.[108] As far as identified by Nicol,

[104] Idem, "Kourtikios," pp. 1157-1158.

[105] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," p. 130. See also Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, pp. 109-110.

[106] Ibid., p. 220; Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 130-131.

[107] Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos*…

[108] Ibid., pp. 317-318, no.6.

most of the Kantakouzenoi in his study was from the high aristocracy, either having links with the imperial family or holding high titles/offices in the state.

The Kantakouzenoi involved in military administration actively. N. Kantakouzenos (flourished in 1100)[109] participated in military campaigns as early as the 1090s (e.g. the one against the Cumans in 1094). He is attested in another later duty, which was arresting two rebels, Bardas and Michael, who were in Kyrenia, Cyprus. These rebels were accused of disobeying Byzantine general's (Boutomites) orders during the campaign against Bohemund in 1102.[110] John Kantakouzenos (died in 1176) was another member of the Kantakouzenoi who was entrusted with military duties, such as he participated in the battle of Myriokephalon in September 1176.[111] Moreover, although we do not know the rank of the individual, a particular Manuel Kantakouzenos (flourished in 1195)[112] was in charge of suppressing a Cilician false Alexios Komnenos' revolt raised in Ankyra.[113] Another Manuel Kantakouzenos (flourished in 1179)[114] has been in charge of a commander of an army against the Turks.[115] In short, the Kantakouzenos family seems to have been trusted in Byzantine Empire since the members of the family were entrusted with very critical duties. This especially intensified during the later decades of the twelfth century: Manuel I's later years and including the reign of the Angeloi. After the Angelid period, the family retained its role in the government. Some Kantakouzenoi rose up to courtly status, occupying significant places. Manuel Kantakouzenos (flourished in 1250), for

[109] Ibid., no. 1.

[110] See Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, pp. 364-366; Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos*…, p. 3.

[111] Ibid., p. 4, no. 2.

[112] Ibid., p. 9, no. 8.

[113] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 254.

[114] Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos…,* no. 3

[115] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, pp. 110-111; Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos*…, p. 5; Donald MacGillivray Nicol, "The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos: Some Addenda and Corrigenda," *DOP* 27 (1973), p. 309.

example, was the *pinkernes* in the Nicaean Empire in John III's reign and thus became the *oikeios* of the Emperor.[116]

Compared to the Komnenian and Angelid periods, the thirteenth century was characterized more with favoritism in the administrative cadre. Correspondingly, the first probable *doux* of Thrakesion in Nicaean Empire was emperor's brother, Georges Laskaris, who might have assumed the title around 1211 since he was assigned with a military mission delivered by the emperor.[117] After him, Basileios Chrysomalles occupied the office. A *prostagma* (an imperial document containing administrative orders) dated to 1213 from the convent of the Xerochoraphion provides that information to us, confirming the first recorded *doux* of that theme under the Nicaean rule.[118] He held another official post beside the *doux*: ἐπὶ τοῦ κανικλείου.[119] Michael Kadianos was later probable holder of the title as his name is attested in a document dated to 1226. Michael Kadianos was given the title of *pansebastos sebastos*, and later by 1232 the title *oikeios* was added to his titular. His rather wealthy status around Smyrna, possessing lands and estates at Pyrgos, would be an indicator increasing the probability of his office, but it certainly makes him one of the provincial aristocrats.[120] Another probable *doux* was Alexios Krateros, who was probably holding the office in 1227 and owned lands in Smyrna region.[121]

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[116] Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos*…, no. 10.

[117] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 138-139.

[118] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, p. 247 referring to N. Wilson et J. Darrouzès, "Restes du cartulaire de Hiéra-Xérochoraphion," *REB* 26 (1968), pp. 13-14.

[119] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," p. 139; Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, p. 240 referring to Wilson and Darrouzès, "Restes du cartulaire de Hiéra-Xérochoraphion," pp. 13-14 and F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches* (Munich/Berlin: n. p., 1924–1965), 5 vols, p. 1685.

[120] MM, IV, p. 173; Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 139-140.

[121] Ibid., p. 140.

In 1228 Kyriakoutzikos served as a *doux* of Thrakesion, among other functions held in different times or simultaneously. His name is transmitted today through the cartulary of the Lembos Monastery. He is expressed as the *energon* for the Thrakesion theme in a text from these documents.[122]

After 1233 until the end of the Nicaean period fortunately we have almost uninterrupted sequence of the *doukes* served in Thrakesion.[123] As already pointed, the reflection of the household government was attestable among high provincial offices throughout the Nicaean period. In a full one year period starting from April 1233 the *doux* of Thrakesion became John III Vatatzes' son-in-law (γαμβρός). His name was John Doukas Kourtikes. In 1236 he is mentioned as having the same position. Similar to the family of Krateros, the family of Kourtikes had remarkable possessions in Smyrna region.[124]

The following three *doukes* occupied the office in Thrakesion fairly shorter. John Angelos was the *doux* for the period between June 1235 and January 1236. He possibly continued his office at most until 1238.[125] In 1239 Theodore Ikanatos was *doux* of Thrakesion theme. He was attested as having been ordered to ensure the order for the convent of the Lembos once ruined by the officials' misuses.[126] Manuel Kontophre was the *doux* of the Thrakesion theme in 1240. His position lasted fairly short, only at most three months between March and May of that year.[127]

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[122] Ibid., p. 130. See MM, IV, p. 188.

[123] See F. Dölger, "Chronologisches und Prosopographisches zur byzantinischen Geschichte des 13. Jahrhunderts," *BZ* 27 (1927), pp. 307-310; Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 138-149.

[124] MM, IV, pp. 193, 214, 240-243; also see Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 140-141.

[125] See Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," p. 142.

[126] MM, IV, p. 215; Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," p. 143.

[127] See MM, IV, pp. 249-253; Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 143-144. On Kontophre's Latin origin, George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 206, n. 17.

Another *doux* of the theme was a member of one of the most distinguished families possessing extensive lands in the thirteenth century mentioned by Pachymeres. He was George Kammytzoboukes and was holding the office in June 1241.[128] He received order from the emperor very similar to what Theodore Ikanatos had received. The *doux* was sent to reinstate order once lost on account of the 'troubles' caused by specific families: the Tarchaneiotai and the Gabalas.[129]

The *doux* of Thrakesion was John Komnenos Kantakouzenos between March 1245 and January 1247. He had also the title of *pinkernes* and probably held both *apographeus*' and *doux*' responsibilities together.[130] The next *doux* came from among the distinguished families: Constantine Laskaris. He served as a *doux* for Thrakesion theme by August 1249.[131] Furthermore, Ahrweiler suggests some names that could have served as *doukes* in Thrakesion theme. Manuel Kantakouzenos (1250) and Agalon Kopides (1253) were two of such individuals. Ahrweiler makes her suggestion on the duties or orders that these men were assigned by the emperor.[132]

As understood from the sources' contents, Lembos people must have suffered too much from the abuses or vexations of the families, officials, or individuals who

[128] MM, IV, p. 254. The family of Kamytzes appeared in sources in the late eleventh century. Eustathios Kamytzes was *chartoularios* of the stables in 1094. He is later attested the *doux* of Nicaea. Some family members established familial links with the Komnenian dynasty. The Kamytzai are in Pachymeres' list of distinguished families, although their estates are not mentioned very much in the sources. George Kammytzoboukes seems to be the only exception. Alexander Kazhdan, "Kamytzes," *ODB*, vol. 2, p. 1099.

[129] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," p. 144. See also Kazhdan, "Kamytzes," pp. 1099-1100.

[130] MM, IV, 139-140; 216-217; MM, VI, 183. Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 144-145. George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 246, #48. Nicol, "The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos…," p. 311, no. 13. See also Nikephoros Blemmydes, *A Partial Account*, trans. by Joseph A. Munitiz, (Leuven: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1988), p. 77. As Munitiz has suggested, Kantakouzenos was holding the office of doux from July 1239 onward. Ibid, p. 77, fn. 107. On the overlapping of the office of *doux* and *apographeus* in terms of duties, see Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, p. 210.

[131] MM, IV, 182.

[132] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 145-146.

ruled over the area. The Byzantine emperor had entrusted Theodore Ikanatos, the *doux* of Thrakesion by 1239, with restoration of the order. Likewise, a member of the Makrenos family, George Makrenos, the *doux* of Thrakesion theme in 1256, was entrusted with a similar mission at Lembos.[133]

John Tornikios, on the other hand, was another *doux* of Thrakesion in 1258 that he had the same background affiliations with previous holders of the office.[134] At the end of the Nicaean period, clan favoritism was still at the stage, especially observed in *doux* appointments. In 1259 and 1260 two *pansebastos sebastoi* received the office of *doux* of Thrakesion, respectively Theodotos Kalothetos and Theodore Krybitziotes, the former being also the uncle of the emperor.[135] For the year 1261 Ahrweiler mentions a probable holder of the office, John Syropoulos, for a short period of time.[136]

Other than the historically attestable permanent *doukes*, it seems that there were instances of some officials deputizing the *doukes* during the Komnenian era. A certain Dabatenos was the *topoteretes* (temporary governor) of Pontic Herakleia and Paphlagonia in 1081.[137] Kazhdan raises a possibility that the *doux* of Trebizond might have been the same Dabatenos over twenty years later.[138] Seals reveal some members of that family took important offices such as *katepano*, or a general in Alexios I's army.[139]

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[133] MM, IV, p. 211, 224, 247; also see Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," p. 146.

[134] See Alexander Kazhdan, "Tornikios," *ODB*, vol. 3, pp. 2096-2097. Also see Schmalzbauer, "Die Tornikioi…," pp. 115-135.

[135] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 146-148.

[136] Ibid., p. 148.

[137] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 125.

[138] See Alexander Kazhdan, "Dabatenos," *ODB*, vol. 1, p. 577; Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 386.

[139] See, ibid., pp. 386 and p. 298.

Furthermore, equal to the *doux* there was the commander of the fleet: *megas doux*, who was initiated by Alexios I Komnenos and was observable throughout the twelfth and thirteenth century. The office remained one of the top ranks in military administration. They were mostly the members of the Kontostephanos family, a family interlinked with famous families such as the Doukai, the Angeloi, occupied the office in the twelfth century.[140] The *megas doux* Andronikos Kontostephanos was at the head of the fleet sailing to Egypt in 1169.[141] John Kinnamos, in his account, mentions two Kontostephanoi as military commanders recovering forts from the Antiochenes in 1144.[142] But a particular member of the family, as we know from the letters of George Tornikes, was in charge of an important office, the *doux* of Thrakesion. His name was Alexios Kontostephanos and he occupied the office in 1167.[143] It has been contended that another Alexios Kontostephanos held the same office a little before 1204.[144] Therefore, the key positions of the family of Kontostephanoi were not restricted to *megas doux*. Another holder of the office of *megas doux* shorthly after 1204, Theodotos Phokas indicates the tradition continued after 1204. His connection with the imperial family is indicative of 'household government' since he was the uncle of Theodore I Laskaris.[145]

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[140] Alexander Kazhdan, "Megas doux," *ODB*, vol. 2, p. 1330. Another member of the family, Theodore Kontostephanos, was sent by the emperor Manuel I to suspend the Turkish troops devastating the countryside. John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, p. 39. He may probably have been one of the chief commanders in Manuel's army.

[141] Ibid., p. 208.

[142] Ibid., p. 35.

[143] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 131-132; Browning, "The Speeches and Letters of Georgios Tornikes…," p. 425.

[144] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 131-132.

[145] Alexander Kazhdan, "Phokas," *ODB*, vol. 3, pp. 1165-1166. For the role of the Phokas family asserting his authority in lower Maeander region and Priene in Theodore I Laskaris' reign, see Efi Ragia, "The Inscription of Didyma (Hieron) and the Families of Phokas and Karantinos in Western Asia Minor (12th-13th c.)," *BZ* 100/1 (2007), p. 145.

Provincial administrative cadre included some other officials lower than the office of the *doux*. *Stratopedarches* was the first man among the staff of the *doux*. In provincial administration, he was mainly responsible for handing over the property. Michael Phokas was known as the *stratopedarches* of the theme of Thrakesion and of Philadelphia in ca. 1235. His prominent title seems to have been the result of his affinity to the emperor. He was the son-in-law of John III Vatatzes.[146]

Apart from *doukes*, there were the *toparchai* who were basically enjoying relative independency as governors of some provinces. A *toparches* was in charge of administrative affairs of a distant region.[147] Early in Alexios I's reign (1081-1118) the eastern districts of the Empire partly entered into a process of disintegration. Most of these districts were recovered under the following two emperors (Ioannes II Komnenos and Manuel I Komnenos). Cappadocia and Choma were two districts of such and controlled by a particular Bourtzes as the *toparches* under the reign of Alexios I Komnenos. The family of Bourtzes possessed remarkable local military bases and had long been influential in Anatolian politics since the tenth century.[148] (See Appendix) The tenth century represents the initial appearance of the family in historical sources. A certain Michael Bourtzes, probably since the family had originated from Euphrates region, was able to gain the office of the *doux* in the reign of Nikephoros II Phokas (963-969) and also in ca. 990-996. His support for the rebel Bardas Skleros may indicate his overwhelming and self-confident status over the Cilicia and Antioch region. In the eleventh century, the family is considered to be one of the most influential provincial aristocrats in the Anatolikon theme. Later, it

[146] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 141-142.

[147] Alaxander Kazhdan, "Toparches," *ODB*, vol. 3, p. 2095.

[148] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 125; Kazhdan, "Toparches," p. 2095.

declined as we see the family members who became the holders of the provincial offices in the twelfth century. [149]

There had been many different military offices in the provinces. A *kastrophylax* was the equivalent of *prokathemenos* in military services. Appointed by the emperor the *kastrophylax* was the commander of a garrison or a *kastron* throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The office may have been existed also in modest fortresses, since there are evidences from two forts on the island of Cos, Pelion and Pardovounon that point to the office of *kastrophylakes* there.[150] There is a single holder of that office attested in the sources for the Nicaean period. He was the *kastrophylax* of Smyrna in the 1230s.[151]

The power that a military administrative position provided to the holder of the office could reach extreme levels. The solidarity among the aristocrats sometimes brought dispositions of Byzantine emperors. A strong opposition party has already been formed against the usurper Andronikos I Komnenos (1183-1185) for which the aristocrats had played role in the front line. Theodore Kantakouzenos (died in 1184)[152] exposed a strong opposition against the usurper Andronikos I Komnenos, who seemed to have had an intention to wipe out Isaac II's supporters. Another member of the family, John Kantakouzenos (flourished between 1180 and 1199, the Caesar), had a similar stance, but was blinded and sent into prison by the usurper.[153] Moreover, a group of aristocrats' strong oppositions ended with the proclamation of

[149] Alexander Kazhdan, "Bourtzes," *ODB*, vol. 1, pp. 317-318.

[150] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile…*, p. 266 referring to MM, VI, pp. 184, 228.

[151] Ibid., p. 267.

[152] Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos…*, no. 5.

[153] Ibid., pp. 5-7, no. 4. Nicol explains the reasons behind John Kantakouzenos' tragedy: "John's political inclinations, possibly sharpened by his love for Eirene, evidently made him a partisan of the house of Angelos and of the interests of the landed aristocracy against the tyrant Andronikos Komnenos; and he had his reward when his brother-in-law Isaac II Angelos came to the throne in 1185. Isaac gave him the rank of Caesar and appointed him, despite his physical disability, to succeed to the command of operations against the Bulgars in 1186." Ibid., p. 6.

Alexios III Angelos as the emperor in April 1195. Michael Kantakouzenos (floruit 1195), Theodore Branas, George Palaiologos, John Petraliphas and Constantine Raoul played distinctive role in the enthronement of Alexios III Angelos (r. 1195-1203).[154]

Fiscal Administration

Fiscal administration had been well established in Byzantium. The Byzantine fiscal system reflects a hierarchical organization. At the beginning of the Komnenian era the responsible official for assessment and collection of taxes in provinces was the *dioiketes*, whose office was replaced with the *praktor* after 1109.[155] The official was then dealing with regular taxes, the land tax (ἀκρόστιχον) and irregular services (ἐπήρειαι)[156] all including fiscal duties. The office of the *praktor* led the holders to have judicial duties over some issues. Thus the combination of two substantial aspects of government made the office the most important one in provincial fiscal administration. The *praktor* maintained this situation throughout the Komnneian, Angelid and Laskarid dynasties. The *praktores*' role increased especially after 1204. They lived in Constantinople not in the area where they had duties to conduct.[157]

Anagrapheus was a fiscal official likely to have attached to the themes.[158] The duty of the official was the revision of the cadaster, and presumably measuring and

[154] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 247; Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos…*, p. 8.

[155] Alexander Kazhdan, "Dioketes," *ODB*, vol. 1, pp. 627-628.

[156] Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," p. 270.

[157] Alexander Kazhdan, "Praktor," *ODB*, vol. 3, pp. 1711-1712. See also, Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," p. 275.

[158] Theophylaktos of Ohrid was accusing some of the *anagrapheis* because they were manipulating the measures. Alexander Kazhdan, "Anagrapheus," *ODB*, vol. 1, p. 84.

assessing the land and taxation. Therefore, he was responsible for jurisdiction. It can be possible to follow his office in the Komnenian and Angelid periods. The office disappeared in the Nicaean period. After 1204 there was a new position called *apographeus*, which was tasked exactly with the same duties with *anagrapheus*.[159] The authority and duties of both *doux* and *apographeus* were overlapping during the twelfth century. The Nicaean emperors separated these two so that these posts did no longer exist as the same office. This very innovation, thus, means a separation of civil and military administration that was being achieved.[160]

There was some other lesser fiscal officials existed with different duties: the *kommerkiarios* responsible for trade in frontier regions, the *logariastes* dealt with controlling of expenses and was an assistant for the *praitor* (praetor) in financial issues. These two (*kommerkiarios* and *logariastes*) were observed in the period that is considered in the present thesis and both were provincial offices.[161] We have the evidence that a certain member of Basilakes family, Michael, was the *logariastes* in the early thirteenth century in Miletos region. The Basilakes family existed in the preceding centuries. The family had probably an Armenian or Paphlagonia origin. A certain member of the family, George Basilakes who was *protoproedros* in 1094-1095, raised a plot against Alexios I Komnenos. The members of the family occupied lesser positions in provincial administration after the mid-twelfth century.[162]

The *episkepsis* refers to an office responsible for either administration of an imperial property or portion of a theme of fiscal value, or an estate referring to a

[159] This office existed in the Thrakesion theme as well as the Peloponnese. Kazhdan, "Anagrapheus," p. 84; Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," p. 271.

[160] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, p. 242.

[161] Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," p. 272. See also, Alexander Kazhdan, "Praetor," *ODB*, vol. 3, p. 1710.

[162] For this reference and the family of Basilakes, see Alexander Kazhdan, "Basilakes," *ODB*, vol. 1, pp. 262-263.

compilation of properties belonging to the emperor, imperial family members or the aristocrats. Michael Dermokaites was holding the *episkepsis* of Sampson in ca. 1216. He was a member of one of the aristocratic families flourished especially after 1204.[163]

Minor offices, on the other hand, were mainly filled with the local notables, middle or lower aristocrats. The *protovestiarites* was an office in the Nicaean Empire dealing with financial issues.[164] The *hypodochator*, who was collecting some sort of taxes either in kind or in cash, paid under the name of "προσκυνητίκια."[165] The *domestikos* was another lower official, whose main duty was theme finances.[166] Beside all these somewhat minor offices among the higher ones, there were some officials undertaking administrative duties. Our knowledge confirms that there were officials responsible for collecting various taxes such as *kapnikon* (heart tax) or *zeugologountes* (tax for animals) as well as naval taxes in Greece.[167] Due to the fact that Byzantine naval force existed in Thrakesion theme and on Asia Minor shores, similar official must have existed there. Due to a remarkable decrease in balance concerning demand and production, the size of administrative units in Asia Minor dramatically shared the same fate, and correspondingly it was the case for limits of provincial officials' power.[168]

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[163] For that and for the other members of the family, see Donald Nicol, "The Byzantine Family of Dermokaites, circa 940-1453," *Bsl* 35 (1974), pp. 1-11, reprinted in idem, *Studies in Late Byzantine History and Prosopography* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1986), No. XIII]. Also see Mark C. Bartusis, "Episkepsis," *ODB*, vol. 1, p. 717. Ruth Macrides raises a possibility that he may be Dermokaites, functioned as an army commander, which Akropolites does mention in his *History*. George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 153, #16 and p. 154, n. 3.

[164] Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," p. 273.

[165] Ibid., p. 274.

[166] Alexander Kazhdan, "Domestikos," *ODB*, vol. 1, p. 646.

[167] Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," pp. 274-275.

[168] Hendy, *Studies*…, p. 437.

Aristocrats' Fall from Favor

We may probably surmise that some of the provincial aristocrats remained very local, and the emperors probably did not know them. Then a question arises: Who did give their titles? Cheynet explains it with some intermediary groups of aristocrats awarding their men.[169] That is, the titles were distributed not directly by the emperors. This structure can be schematized as follows: emperor→aristocrats known to the emperor→aristocrats not-known to the emperor. Provinciality created a context within which 'appointed' aristocrats played the major role, representing emperor's authority. In other words, provincial society differed from what was the norm in Constantinople. This was rather a system carried out by the aristocrats sent by the emperor, but also had to consider provincial *sui generis* features. The state through a selective process determined the social status of the aristocratic groups (e.g. granting them privileges, or offices, etc.), thus, imperial control played a major role in who is going to be favored by the state. This was at least the case in the initial stage of the Byzantine aristocracy (ninth-twelfth centuries). There was an absolute central authority over the aristocratic offices and titles and the way they were acquired and transmitted.

No aristocratic family has been recorded without falling into a period of decline or experiencing a total banishment from the aristocratic circle. The arbiter at this issue was apparently the state. Despite the glorious past, some aristocrats fell into disfavor after a while no matter the duration. The situation can be observed more among the members of the high aristocracy. The Tarchaneiotes family had such a fate during the reign of the Komnenoi, yet regained their place in the Nicaean state

[169] Cheynet, "Official Power…," pp. 140-141.

and received estates in Smyrna region. Beforehand, the family was an important family of Adrianople. Its members took several military posts in pre-Komnenian period.[170] Komnenian emperors obviously favored the aristocrats that did not withhold their support from them. Their fate under the Komnenoi was the result of their stand during the events of the civil war among the generals primarily between Alexios I Komnenos and Nikephoros Bryennios in the aftermaths of the Battle of Mantzikert to seize the throne in Nikephoros Botaneiates' reign (1078-1081).[171]

The old aristocratic families are not mentioned in *Alexiad*. The Komnenian dynasty created a new system of government, the emperors reserved prior offices to their relatives. Thus, they disregarded old families whom they did not trust. That attitude of the text demonstrates the reasons behind disfavoring of old aristocratic families during Alexios I's reign. For example, under the Komnenian rule, families having a Paphlagonian origin were not respected nor were they given positions in the government. After a Komnenian interlude, one may see them in politics by the late twelfth century.[172]

Twelfth-century aristocratic families had a long history going back to the eight century except for the newly emerged families. It should be a tentative result; however, since the *long duree* of aristocratic families is a common phenomenon one

[170] In spite of the enigmatic family origin (Georgian or Bulgarian) the Tarchaneiotes family definitely belonged to Adrianople aristocracy. Some members of the family occupied positions in the army, for example, Katakalon Tarchaneiotes was commanding the Chomatenians and the Turks in Alexios I's troops supporting Michael VII and fighting against Nikephoros Bryennios. However, in the course time the Tarchaneiotai turned against Alexios and this made the Komnenoi feel distrustful about them. It was much later, after 1204 that they regained fame and can be attested as possessors of lands around Smyrna. Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, pp. 40-42; Kazhdan, "Tarchaneiotes," pp. 2011-2012. The point here is that the family was from one of the European cities and was able to possess lands/estates in Asia Minor.

[171] See Kazhdan, "Tarchaneiotes," pp. 2011-2012.

[172] Paul Magdalino, "Paphlagonians in Byzantine High Society," in *Η Βυζαντίνη Μικρα Ασια (6ος-12 ος αι.)* (*Byzantine Asia Minor (6th-12th cent.))*, Stelios Lampakis, ed., (Athens: Institute for Byzantine Research, 1998), pp. 142 and 147.

can follow in long Byzantine history.[173] How did those families retain fame throughout decades and even centuries? The survival of Byzantine aristocratic families was closely linked with the form of relations they established with the state.[174]

Previously, the provincial aristocratic families acted within certain limits determined by the state. Their power could reach up to a certain point. Yet, once the administrative system got to dissolve by the reign of Andronikos I Komnenos, the picture began to change. He owed much to Paphlagonians' support in his rebellion against Alexios II Komnenos, at the end of which he became the emperor. Thanks to the aristocrats' support to Andronikos I Komnenos, the aristocratic families gained social and political place which the state was no more able to take control of.[175] As Magdalino identifies, "Constantinople had become literally a law unto itself, and the exclusiveness with which Constantinopolitans treated outsiders was replicated and reciprocated in good measure by provincials" by the end of the twelfth century.[176] Political power enabled the power-holders to take separatist actions if the appropriate conditions were created. As opposed to the attempts to take control of Constantinople by the earlier aristocratic reactions, the local aristocracy of the late twelfth century did not have such a target. At that time, there emerged lords, each one of them was controlling the area around a walled-city and was practically independent.[177] As

[173] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries…," pp. 14-15.

[174] The families of the Kantakouzenoi or the Gabrades were two examples for long-lived families.

[175] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 143, #257; p. 150, #270. Later in the thirteenth century, Michael VIII owed his throne to the support of the European aristocrats, among whom the Palaiologoi were holding prominence. Vincent Puech, "The Aristocracy and the Empire of Nicaea," in *Identities and Allegiances in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204*, Judith Herrin and Guillaume Saint-Guillain (eds), (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), p. 78.

[176] Paul Magdalino, "Constantinople and the ἔξω χῶραι in the time of Balsamon," in *Byzantium in the Twelfth Century*, Nicolas Oikonomides, ed., (Athens: Society of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies, 1991), pp. 188 ff.

[177] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 76.

Oikonomides puts forward, except for Bithynia controlled by Theodore I Laskaris and Eastern Macedonia controlled by the deposed Alexios III Angelos, the rest of the Byzantine commonwealth remained under the rule of autonomous lordships in the post-1204 era.[178] Theodore I Laskaris' attitude towards the local aristocracy in Asia Minor was more of an inclusive one. He accepted its participant in local government, affirmed estates and properties of provincial aristocrats, and developed a cooperative policy. High court titles as grants handed over to these local men helped to consolidate their loyalty to the state.[179] Theodore I Laskaris one way or another had to maintain a safe ground by negotiating with the local aristocrats in Western Asia Minor. He used force to suppress some of them, while for some others he chose to compromise.[180] Theodore I Laskaris' centralist policies led many of them to come to an agreement with the state.

The same practice of displacing the aristocrats within state mechanism of any sort was conducted by the Laskarid government. John III Vatatzes established or preserved social and political contacts with Asia Minor, which, according to Kyritses, indicates that there was not a total abandonment of the local Greek aristocracy in Asia Minor because of Turkish advance.[181] In later years, Theodore II Laskaris (r. 1254–1258) discharged some elites; he eliminated several generals and nobles such as Constantine Tornikes as a result of the emperor's policy against the aristocracy.[182]

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[178] Ibid., p. 76, fn. 2, citing Nicolas Oikonomides, "La decomposition de l'empire byzantine à la veille de 1204 et les origines de l'empire de Nicée: à propos de la 'Partitio Romaniae'," *XVe congrès international d'études byzantines: rapports et co-rapports* (Athens: n. p., 1976), pp. 3-28. Once Theodore Laskaris established his authority on the Bithynian region, the next target was to overcome the issue of the troubled provinces in Western Asia Minor.

[179] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, pp. 61-62.

[180] Ibid. p. 61.

[181] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 83.

[182] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, pp. 77-78.

The disappearance of some aristocratic families did not stop in the second half of the thirteenth century. Kyritses mentions some families disappearing from the political scene of the Byzantine Empire. When the Palaiologans held the power in Byzantine throne, a period of annihilation from the historical sources for some families of the Nicaean era has already started. Kyritses gives the Sampson family and the Gabalades of Rhodes as a few instances for great landlords, and Krateros, Kourtikes, Ikanatos, or Kammytzes-Kammytzoboukes as some other families or individuals.[183] This seems to be a common situation for any period, because it is very reasonable that a government would possibly not embrace/accept the old families, who took active positions in the former one and were engaged in close relations with it.

The Provincial Aristocracy in the Nicaean Empire

With the Latin conquest of Constantinople, the Frankish conquerors came to term with the cities and their lords. They recognized the rights of the *archontes*, one of whom was the Caesar Theodore Branas, the *capitaneus* of the city of Adrianople and whose position was simple, inherited from his family. The *archontes* certainly tried to keep –and extend– their privileged positions between 1204 and 1261. Byzantine hegemony in Greece was restored by series of compensation paid for the local aristocrats (e.g. Maliasenos family), who kept administering their estates during the Nicaean period. Some urban centers preserved their economic activity through privileges settled by dominant political factors. As a common policy of the Latins towards Byzantine cities, *Pactum Adrianopolitanum* illustrates a specific case

[183] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, pp. 80-81.

making Venetians to agree with the privileges given to Theodore Branas, autonomous ruler of the city of Adrianople.[184] The aristocrats of large cities, as a result of the treaty, defended their security of interest and their positions. This was a treaty signed in 1206 between the Venetian *podesta* of Constantinople and the Adrianopolitan representatives. While the grant of the imperial privileges to cities was exceptional in pre-1204 period, it turned out to be common situation as a result of that treaty.

The Nicaean period represents an opposition against the Angelid rule in terms of both political and social considerations. The detachment of the Nicaean aristocrats from the ones of the Angelid era becomes concrete when one focuses on the surnames that they preferred. Instead of adding the surname Angelos, they rather used luster-adding surnames such as Komnenos and Doukas.[185]

The rising opposition against the courtly favoritism became more observable in rhetorical tradition of the early fourteenth century. A representative of such genre, Magistros, who was telling that an emperor should provide offices for the natives and giving the example of foreign mercenaries, used in the imperial army, formulated his suggestions to the ruler. Dimiter Angelov puts it as follows:

> He inveighed against the appointment of inept imperial relatives as governors of cities and against the privileged position of the emperor's kinsmen and friends at courts of law. Magistros urged the emperor to be generous to all subjects, not just to a small circle

[184] Angold, "Administration of the Empire of Nicaea," pp. 134-135. As an illustrator for local aristocracy's strong power base, for the influential Branas family and Adrianople, see Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, pp. 152-153. The Branas family, probably of Slavic origin, is attested in the Byzantine sources from the eleventh century onwards. Many family members had posts in military and civil administration. The family had estates and properties in Smyrna region in the thirteenth century. The family's existence continued all the way well into the fourteenth century. Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 168-170; Alexander Kazhdan, "Branas," *ODB*, vol. 1, pp. 319-320.

[185] See ibid., p. 221; Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*…, p. 211, fn. 28.

> of privileged individuals. In this sense he opposed a government run by privilege and a ruling aristocratic clan.[186]

In the late thirteenth century literature, hatred views about the prominent aristocratic families, i.e. the Angeloi, were reflected particularly in the verses of an anonymous poet. He describes the Angeloi 'bastard and evil–growing family'.[187]

In the Nicaean period, household government remained as the main attitude of the court. Again, we encounter the simplification of the structure of the government and substitution of the important governmental positions to the relatives of the imperial family or the favorite aristocratic families. Angold defines the characteristics of the Nicaean imperial governmental policy:

> In the course of the period of exile there were many changes in the military organization of the Empire. The direction these took reflects two trends. On the one hand, the changes came about as a result of the pressure which the Nicaean conquests in Europe placed upon the resources of the Empire; on the other, they reflect the way Nicaean central administration came to be concentrated in the imperial household. The imperial retinue became the core of the field army. The chief commands were given very often to the holders of the most important household offices. At the same time, military and naval commanders had a very large part to play in all aspects of the administration. They were frequently governors of provinces.[188]

Theodore I Laskaris' brothers were given the title of *sebastokrator*. As a part of conciliatory policy, similar treatment was also conducted for the aristocrats of Western Asia Minor. Angold states as follows:

> Theodore [I] Laskaris induced them to recognize his overriding authority, but in return he had to tolerate their ascendancy in their localities. A sign of this was the grant of high court titles. Sabas Asidenos at Miletus and Nicephorus Kontostephanos in the

[186] Ibid., p. 303.

[187] Polemis, *The Doukai*…, p. 13, fn. 2 citing J. Müller, "Byzantinische Analekten," *Sitzungsberichte der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse*,9 (Vienna, 1853), 376, vv. 320-323.

[188] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, pp. 200-201.

> Maiander valley were both accorded the dignity of *sebastokrator*, which until then had been reserved for brothers and uncles of reigning emperors. The slightly lesser dignity of Caesar was given to Leo Gabalas who had seized the island of Rhodes in the chaos surrounding the fall of Constantinople.[189]

During the early years of Theodore I Laskaris' reign, these *archontes* cause much trouble for him. In spite of their challenging stands/attitudes toward Nicaea, Theodore could fortunately establish control over these provincial aristocrats due to short duration of their authority, except for Leo Gabalas, independent ruler of Rhodes.[190] Theodore I Laskaris behaved politically circumspect that he punished the rebellious aristocrats of the provinces while for another sum of the provincial aristocrats he chose to come to some kind of agreement with them. European provinces remained crucial in Nicaean policy during the reign of Theodore II in spite of some conspiracy against the emperor. A harsh contradiction can be observed between the aristocracy of the Western provinces and the emperor during the last years of the Nicaean dynasty.[191] The conspiracies by some prominent aristocratic families (e.g. the *protovestiarios* Alexios Raoul, the *megas primmikerios* Constantine Tornikes) in these provinces were promptly and in dissuasive way exposed to drastic orders. Several office-holders, including the governor of Thessalonike, Theodore Philes, and the Alexios Strategopoulos, son of the governor of Serres, were the individuals who were put on the target and be punished either by physical torture or by losing their titles, thus losing their offices.[192]

The opposition already pervaded in aristocratic society, having been bothered by the Nicaean emperors' policies. The aristocrats were at hand waiting to overthrow

[189] Ibid., p. 129.

[190] Ibid.

[191] Puech, "The Aristocracy and the Empire of Nicaea," p. 76.

[192] Ibid., pp. 74-75.

the Laskarid dynasty after Theodore II Laskaris' death. Their intention and capacity were enough to replace the Laskarid dynasty with the Palaiologoi. Theodore II Laskaris' death became a milestone for some aristocratic families supporting Michael Palaiologos as the regent to the throne. Akropolites gives the names of the supporters, "who had been maltreated by the emperor [Theodore II Laskaris]", at that incidence: Alexios Strategopoulos, Constantine Tornikes, Theodore Philes, George Zagarommates, Nikephoros Alyates, and some members of the Raoul family.[193] Among them, for example, George Zagarommates owned large amounts of property in Smyrna and its surrounding areas. He seemed to be active in government served in different offices including *protovestiarites* under the Laskarids.[194] Some of these individuals have taken active part in administration both civil and military already long before 1258. More to these supporters can be added: the families of Nestongos, Kavallarios, Kamytzes, Angelos, Aprenos, Livadarios, Tarchaneiotes, Philanthropenos, Kantakuzenos and Palaiologos.[195] Apart from the close circle around the emperor, there was an interest-shared body of higher aristocratic families.

In rural areas, various aristocratic families were participating in social and administrative life. Pachymeres gives a list of the most influential families in Byzantium by the second half of the thirteenth century, which was extended by Angold by adding a couple of more: Tzamantouroi (or Laskarids), Tornikioi, Strategopouloi, Raoul, Palaiologoi, Vatatzai, Philai, Kavallarioi, Nestongoi, Kamytzai, Aprenoi, Angeloi, Livadarioi, Tarchaneiotai, Philanthropenoi, Kantakouzenoi, Petraliphas, Vranas, and Synadenoi families. Among them,

[193] George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 339, #75. Also, mentioned together with Pachymeres' account by Laiou, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Palaeologan Period…," pp. 133-134.

[194] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la region de Smyrne…," pp. 177-178; George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 342, n. 11 referring to MM, IV, 11, 31, 232-236.

[195] Laiou, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Palaeologan Period…," p. 134, referring to Pachymeres, 1. 65.

Nestongos, Philes, Branas, Tarchaneiotes, Aprenos, Synadenos were great aristocratic families which possessed large lands and engaged in intimate relations with the ruling dynasty both before and after 1204. These families were so powerful that there were some families which "usurped" the rights of the Nicaean Empire in terms of land sovereignty. That is, they had no loyalty to the Empire in exile, and were holding the territories of certain lands. For instance, the Gabalas family was controlling Rhodes from the sack of Constantinople onwards. This situation was seriously opposed by the Nicaean government.[196]

Social backgrounds matter in the provincial aristocrats' provincial power. Alexios Apokaukos, for example, had a 'civilian' background, from Bithynia. Like him, Nikephoros Gregoras, from Herakleia (Paphlagonia), had also provincial background.[197] Among these families, some had long history bearing prominent places in Byzantine society. One can follow their family lines even as far as the tenth century. For instance, the Tarchaneiotai, from the nobles of Adrianople; they occupied important military posts from the tenth century onward. Moreover, the family members possessed properties in Bare, which was a village near Smyrna in the thirteenth century.[198] The family took an opposing side against the Anatolian aristocracy, who in the eleventh century struggled with the state.[199] In Smyrna region, there were important families, who have had the ascendancy above the central authority. The Gordatos family, the Thrakeses and the Petritzes families were some leading families of the region. In that way, they effectively participated in the

[196] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile…*, p. 69. George Akropolites, *The History*, #27 and #28, pp. 184-185 and p. 187. Also see Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, p. 114.

[197] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 82.

[198] George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 170. Akropolites mentions the Tarchaneiotai also in ibid., p. 200 and p. 202.

[199] Kazhdan, "Tarchaneiotes," pp. 2011-2012.

local politics and were given *pronoiai*, and served in the imperial administration system.

Information we can get from the evidences of the cartulary of the Lembos Monastery and the archives of Patmos Monastery, leads us a general idea about the social–political positions of the aristocrats especially in western parts of Asia Minor. Their close ties with the imperial family (i.e. they were given the rights to use the lands which provided either as *pronoia* or that they were the *oikeioi* of the emperor) and their titles (e.g. *sebastos*) indicate how they occupied such important positions in the provinces of Asia Minor. The aristocrats were quite wealthy. Some of them have long possessed prosperity in the provinces. On the other hand, they were holding both higher and lower administrative responsibilities.

Favoring the Aristocracy of Asia Minor

As understood from the words of Angold, the aristocracy's exclusively privileged role retained under the 'Empire in exile.' Nicaean central administration was much more strongly based in Asia Minor. Provincial administration was never established in Thrace and Macedonia until their recapture by the Nicaeans. The fall of Constantinople to the Latins in 1204 led to a great flee of the lay aristocracy to Asia Minor. There, the monasteries became important shelter for not only the refugee for the clergy but also for the bureaucrats.[200] Theodore I Laskaris had found himself dependent to the support of local aristocrats for reestablishment of Byzantine power in Western Asia Minor after 1204. After Byzantium revived in Nicaea with the

[200] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, p. 11. First Laskarid rulers had some difficulties managing the local aristocracy. Even if it was a troublesome issue, they achieved the balance between the state and the aristocracy. Ibid., pp. 62-63.

emperor Theodore I Laskaris' military accomplishments, it has become eminently stronger after undeniably effective military, civil and ecclesiastical aristocrats in Theodore I Laskaris' state. That was succeeded by "a liberal distribution of revenue-producing grants, usually but not always land, known as *pronoeae* [*pronoiai*] or *oeconomeae*."[201] People from lower background became the aristocrats and constituted the 'Anatolian' aristocracy.

Theodore II Laskaris had Michael Palaiologos as his rival to the throne. He needed an exclusive policy so that he could cope with that problem of heir to the throne. The emperor's plan was, then, to balance the Constantinopolitan aristocracy with the aristocrats of Asia Minor, since the former was supporting Michael.[202] Akropolites describes a man (Constantine Margarites) who was coming from a humble, peasant background. With regard to his service at the court and in the army–occupied positions in the high ranks of the thematic army–and his skilful career, he had emperor's favor and was consequently granted with the title '*megas'*; therefore, he became an *archon* eventually for the emperor's company – actually to a segment in the regiment of the army. This occurred for the first time. That fortunate man was from Neokastra.[203] That particular example from the 1250s shows that rising to the first ranks of the administrative class was possible especially for the individuals from Anatolia. This situation is linked with Theodore II's favoritism. Emperor's policy was to balance the rising Constantinople's aristocracy (e.g. Michael Palaiologos)

[201] Peter Charanis, "On the Social Structure and Economic Organization of the Byzantine Empire in the Thirteenth Century and Later," *Bsl* 12 (1951), p. 97.

[202] George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 88, fn. 569 referring to Vincent Puech, *L'Aristocratie et le pouvoir à Byzance au XIIIe siècle (1204-1310)* (Thèse de Doctorat, Université de Versailles/Saint–Quentin-en-Yvelines, 2000), pp. 344-6, pp. 388-394.

[203] George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 297, #60.

with the intentionally privileged individuals from Anatolia.[204] Thus, besides the Constantinopolitan aristocracy, the aristocrats of Asia Minor came to prominent positions in bureaucratic/administrative body of the Byzantine government. To put it simply, Theodore II Laskaris aimed to place officers of lower stock to higher offices, in other words, it was an 'anti-Constantinopolitan aristocracy' policy, which he inherited from his father, John III Vatatzes.[205] This may be exemplified with another instance. George Mouzalon of Atramyttion's rise to upper positions in the government apparently illustrates that the children of the local humble background who were raised at the court and educated have come to high positions in bureaucracy.[206]

Actually the very phenomenon about the provinces of Asia Minor and the preference of the Nicaean emperors all along resulted in Theodore II's reliance on the Bithynian aristocracy. Puech points out this as follows:

> …Theodore II relied systematically on the aristocracy of north-western Asia Minor, reinforcing the ties formed during his father's reign. Apart from the case of the Mouzalones, one must realize that the imperial entourage was recruited from among the aristocracy. It is true that many of these individuals did not enter the nexus of clans related to the imperial family until the reign of Theodore II. But the same claim can be made for the party of the Palaiologoi, which was not really promoted until the reign of Michael VIII. Theodore II chose for the patriarchate Arsenios Autoreianos, who possessed two important advantages for the emperor: his family ties and his membership of the Bithynian clergy.[207]

As exemplified above, powerful families existed in the provinces under the Laskarid rule. Their economic power and their military capacity were so considerable that the

[204] Ibid., "Introduction," p. 88, as written by Ruth Macrides, citing Puech, *L'Aristocratie et le pouvoir*..., pp. 344-346 and 388-394.

[205] Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*…, pp. 179-180.

[206] Ibid., pp. 210-211.

[207] Puech, "The Aristocracy and the Empire of Nicaea," p. 77.

Nicaean Empire never won a complete victory over its provinces especially the ones close to the Turkish border. Families like Maurozomes or another rival, David Komnenos, who was one of the two founders of the Empire of Trebizond, often caused threats for the Laskarid Nicaea.[208]

Defense of Self-interests: Local Aristocratic Resistances

Imperial politics consciously eliminating and dissatisfying the provincial aristocrats made the problem deeper. The problem was the tension between the state and the local aristocracy and had been gradually set over a few centuries. It gained ace as the Komnenoi took power over the state. Alexios I Komnenos had to spend his first years on campaigns with the aim of defeating rebellious aristocrats throughout the Empire. The tension seems to have been reduced during the following two Komnenian emperors, John II and Manuel I. Aristocratic resistance against the administrative authorities had affected an extensive area. The former's attempt to establish control over the inhabitants turned into an independent attitude explicitly manifested between 1180 and 1204. Some of the aristocrats were the officials who found the opportunity to break away from central government. Niketas Choniates gives an example among others of a *phorologos* of the theme Mylassa and Melanoudion, Michael Komnenos Doukas. He was the son of *sebastokrator* John, so an imperial appointee. He rebelled against Alexios III Angelos in summer of 1200 while he was serving as tax collector in Mylassa.[209] Their breakaway gives them

[208] Savvides, *Byzantium in the Near East*…, pp. 55-58. Akropolites points to the struggle between Theodore I Laskaris and some Anatolian aristocracy: "The emperor Theodore also prevailed over the ruler of Paphlagonia, David, and brought to terms Herakleia and Amastris and all the surrounding land and fortresses." George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 132.

[209] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 290; Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," p 275.

another opportunity to negotiate with the Seljuk sultans for military supports for extending lands in the absence of central Byzantine authority. Michael received help from Rukn al-Dīn, and thus, was able to demolish Byzantine settlements in the Maeander valley.[210] Therefore, resistances were not necessarily originating from the local aristocratic families; however, imperial officials could sometimes gained authority in their area of service without any local connection.

A general decline of provincial administration became more explicit in the eleventh century. As formerly pointed out, the disintegration process for the provinces gradually deepened, due to the hardly tolerable taxation burden on local inhabitants. Tax increases were imposed under different names. Their increased number and amount eventually could not be handled by the people. At the end, the rising tension triggered the local revolts, especially after Basil II's reign. Common people sometimes must have supported local aristocrats in their opposing attitudes in the hope of gaining advantages against taxation policies of the Empire. Nikoulitzas Delphinas, although he did not have aristocratic background, was a landowner in Thessaly. His motivation behind opposing against the tax increases was interestingly supported by the common local people, not the aristocrats.[211] Separatist ideas come exactly out of that picture.[212]

Local patriotism was influential among the provincial aristocrats especially seeking to preserve their local interests and the local people's benefits. Of course, this has been done in a variety of ways. Establishing themselves upon a glorious past,

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[210] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 290; Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," p. 275. Niketas Choniates, once more in the text, shows fierce accusation directed towards the Komnenian dynasty. He relates almost all the negative situations the Empire experienced with the Komnenoi. Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 290.

[211] Alan Harvey, *Economic Expansion in the Byzantine Empire 900-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 114-115, citing Kekaumenos, *Cecaumeni Strategicon*, B. Wassiliewsky and V. Jernstedt, ed., (St. Petersburg: n. p., 1896), [reprinted in Amsterdam, 1965], pp. 66-72.

[212] Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," p. 255.

for instance, was the major attempt indicative of local patriotism. The aristocrats were trying to legitimize their local identity as a way of self-defense. It is available to us through Michael Choniates' -the erudite metropolitan of Athens- writings as Magdalino makes it clear that Michael's goal was to give 'regional feeling' to local people and make them tied to their territories through defending his fellow townsmen's interest.[213] Digging for an ancient origin became common trend among other ecclesiastical aristocrats, such as the metropolitans of Corinth, Thebes and Ephesos.[214] Local patriotism was not limited to ecclesiastical authorities. Yet, it sometimes dispersed to power-holders from different segments of society; each was prioritizing to self-interests that are enduring self-existence on the locale without resignation from old rights.

Local separatism appears as an outcome of this process, which at the end became a serious problem for the integrity of the central Byzantine government. Considering the distribution of civil local aristocrats, the Armenians, or others may have had similar orientations-motivations for their living area. The formation of 'national' kingdoms of the Serbs and the Armenians were the results in the past. Now, we must turn to local aristocracy, narrower in scope but more in quantity.

A single powerful man (*dynastes*), whose fame derived from his opposition to the central authority's politics and his ardent support for the local interests, was usually heading the movement. These kinds of individuals came to the picture in

[213] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 154. The bishop had a very prominent role in encouraging local patriotism among the people. Magdalino points out the very influence of the bishop as follows: "As one of the largest local property owners, the guardian of local religious tradition, and the community's official representative, the bishop was an obvious focus for community and regional feeling." Ibid., p. 155. Also, see Ahrweiler, *L'idéologie politique*…, pp. 87-102, the part titled 'patriotisme provincial et attitude anti-Constantinopolitaine.'

[214] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 154. The archbishops of Ohrid were putting forward some arguments about their roots in the area, which even reached Justiniana Prima at the beginning of the pedigree. Ibid., citing Günter Prinzing, "Entstehung und Rezeption der Justiniana-Prima Theorie im Mittelalter," *Byzantinobulgarica* 5 (1978), p. 272ff.

both preceding and succeeding periods of the Komnenoi, whose rule can be summarized as the peak of centralism. Their power must have been gradually established in Komnenian era. For instance, Theodore Mangaphas' state of authority was becoming predominated around Philadelphia perhaps in Manuel's last years or just after him until the early years of the thirteenth century.[215]

Frontier regions would be indicative for the provincial aristocrats' positions in provincial society. In late twelfth century, administration was in control of the provincial aristocrats in frontier zones. They were holding a place in which they sometimes acted independently in times of crisis on the borders. Their authority was recognized by the emperor. That strength brought them certain kind of 'autonomy' that they could change their side and take a contrary stand against state's policy. The fluid nature of the provincial aristocracy gains prominence at that point. Cheynet put it in a nut shell: "…at Amasea, the citizens protested against the arrest by Alexios Komnenos of Roussel de Bailleul, who had effectively protected them against the Turks."[216] Similarly in favor of the public, tax impositions were objected by the aristocrats of Antioch.[217] Therefore, it is essential to point out that if the local interests were in question, the provincial aristocrats and local people tended to follow the path that provided them the most appropriate conditions.

Provincial Rebellions

All these points lead us to provincial rebellions which need to be read as signs and results of political power of the provincial aristocrats. During the period of

[215] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 155.

[216] Cheynet, "Official Power…," p. 141.

[217] Ibid.

reconstruction after the fatal defeat at Mantzikert in 1071, the Byzantine Empire had to face with various regional oppositions. The rebellions cropped up in many parts of the empire from Asia Minor to the big islands such as Cyprus and Crete.[218]

At first glance, from the tenth-eleventh centuries onwards, many rebellions had occurred in Byzantine territories. For example, Bardas Phokas' and Bardas Skleros' rebellions had extensive echo in Asian territories of the Empire.[219] Other rebellious families of Armenian origin may well be Bourtzes[220] and Tornikios.[221] While the former was politically and militarily important during the reign of Alexios I Komnenos, the members of the Tornikios family occupied significant positions in the government. Furthermore, the Tornikios family was later attested in Nicaean government. Demetrios Tornikes (Tornikios) held civil position in the Nicaean Empire as a *mesazon* (ca. 1216-ca. 1246). Being Theodore I Laskaris' chief minister, thus, will be very effective in the prosperity of the Tornikioi family in the future.[222]

On the disloyalty of Armenian civilians and military groups, their desertion from the Byzantine army at Mantzikert would serve a mirror. Moreover, the Armenians had constituted a remarkable body of the Byzantine army for centuries. There were various Armenian generals in the Byzantine army in the eleventh century, but they could not achieve to establish themselves in state organization due to the changes in political conditions of Asia Minor.[223] Armenian presence in

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[218] Provincial riots occurred in Cyprus headed by Rhapsomates, and in Crete by Karykes, who were basically taking control of the imperial territories. Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, pp. 272-273.

[219] The Skleroi were an Armenian family whose members took part in politics of Byzantine Empire during the eleventh century. "A Skleros was involved in the revolt of the military which put Isaac Comnenus on the throne in 1057 (Cedrenus, 2, 622); another took part in the conspiracy of the Anemas family against Alexius Comnenus. (Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 382)." Peter Charanis, "The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire," *Bsl* 22 (1961), p. 225.

[220] See Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, pp. 481-482.

[221] For the Tornikios family, see Charanis, "The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire," pp. 229-230.

[222] See Schmalzbauer, 'Die Tornikioi…," pp. 115-135.

[223] Charanis, "The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire," pp. 235-236.

Byzantine commonwealth, however, did not cease. We see two groups located in western Asia Minor during the thirteenth century.[224]

Similarly in the initial years of the Laskarids, the provincial aristocracy was so powerful that even there were some families which "usurped" the rights of the Nicaean Empire in terms of land sovereignty. In other words, they had no loyalty to the Empire in exile, and were holding the territories of certain lands. For instance, the Gabalas family controlled Rhodes from the sack of Constantinople by the Latins onwards. This situation was seriously opposed by the Nicaean government.[225]

A variety of factors functioned in provincial rebellions. If we look at the question from the state side, it would seem to us differently. The governmental position assigned to an individual, would well be first of them. An administrative post provided him local authority up to a certain level, which was transformed into autonomy, or even ended with an extreme opposition or rebellion. It also increased the fame of an individual who gained it in the area where he had his duty. He held that 'position' through administrative position and economic wealth that came with it. Gregory Taronites, a noble of Armenian origin, was assigned the *doux* Trapezus, yet he rebelled against Alexios I Komnenos in 1103-1104, and tried to establish his control in the area.[226]

The rebels were mainly either the Empire's officials or emperor's *douloi*, who were the individuals with whom the state once established reciprocal interest relations, or served in local armies. Physical distance (that, we may term as 'provinciality') produced suitable ground for rising up easily as a powerful side. The officials appointed to the provinces, as they firmly established their power bases,

[224] Ibid., p. 237.

[225] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, p. 28.

[226] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, pp. 386-387; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et Contestations*…, p. 101, nr. 131.

constituted a constant potential to rebel against the central government. In the absence of state authority, they had the means to orient people under their governance. The officials were able to establish themselves firmly in the area. Not interestingly, therefore, most of the rebels were among the local power holders. What was the role of the lower aristocracy in this context? Did it remain inactive in the dissolution process? This depended on the capacity. If a lower aristocrat was not able to reach administrative positions vital for the province at least, he could not extend his influence.

Whether the provincial aristocrats were incorporated into the system of governance before they gained challenging power in certain areas or they were given offices due to their influence seems to be obscure. The obvious thing, however, was that the state seems to have been constrained to establish a mutual beneficial relationship with the local authorities.

As the channels for authority were allowed in Komnenian model, the aristocrats would easily find the chance to become challenging power. In that context, imperial control over the extension of aristocratic power becomes obvious when we look at the precautions that the state took against the aristocrats, who in away 'overextended' the acceptable limits in the eyes of the state. That can be related with sometimes a suspicion for the fidelity of the aristocracy and sometimes the economic-political rise of that group. The confiscation of property and the exile stand out as common treatments in such cases, as explained in various times by Anna Komnene, conducted by the government or its officials.[227] The former of these

[227] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, pp. 59-60. In Anna Komnene's account, there is the confiscation of property of Diogenes and Kekaumenos Katakalon and Michael Taronites, who were among the aristocrats sent into exile to Cyprus or Caesaropolis. Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 286 and p. 359. Furthermore, Ariebes (an Armenian) and Humbertopoulos (a Kelt) were important office holders who were thought that they were preparing a plot; and they were sent to exile, their properties were confiscated. Ibid., pp. 261-262.

practices was exercised against the monastic/ecclesiastical property by the state in Alexios I's reign.[228]

The provincial aristocracy remained relatively under control of the imperial initiative at least throughout the first three Komnenian emperors. A scholar has identified this as a process of 'Constantinopolitization' either through the functions of their offices or titles, or their linkage with the imperial family.[229] The well-structured bureaucratic cadre, often remained unaffected after a political change, became, then on, open to be forfeited, or dismissed by Alexios I Komnenos.[230] As the provincial aristocracy increased its authority in several regions, the provincial aristocrats gained important positions without establishing linkages with the imperial family.[231]

During the early Komnenian era social and political upheavals had various characters. There were social, political and religious movements (Italos' case or the Paulicianism), constituted problems for the central state. The Komnenoi perceived themselves as the 'defenders of orthodoxy'. Several of potential or 'dangerous' thoughts were tried to be eliminated from the minds of the Byzantines. These opposing religious movements sometimes appeared as serious cases for the Komnenian government. These were not necessarily religious in manner. Some political opposition was also recorded. Alexios I Komnenos , after he came to throne, waged 'war' against his opponents within the Church. Leo of Chalcedon was a leader of one opposition in his reign. As a result the bishop was exiled. Thus, as it has already been argued, the 'exiles' were a way of precaution that the imperial power

[228] Kazhdan, "State, Feudal, and Private Economy in Byzantium," p. 98.

[229] Hélène Ahrweiler, "Recherches sur la société byzantine au XIe siècle," *Travaux et mémoires* 6 (1976), pp. 104-110; Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 65.

[230] Ibid., pp. 66-67.

[231] Ibid., p. 65.

preferred to control the aristocracy. Similar cases occurred several times in the eleventh century. Another kind of 'risky' situation for the state, moreover, appeared: treason. To a rebel aristocrat (e.g. a member of the Bourtzes family) committed treason, confiscation of his lands and properties was mostly preferred by the central government as a counter-action.[232]

Even though the Empire took precautions against possibility of aristocratic power breaking the state control, it had to deal with many rebellious aristocrats. In her panegyric history of Alexios I's reign (*Alexiad*),[233] Anna Komnene speaks of many riots in the provinces. Philaretos Brachamios' rebellion in Antioch would be an example in that respect. He occupied high military ranks including domestic prior to 1071, promoted by Romanos Diogenes.[234] He got control of Antioch and its surrounding (Edessa, Melitene, Tarsos) after 1071. As a Byzantine general, his powerful position no doubt played crucial role in his independence.[235] He was an Armenian. Philaretos decided to join Turks, who were on the frontier zone plundering the countryside.[236] The Armenian Brachamios family had occupied significant offices since the mid-tenth century, including high military ones such as *doux*, *strategos*, etc. The family seems not to have existed in Byzantine sources after

[232] Vryonis, "The Peira…," pp. 138-139. For property and confiscation, see Alexander Kazhdan, "Some Observations on the Byzantine Concept of Law: Three Authors of the Ninth through the Twelfth Centuries," in *Law and Society in Byzantium: Ninth–Twelfth Centuries*, A. Laiou and D. Simon (eds), (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1994), p. 215.

[233] *Alexiad* is a personal interpretation (intrusion of the Byzantine author into the text- self-insertion) of the history, which has turned out to be an imperial (dynastic) and individual propaganda in the whole book and a general expression of classical tradition in style and vocabulary. Scott, "The Classical Tradition…," pp. 61-74.

[234] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 198.

[235] Alexander Kazhdan, "Brachamios," *ODB*, vol. 1. p. 319. Also see, C. J. Yarnley, "Philaretos: Armenian Bandit or Byzantine General?" *Revue des études arméniennes* (new series) 9 (1972), pp. 331-353.

[236] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 198. Kazhdan, "Brachamios," p. 319.

the eleventh century, excluding some messengers between Manuel I Komnenos and the Armenians in 1170s.

Similar situations occurred in the thirteenth-century Byzantium. The Byzantine aristocrats sometimes made switches if the existing situations were deteriorating against their interests. The situation occurred often either whence the state had been stuck by many internal or external troubles or when the conditions were more promising. At first glance, it seems that some powerful aristocrats preferred to shelter under the Latin aristocracy after Constantinople fell to the Latin hands. Theodore Branas and Michael Angelos, who established the Despotate of Epiros, found themselves positions within new political formations. They both entered into Latin aristocracy.[237] Furthermore, a certain Theophilopoulos entered into the Latins' service and was handed over the defense of the Skamander region after its capture by the Latins. He was certainly a Greek local aristocrat who attended Latin administration of the area between 1212 and 1224.[238]

Opposite circumstances were also prevalent. The Byzantine Empire became the pole of attraction occasionally. Individuals, who defected to the other side, can be attested among the Turkish aristocracy. Skaliarios was a Turkish aristocrat who chose to shelter in Byzantine court and became Christian. He, as Anna Komnene notes, "in the old days had been a famous general in the east."[239] Philaretos' son provides an evidence for the subject on the Byzantine sides. He sought support from the *emir* of Nicaea, the Emir Suleyman in order to overturn his father.[240] Furthermore, as the recovery of European territories began in the 1220s and 1230s,

[237] Angold, "Byzantine 'Nationalism' and the Nicaean Empire," *BMGS* 1 (1975), p. 50.

[238] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, p. 241. See George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 153, #16, and p. 154, note 5.

[239] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 409.

[240] Ibid., pp. 198-199.

once lost to the Latins, the Byzantine aristocracy tended to hold new positions in administrative cadre of those regions. At that milieu, aristocrats from the Despotate of Epiros had also raised intentions following a new career under the Empire's territories, which was at that time expanding in Europe. Thessalonike became the center for newcomers as members of the provincial aristocracy after 1240.[241]

It should always be remembered that provincial rebellions had various bases. They may have well been derived from military bases of provincial aristocrats. Several *strategoi* raised rebellions against the central government.[242] A provincial rebellion held by the governor of Akrounos (Michael from Amastris) presents another example.[243] His duty provided him considerable ascendance in the region. Similar rebellions existed in various parts of the Empire. Eustathios Kamytzes, who was the *doux* of Nicaea, constitutes an example for such cases.[244] He was an individual holding both civil and military positions together. Other examples can be given: Strabobasileios and Michael Stypiotes were soldiers from aristocratic class with a prominent background; Monastras was the authority in Pergamon, Chliara and the surrounding towns; Anna Komnene states that other coastal cities were also "controlled by officers distinguished for their boldness and experience as leaders."[245]

Alexios I Komnenos followed a 'balance' policy. He decided to keep the provincial aristocracy connected to the state through bestowing them several ranks. There were several ways of acquiring titles. Firstly, holding a council was part of his policy with which he aimed to consult to the senate members and high-ranked

[241] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 139.

[242] Other than military reasons, there were also some dissident movements of religious character in the Komnenian period, such as John Italos' case. Here, yet, rebellions originated from political issues will be put forward.

[243] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 446.

[244] Ibid., pp. 452-453.

[245] Ibid., p. 445 and p. 474.

military aristocrats in need of help.[246] The emperor gathered aristocrats of the city of Adrianople, and assigned them a task of protection of the citadel in times of Cuman incursion. Adrianople was a city at the centre of the networks of cities in Thrace. The Bryennioi and Tarchaneiotes family were strong there, so the emperor should have met their interests. Convention of the leading citizens of the city was obviously in order to maintain their loyalty to the Empire.[247] He assured the aristocrats of the city titles and other awards as he gave Katakalon Tarchaneiotes, prominent elite of the city, a title of *nobilissimus* for his achievement in the battlefield.[248]

Secondly, individuals were given titles sometimes in return for their achievements in warfare. The following case also shows the accompaniment of the aristocracy in the service of imperial army. Manuel Boutoumites, who was assigned commander of a segment of the army during the siege of Nicaea, and after its recapture (1097) from the Seljuks following the siege, he was appointed as the *doux* of the city.[249] Manuel Boutoumites is among the first known members of the family as far as the sources have come down to our day. He served as commander later on his career. He was in the army in Cilia in 1105. A few years later, in 1111-1112, he

[246] Ibid., p. 440.

[247] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, p. 130. Angold mentions a convention similar to one in Adrianople in terms of emperor's approach. "There is plenty of evidence from both the Balkans and Asia Minor that the loyalties of local townspeople to the Empire were scarcely even lukewarm. Occasionally, local opinion was so powerful that it had to be consulted, as happened in 1094 at Ankhialos on the Black Sea coast during the Cuman war. Alexius was using it as his main base and his position was uncertain. Other towns in the area had gone over to the enemy. So, he called a general council of war, to which the leading citizens of the town were invited. Local interests were more often ignored. Military governors instituted a regime that was harsh in the extreme. They were interested in securing supplies for their own men and to do so terrorized the surrounding countryside. They were also there to back up the activities of the tax-collectors. The passage of tax-collectors at this time was little different from that of an invading army, perhaps worse because they plundered more systematically." Ibid., pp. 129-130. That specific instance shows that Alexios I Komnenos considered or had to consider local initiatives.

[248] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 299.

[249] Ibid., p. 340.

was sent to Jerusalem as an envoy. The family almost disappeared after the twelfth century.[250]

Thirdly, noble background was considered an advantage for an individual to be appropriated to a high position. A particular Oshin, an Armenian noble of Cilician descend, is mentioned in *Alexiad*. Anna Komnene was impressed by his lineage, just like her father, whose thoughts about Oshin were expressed through the mouth of her. As she quotes, Alexios I eulogizes his bravery and noble origin. This is the foremost reason behind his appointment as a governor by the emperor. The Armenian noble was promoted to the office of *stratopedarches* (head of the thematic army) and sent to Cilicia by the emperor in order to balance Tancred's threat there.[251] An individual having local roots, therefore, was appointed to his homeland due to his local power base.

In Byzantium, families sometimes became a rival to be the ruler. Some rebellions were intended to overwhelm the existing ruling elite or the emperors. As Kazhdan and Epstein note:

> In 1057, Emperor Michael VI was dethroned by the combined efforts of a popular insurrection in Constantinople and an aristocratic rebellion in Asia Minor headed by Isaac Comnenus and Katakalon Kekaumenos, both of them able generals supported by the local nobility. In 1078, Nikephoros Botaneiates, also a noble general, was proclaimed emperor by the people from the agora, including tradesmen as well as the representatives of the clergy and the state. Some of the ruling authorities hoped to smash the rebellion, since the crowd, they said, consisted predominantly of craftsmen inexperienced in warfare, but the frightened Michael VII allowed the rebels to take over.[252]

[250] Alexander Kazhdan, "Boutoumites," *ODB*, vol. 1, pp. 318-319.

[251] Ibid., pp. 372-374.

[252] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 54.

Bureaucratic families had gained prominent roles in society through their networks and benefits (political and economic) provided by their positions. The reasons of their social status were inter-related. This chain of effect sometimes made them prominent actors in historical events (e.g. on the overthrown of Isaac II Angelos, heralding the end of the Angelos dynasty on Byzantine throne).[253] Provincial aristocratic power even reached a point enabling to take a contrary stand against central government. Andronikos Nestongos, supported by Theodore I Laskaris' two brothers and some notables in Nicaea, attempted to overthrow John III Vatatzes.[254]

However, each struggle for the throne gave birth to possible occasions for provincial rebellions. Political decomposition became apparent in Byzantium on the eve of 1204. Constantinople has almost lost control over its provinces. Thereby the countryside has come under certain aristocrats' domination, whose power often remained local, though sometimes extended to other areas.[255] Some of these rebellions should further be mentioned briefly in order to get the idea of provinciality and power-holders in provinces in eleventh–thirteenth centuries.

During the Komnenian era, local individuals/groups challenged the central authority of Constantinople as Cheynet identifies in his book *Pouvoir et Contestations à Byzance (963-1210).* Alexios I's reign did not discard old military families from the provincial affairs all at once. He had to handle the opposition, yet not of a severe one for the Empire, rose in Asian and European provinces as disobedience against the new emperor. As Anna Komnene mentions, the emperor sent Bourtzes and Dabatenos, who were both *toparches* of Cappadocia and Choma, and Pontic Heraklea respectively, letters in order to provide military support both for

[253] Michael Angold, "The Imperial Administration and the Patriarchal Clergy in Twelfth Century," *BF* 19 (1993), p. 23.

[254] Savvides, *Byzantium in the Near East*…, p. 188.

[255] Angold, "Administration of the Empire of Nicaea," p. 127.

the cities that they were governing and for the army in Constantinople. As military aristocrats, some other names also appear: Mandales in Kybistra, Constantine in Iconium, and Makres in Kabala.[256] All these instances show that military tradition was still an important component in provinces.

The separatist movements had local support (from the provincial aristocracy) behind them. The phenomenon can be followed throughout the twelfth century. A case from the later part of the century is well stated in Magdalino's sentences:

> Released upon payment of a ransom by Andronikos I, Isaac promptly spent the money –no doubt with the connivance of Rupen and Bohemond III of Antioch– on making himself lord of Cyprus in 1185, where he ruled independently until dispossessed by Richard I and the Third Crusade. At least initially, Isaac had the support of the local aristocracy. The usurpation of Andronikos also provoked rebellions in two major cities of north-western Asia Minor, Nicaea and Prousa, and dissatisfaction with his rule may have contributed to the ease with which the Sicilian army took Dyrrachium in 1185 and advanced to Thessaloniki unopposed.[257]

The provincial power relations often disregarded the existence of the state in the provinces. The state's power was actually 'absent' for many aspects.

Moreover, some families remained faithful to the Komnenian state, and performed in state service. What made an aristocrat loyal to the emperor varied indeed? Individual's own interest, personal fondness and loyalty, as well as old-established traditions had influence in that. These factors were made firm with another supplementary act. The Byzantine emperors seemed not to trust aristocrats unless they fulfilled "the oath of allegiance" (ὅρκος δουλείας) to the emperor. Oath

[256] Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*…, p. 91. As already stated, examples of military opposition can be given for the European provinces for the initial years of Alexios I Komnenos. Xantas and Kouleaon appear in Anna Komnene's *Alexiad* also as disobedient military men. They were called 'heretics' by her for they were the leaders of the Manichaeans in the region of Philippoupolis. Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 141; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*…, p. 92.

[257] Paul Magdalino, "The Empire of the Komnenoi (1118-1204)," in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire c.500-1492*, Jonathan Shepard, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 655.

taking was, thus, a measure put by the emperors to hamper unfaithful office holders occupying important positions in the imperial government, or any office in provincial government *per se*. The process was renewed every time there was a change of emperor. George Akropolites defined the act as "an oath of servitude." Pachymeres used the same identification.[258]

Even though the Empire was practicing strict sense of managing state through different ways, trying to keep its authority within its territories, there was still a need to compensate the army from outside. Due to a need, as Anna Komnene states, the Byzantine state was in need of security and firmness of Empire's territories against "incorrigible" Bohemond. For that, Manuel Boutoumites was appointed as a commander at the head of large military groups, containing Celtic mercenaries, heading to Cilicia. He was accompanied by the members of Constantinopolitan aristocracy.[259]

Manuel Boutoumites was later sent to Bohemond as an envoy.[260] The similar examples abound. Nicetas Panoukomites, for example, was sent as an envoy to the Babylonians.[261] Using non-Byzantines were so common in Byzantine contacts with foreign states. It was probably chosen for fluency of the person in the language of the foreign country and/or his acquaintance in that country's culture. Manuel sent an Italian-origin man, Alexander, to conduct diplomatic relations with the Europeans in 1147.[262]

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[258] George Akropolites, *The History*, pp. 171-179, #24-25; also see Ruth Macrides' notes, idem, p.179ff; Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, pp. 65-66. For the oath of alliance during the Palaiologan period, see Maksimović, *The Byzantine Provincial Administration under the Palaiologoi*, pp. 23-25.

[259] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 358.

[260] Ibid., p. 362.

[261] Ibid., p. 370.

[262] John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, p. 58.

On the other hand, a Raoul (but not a known and certain one), and an Opus were both noble and brave according to Anna Komnene, helping the emperor's army with their men.[263] When the state was in need for military support, or new generals and military commanders against either outside threats or state's encounter with provincial aristocracy, it called the high aristocracy and imperial family members into action. After Tzachas challenged the Byzantine emperor in the eastern Aegean coasts and the islands and declared himself emperor in the region, Alexios I Komnenos felt a need to summon his brother-in-law, John Doukas, to make him Grand Duke of the imperial Fleet.[264] All in all, Alexios I Komnenos had the military support of some aristocrats. During the years the Byzantine Empire had to deal with struggles raised by three rebels (Mankaphas, Maurozomes, and Sabbas Asidenos), the provincial aristocrats and population of lower Maeander region did not remain impartial, they supported the emperor in these rebellions.[265] After the state control was absolutely recovered, there appeared, nevertheless, hostility towards the new emperor from the Vatatzai, which resulted in a considerable revolt, lasted until 1225.

Some provincial aristocrats showed great effort to retain their independency even if they had once been taken captive and run away from emperor's hands. An appropriate example can be given from Byzantine Cilicia, where there had always been strong Armenian presence. A man of distinguished background (the family of Rubenids) and status, Toros (II), returned to Cilicia after some time of sentence in Constantinople as a fugitive in ca. 1145. He seems he had not lost any considerable thing from his power base in the region so that he was able to rebel against Manuel I. His rebellion began to expand well into several cities there, which necessitated an

[263] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, pp. 323-324.

[264] Ibid., pp. 269-270. This also signifies the recruitment of soldiers in times of war.

[265] Puech, "The Aristocracy and the Empire of Nicaea," p. 71. For example, the Mouzalones family was close to the Laskarids. Ibid., p. 73.

imperial campaign to stop it. The emperor, then, dispatched an army to Cilicia and Isauria in 1152, but the imperial army commanded by Andronikos was heavily defeated.[266] Many Cilician cities were captured by the 'tyrant.' It was not until 1158 that Toros had to be consent to reconcile with the emperor, who bestowed him the title of *sebastos*.[267] The authority of the Rubenids was eventually solidified with the achievement of Toros II.

How was a provincial rebellion treated by the emperors? Although it depended much on the circumstances as well as the capacity of the rebel, the military campaign was usually the common treatment. As in the case of Toros' rebellion, local forces were needed to be gathered since the Empire was in big trouble with many of her foes, thus was probably unable to manage an imperial army.[268] This may have been due to an operational tactic aiming for gaining local support against a regional problem. What is apparent in this case was an imperial appointment of Alexios Kasianos, who then became the governor (*doux*, maybe?) of the province of Seleucia by 1158, in order to prepare an army comprising of the native people. The governor had also part of his own troops with him.[269]

There were, on the other hand, always a group of aristocrats remained loyal or returned from their delusion to the emperor, depended to him for the sake of their profit. Having been admitted their faults in following the rebels some local aristocrats pleaded for forgiveness from the emperor Isaac II Angelos.[270] Those who

[266] John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, pp. 96-98. John Kinnamos narrates the details of the siege by the Andronikos' troops and maneuvers of Toros' forces in p. 98.

[267] Ibid., pp. 135-138. See also Nina G. Garoïan, "Toros II," *ODB*, vol. 3, p. 2098.

[268] Manuel I Komnenos was waging war at various fronts and had to deal with both western and eastern affairs sometimes at the same time. Kinnamos clearly asserts that situation. John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, p. 164.

[269] Ibid., p. 137.

[270] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 214.

might have regretted their acts against the landlords and the emperor would probably have become in line with emperor's directions simply for keeping their financial interests intact.

The process ending with the triumph of the Angelid dynasty was so turbulent in the sense that provincial rebellions pervaded Asia Minor. Many rebellions appeared within a short time after Manuel I's death in 1180. They intensified around Bithynia (e.g. Nicaea, Brusa, Lopadion), where the local aristocrats allied with the inhabitants of the region rebelled against the Komnenian dynasty. High bureaucrats also took part in the opposition movement. Andronikos Lapardas, commander in the army, was arrested and blinded for he was sailing to side with the rebels to Bithynia.[271] The Komnenian rule was successful in evading from these rebellions; however, in a few years nothing would be sufficient to hamper the Angeloi.

The Angelid period (1185-1204) became the triumph of these provincial rebellions. Isaac II Angelos (r. 1185-95) also had to deal with series of rebellions in many parts of the empire. Pretenders to the Byzantine throne occasionally appeared in the last two decades of the twelfth century.[272] A particular Alexios, claiming to be Emperor Manuel's son, penetrated into Paphlagonia and some other provinces where he found ground in 1191. Another false-Alexios rebelled in frontier regions in ca. 1195. This Cilician rebel proclaimed that he was the son of Emperor Manuel I. His rebellion against Alexios III's authority in Byzantine throne and his argument were supported by the satrap of Ancyra, Muhyiddin Mesud (Muhī al-Dīn Mas'ud).[273]

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[271] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, pp. 54-55.

[272] In 1091, an earlier false-Alexios defending that he was the son of Manuel, the grandfather of Alexios I Komnenos, and he was the legitimate heir of the throne, caused much trouble to the emperor. The rebel appeared in the upper Maeander valley. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*…, pp. 123-124.

[273] Niketas Choniates argues Alexios III's policies being incline to extravagance and fame. Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 252. This situation was worsened by his way of administering the state. He appointed men adherent to him to high positions and behaved the aristocrats in direct

Beside these two pretenders were severely killed at the end, the latter deserves more attention since both Niketas Choniates gives a detailed picture of the story and it illuminates how foreign elements embarked in and took a side in such threats to Byzantine throne.[274] Inhabitants of regions where rebellions were initiated may take interesting reactions. On the final case, the Melangeians (inhabitants of Melangeia[Yenişehir*]) took an indistinct stance on whether who deserved the throne most. Although they approved Alexios as the emperor, they hesitated not to disapprove false-Alexios' claim, seeking to have both of their favor.[275] It indicates how the provincial society was behaving on unstable ground towards the ruling power in Byzantium.

Rebels sometimes came out in places not far away from Constantinople. A particular revolt, which was held by Basil Chotzas in Tarsia near Nikomedia in 1191-2, shows seriousness of the situation for the central state, although it was absolutely drown.[276] Taken together, these incidents represent how the rebellions affected the entire Empire all at once.

An imperial family member also caused "trouble" for the Byzantine state in times of turbulence under the Angeloi. Isaac Komnenos declared himself *basileus* in Cyprus (1184-1191) and minted coin, which meant an obvious rebellion against

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contradiction with that. Isaac II's accomplishment was wiped out by his brother (Alexios III) due to the latter's wastefulness. Ibid., p. 249 and p. 252. N. Choniates argues that Alexios III did never deserve the crown, he did not campaign for the sake of the Empire nor he fought for the integrity of the Empire's territories. Ibid., pp. 255-256.

[274] Ibid., pp. 232-233 and p. 253; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*…, p. 130.

[*] This remark has been made by Halil İnalcık in idem, "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Gerçek Kuruluş Hikâyesi: Osman Gazi'nin İzinde," *NTV Tarih* 13 (February, 2010).

[275] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, pp. 252-253.

[276] Ibid., p. 233; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*…, p. 125. "The insurrection of Basil Chotzas who, according to the testimony of Choniates and Scutariotes, had seized Tarsia, to the north-east of Nicaea, was suppressed probably in the first half of 1205 and the rebel was blinded by Theodore's "*vasilike phroura*" (imperial guard)." Savvides, *Byzantium in the Near East*…, p. 60. See also Brand, *Byzantium Confronts West*…, p. 87; Vryonis, *Decline of Medieval Hellenism*…, p. 129.

Constantinopolitan government. He was the brother of the emperor Manuel I. His rebellion ended with Richard I Lionheart's conquest of the island in 1191. Nevertheless, Isaac was seeking support from the Turkish emirs of Anatolia; he sheltered to Keyhüsrev's court, but eventually he did not find the support against Alexios III Angelos as he expected.[277]

Administrative office-holders could take a counter stance against the state, when they were sent to provinces conducting certain duties. Michael Doukas Komnenos Angelos, the future founder of the Epiros state, became the tax collector in Mylassa province and went off to the region. However, he rebelled in the summer of 1200. After his defeat by the imperial troops he appointed to major Byzantine rival in Asia Minor, Rukn al-Dīn, with whose support the rebel plundered many Byzantine towns in the Maeander region.[278] We will see the Seljuk ruler in some other occasions supporting the rebels against the Byzantine state.

In the following pages four provincial rebellions will be emphasized in order to mark the phenomenon in three different epochs each representing its own period. First of all, the family of the Gabrades, whose existence was virtually hereditary as *doukes* of the Chaldia province for years, presents a case from the Komnenian era. Secondly, a rebellious individual, Theodore Mangaphas, reflects the chaotic period under the Angelid dynasty. Then, Sabbas Asidenos will be treated in terms of his reaction against the central authority. Finally, the Laskarid period is represented by the powerful rebellious family: the Maurozomes family.

[277] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, pp. 160-161, 187, 254-255.

[278] Ibid., p. 290; Polemis, *The Doukai*…, pp. 91-92; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*…, p. 134.

The Gabrades as Powerful Provincial Aristocrats

The Komnenian policy of provinces would be described as 'liberal' in the sense that the emperors were incurious about the independence of the provinces. It has been suggested that it would be due to the way how Komnenian emperors themselves had come to power from the state of provincial power-holders. Moreover, the Komnenoi probably needed the support of the provincial aristocracy to maintain the provincial control.[279] The example of the Gabrades will allow us to draw appropriate cases. To begin with, it has to be pointed that the family of Gabrades had come to the fore in the Pontos region by the second half of the tenth century.[280] The family's existence was virtually hereditary as the *doukes* in Khaldia province for years. When the etymological root of the word "Gabras" is concerned, Anthony Bryer's hypothesis seems more tenable. He offers a new explanation for the root of the word. Its origin comes from a word that existed in several Near Eastern languages of the middle Ages in different ways. Its meaning is a kind of similar in each of them: unbeliever, referring to non-Muslim ethnicities. That makes this identification more plausible since it confirms the environment of constant confrontations between Muslims and Byzantines.[281] Location was one of the determinant factors for the emergence of powerful regional families/individuals in Byzantine East, but not always.

The Gabras family has long been a prominent group in Byzantine provincial society. The area ruled by the Gabrades consisted mainly of the city of Trebizond

[279] Ralph-Johannes Lilie, "Twelfth-Century Byzantine and Turkish States," in *Manzikert to Lepanto. The Byzantine World and the Turks 1071-1571*, Anthony Bryer and Michael Ursinus, (eds), (Amsterdam: Adolf Hakkert, 1991), p. 45.

[280] The earliest member, as detected by Bryer, was a certain Constantine Gabras, died in 979. He engaged in opposition movements against the central authority, accompanied Bardas Skleros in his rebellious acts. Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades…," p. 174, no. 1.

[281] Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades…," pp. 165-166.

and the surrounding region.[282] Considering our period, members of the Gabras family can be attested in four different contexts: as *doukes* of the theme of Chaldia, in Seljuk service, in Byzantine service, and in the Empire of Trebizond.[283]

The family's territorial core was situated in an isolated part. That is, the Chaldia region has been surrounded by the Danishmendids from the south, and it had an access to Byzantium only from the West. Its geographical situation must have been, I suppose, a factor in the autonomous position of these lands under the Gabrades' control, begins from the late 1030s. It is important to note here that this coincides with –more or less– Turcoman intrusions, which contributed to the rise of provincial power-holders. Theodore Gabras achieved to push the Turks away from Trebizond in 1075. Thanks to that, he was possibly rewarded with the title *sebastos*, which might have been a natural result of his appointment to the important office: *doux* of Trebizond. As time went on, Alexios I Komnenos was destined to see the other side of the coin. Theodore Gabras gained an independent character, which at the end was approved by his coins minted in his name. Actually, Alexios I's act to grant such an important office to Gabras can be explained with his fear of Gabras.[284]

The Gabrades took control of the Pontos shore together with some parts of the inlands. Some of these areas have been testified by historical sources. Anna Komnene mentions Theodore Gabras' occupation of a certain quarry (probably Paipert–Bayburt). Scholarship has shown Paipert's significance in economic aspects.

[282] Angold calls it a 'fiefdom.' Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, p. 112.

[283] Theodore Gabras ruled between 1075 and 1098. Later on, between c. 1103 and c. 1106 Gregory Gabras was ruling the province. Constantine Gabras was another *doux* of the province between c. 1119 and c. 1140. See Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades…" pp. 175-177.

[284] For Theodore Gabras, see Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, pp. 265-268; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*…, pp. 92-93, no. 117.

The town had rich silver mines.[285] As historical records demonstrate, Pontos region was very important for mine resources in the Empire. Several Arab geographers and travelers mentioned rich natural resources of the area. Al-Umari and Ibn Battuta both describe Gumush-hane and Paipert as centers of silver mine.[286] Also, Marco Polo's testimony has reflected some light on the area's silver mines. Therefore, this resource has become an adequate reason for power-holders to take part in a competition to control it.[287]

Niketas Choniates mentions John Komnenos' aim to neutralize another Gabras, Constantine Gabras' power in the Trebizond region and secure the Armeniakon theme from one of the "chief" enemies of the Byzantines: the Danishmendids.[288] Before Constantine Gabras rebelled against John II Komnenos and at the end gained the governorship of Trebizond in 1126, and remained as such until after 1140, he was a devoted general in Byzantine army.[289] Anna Komnene narrates his tasks managing the defense of Byzantine towns in today's Balkans against the Kelts.[290] Later on in the text, she mentions Constantine Gabras again that he had a military duty in Philadelphia in 1112.[291] In the same region, there were

[285] See Speros Vryonis, Jr., "The Question of the Byzantine Mines," *Speculum* 37 (1962), pp. 1-17, reprinted in idem, *Byzantine Institutions, Society and Culture*, vol. 1, (New York: Aristide D. Caratzes, Publisher, 1997), pp. 169-194.

[286] Vryonis, "The Question of the Byzantine Mines," pp. 176-177.

[287] See Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 350.

[288] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 20, #34. Constantine Gabras must have had a familial link with the above-mentioned Theodore. For Bryer, he was son, brother or nephew of him. Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades…," p. 177, no. 5. He was apparently the son of Theodore Gabras and also spoken about in Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*. Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 413.

[289] Constantine's son, Constantine Gabras was given a task of envoyship between the Byzantines and the Danishmendids. He was sent to the Muslim side with gifts and other precious things in 1162. Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 69, #121; and the fn. 342 of Maguilas. Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades…," p. 177. See also Cheynet, *Pouvoir et Contestations…*, p. 104, no. 137.

[290] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 413.

[291] This military commander may have been the same person with the one entrusted army commandership before. Anna Komnene's text, at this point, shows periodical disorder of historical events, thus inconsistency. Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 445 and p. 447; Bryer, "A Byzantine Family:

some provincial families other than the Gabrades. The Kekaumenos family possessed land fiefs around Koloneia, an indication of how the area had already been detached from the central authority. Situated strategically in the knot point of surrounding alum mines, the city had an Italian mercenary leader, Crispin, already in 1069.[292]

Rebels sought support from the local aristocrats/power holders. The *sebastokrator* Isaac Komnenos entered into negotiations with Constantine Gabras in 1130 in order to gain the latter's military support against the imperial army.[293] It should be noted that a link had already been initiated in a form of marriage between the *sebastokrator* and the 'rebellious' family. Gregory Gabras, son of Theodore Gabras (Bryer, no. 3), was another rebel for independence (1091-1092) and was taken as a hostage in Alexios I Komnenos court, and he was betrothed with Isaac's daughter.[294] If that had worked for the future negotiations between the Gabrades and the rebel Isaac Komnenos, then, it would be concluded that familial connections in the past played some sort of role in forming alliances.

Although the Byzantine sources identified the Gabrades 'people of rebellious nature', both Christian and Turcoman local sources do not reflect the same view. Namely Theodore Gabras becomes a heroic figure in *Melikdanishmendname*, though was not implied individually. It is rather common 'composite' Gabras figures prevalent in the epic traditions.[295]

The 1160s are the years when the Komnenian emperors began to reincorporate eastern territories lost to the Danishmendids and the Gabrades. As the

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The Gabrades…," p. 177. Anna Komnene talks about a member of the Gabras family, a commander in the army. He may have been the same Gabras. Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 483.

[292] Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades…," p. 167.

[293] Ibid., p. 177, no. 5. Isaac Komnenos sought for the help from other powerful individuals in Muslim realm, such as Gümüshtegin (Gümüştekin) of the Danishmendids. Ibid.

[294] Ibid., p. 176, no. 4, Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*…, pp. 95-96.

[295] Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades…," pp. 168-169.

Danishmendid state was overwhelmed by the Seljuks in Konya, the Gabrades became stranded between these Muslim forces and the Byzantine Empire. Three choices were standing in front of the Gabrades. In order to preserve their lands, they would either join the Seljuks, or the Byzantines, or Crimea. Some has chosen the first. Bryer attested five Gabrades in the service of the Seljuk sultans: N. Gabras (Bryer, no.6), N. Gavras (Bryer, no.9),[296] Hasan Ibn Gavras (Bryer, no.10), N. Ghwaras (Bryer, no.11), and Giovanni de Gabra (Bryer, no.12).[297] These individual Gabrades fought against the Byzantines, while some obtained titles and undertook prominent missions in Seljuk government. Emir N. Gavras (Bryer, no.9) has served as an ambassador to Manuel I Komnenos in Myriokephalon Battle.[298] Hasan Ibn Gavras (Bryer, no.10) received a Muslim name and served as a vizier (*amir-i hadjib*) to the Seljuk Sultan Kilidj Arslan II, also participated in negotiations with Saladin in 1180. [299] That Muslim Gabras was also sent to the Byzantine emperor Manuel I Komnenos as we learn from both the account of Niketas Choniates and of John

[296] John Kinnamos mentions that Gabras and his envoyship in 1176 to the Byzantine emperor to Manuel I Komnenos. John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, pp. 223-224. This member of the Gabras family was also mentioned by Niketas Choniates. He narrates how the envoy was received and the details of the meeting. Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, pp. 106-107, #189.

[297] Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades…," pp. 170-171 and pp. 179-181.

[298] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 106, #189; John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, Book VII, p. 224; Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades…," p. 180.

[299] Since his *kunya* is Gabras unlike his name, Ihtiyar al-Din Hasan, his father must have been a Christian Gabras. This signifies the very apostasy of this individual. Christians were in a process of integration to the Turkish social and political environment. Throughout this process, apostasy became an obvious fact that the Christian public encountered. Theodore Gabras, having played a significant role along the borders with the Danishmendids, refused apostasy although the Turkish emir forced him to change his religion. At the end, he was killed and became one of the first neo-martyrs of the period under Turkish domination. Examples for the apostatic cases can be multiplied. A nephew of John II Komnenos, John Komnenos, accepted Islam after his desertion to the Seljuk court, and then later Seljuk sultan's daughter became his wife. Speros Vryonis, Jr., "Nomadization and Islamization in Asia Minor," *DOP* 29 (1997), pp. 62-63. The apostasy continued throughout the later centuries. For the case of Köse-Mihal, who apostatized and shifted to the Turkish side and became an aristocrat. See Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism…*, p. 468. That was the information that we had via Turkish legends, yet Byzantine sources do not mention such cases maybe because, as Kyritses thinks, "later Turkish aristocrats exaggerated the social status of their Byzantine ancestors." Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 83.

Kinnamos.[300] He obtained estates near Erzindjan.[301] The Gabrades, in short, seems to be preferred by the Seljuks in ambassadorial issues for they knew the language and –probably– some of them still retained Christianity under Seljuk service.[302] The participation of the Gabrades in Byzantine envoyship and other diplomatic media seemed to disappear after 1204, whereas their significance at the Seljuk court continued until the late thirteenth century.[303] At least some of them had reached prominent positions, which apparently indicate "special situation of converts at such high levels" and how they gained social and economic reward, made them provincial aristocrats.[304]

On the other hand, the Byzantine court hosted some Gabrades with specific services. Emperor Manuel I Komnenos had at least two Gabrades under his service. While one, Michael Gabras (Bryer, no.7), retained the titles of *pansebastos sebastos*, *strategos* and even the position of *doux*, and served in the Byzantine army, the other, Constantine Gabras (Bryer, no.8) was employed as an envoy to Kilidj Arslan II in 1162-1163.[305]

In the post-1204 era, as in the Komnenian period, the aristocratic Gabras family was represented by several individuals in the social and cultural set up of Asia Minor under the Seljuk territories, yet being less influential. Iannakios Gabras, maintained the title of *pansebastos sebastos*, seems to have been appointed to solve a

[300] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, pp. 106-107; John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, pp. 223-224.

[301] Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades…," p. 181. On the road back to his estates, he was killed by the Turcoman groups in 1189. Claude Cahen, "Une famille byzantine au service des Seljuq ides d'Asie–Mineure," in *Polychronion. Festschrift für F. Dölger*, Peter Wirth, ed., (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1966), p. 147.

[302] Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades…," p. 171.

[303] Ibid.; Cahen, "Une famille byzantine…," p. 148.

[304] Vryonis, "Nomadization…," p. 63.

[305] Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades…," p. 180; Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 75, #132 and p. 87, #153; John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, p. 194.

problem of the *proasteion* of Alexandreion between the inhabitants of Sampson and the Mount Latros monastery of St. Paul in 1216, as we learn from διαγνωστικὴ πρᾶξις (a source on the affairs of the Monastery of St. Paul on Mount Latros).[306] The same document illuminates the existence of a provincial aristocrat, Michael Dermokaites, in the same year (1216). Similarly, he received the title *pansebastos sebastos* and served as the *episkepsis* of Sampson.[307] Donald Nicol mentions another Dermokaites (N. Dermokaites), probably a member of the military aristocratic section of the provincial society, having fought at the defending of Lentiana (a town close to Kyzikos and Poimanenon) against Henry of Flanders' forces as a general in 1211.[308]

We see the Gabrades still preferred for envoyships by the Seljuk government. Giovanni de Gabra, for example, received a duty as an envoy of Alaaddin Kaykubad I in the sultan's court in Konya. He was sent to a voyage lasted two years between 1234 and 1236 to discuss several issues.[309] More or less at the same time with that Gabras, another member of the Gabras family has lived around Miletos, as he was a landholder who sold his land to the monastery of the Theotokos in September 1236.[310] The Gabrades took part in ecclesiastical aristocracy during the Nicaean period. A certain Constantine Gabras served as the *protopapas* of the metropolis of Miletos in 1250.[311] Certainly, the Gabrades participated in the cultural atmosphere of the Seljuk Anatolia. Abu al-Farac mentions a member of the family, Mikhail Bar

[306] Anthony Bryer, et al., "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades. An Additional Note," *Bsl* 36 (1975), pp. 39-40.

[307] Nicol, "The Byzantine Family of Dermokaites…," p. 4.

[308] Ibid., 3; George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 153, #16.

[309] Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades…," p. 181.

[310] Bryer, et al., "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades. An Additional Note," p. 40.

[311] Ibid.

Gavras, working as a physician in Melitene around 1256 (notice the Muslim context).[312]

In the Nicaean period, one can attest several Gabrades in various positions. A particular Giovanni (Jean or John) de Gabra served as an envoy to Alaaddin Kaykubad I in 1234 among his several missions in this position.[313] One can attest the discourses of family members in distant regions. N. Ghadras was another member of the family, a provincial aristocrat (*archon*) from the city of Sinope. He was appointed as the governor of the city between 1254 and 1265, the years when the Greek recovery lasted until absolute Seljuk rule.[314]

On the one hand, the Gabrades family was trying to preserve its independent control over the region. Its intermediary position between the Byzantine Empire and the Seljuks apparently indicates that they aimed to keep the distance from the central authority. The area they prevailed remained some hundred kilometers far from the Byzantine capital. This phenomenon, all by itself, must have made it difficult for the Byzantines to keep these lands undetached. The Byzantine state, on the other hand, tended not to drop its hands over the provinces. That becomes more evident toward the 1180s when the central authority extremely suffered from the local revolts. For instance, what the Byzantine Empire followed to overcome the revolt of Theodore Mangaphas was collaboration with the Seljuks or the Danishmendids. Byzantine provincial policy, therefore, illustrates a kind of balance tried to be maintained.[315]

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[312]Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades…," p. 181, citing Bar Habreus, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, J. B. Abbeloos and T. J. Lamy, ed. and trans., Loranii, 1872-1877), II, p. 718. The Gabrades are also attestable within the Empire of Trebizond, but not in significant positions. See Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades…," p. 170. For John Kinnamos' account on Michael Gabras, see John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, pp. 218-224.

[313] Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades…," p. 181.

[314] Ibid.; Savvides, *Byzantium in the Near East*…, p. 129.

[315] Lilie, "Twelfth-Century Byzantine and Turkish States," pp. 45-47. Theodore Mangaphas rebelled against Constantinople in Philadelphia. His revolt will be mention soon in the chapter.

The Angelid emperors had to condone the aristocracy. Fierce confrontations between the provincial aristocratic families sometimes reached a level of feud in which sides used their armed men to overwhelm each other. This became de facto the case in Angelid Epiros. When a provincial aristocrat from Koloneia kidnapped a woman to marry with him by force, her brother called his men and seized the groom.[316] The central authority preferred not to interfere in such a situation. Therefore, Angelid policy reflected an obvious withdrawal from local affairs apart from basic governmental-fiscal requirements.

The Latin capture of Constantinople in 1204 marked vital importance for the Constantinopolitan aristocracy. After the Latin occupation in Constantinople, the Byzantine aristocrats may have probably left the city. How many of them went to their own lands either in European or territories of Asia Minor? And how many of them moved to the new capital, Nicaea? To a large extent, they fled to the Laskarid Asia Minor, whereas there were a few others preferred to go to the Western Greek State of Epiros.[317] Kyritses notes that in Epiros the aristocrats from local families occupied more prominent roles than the ones in Asia Minor.[318]

We have still a centralized strong power in Komnenian rule. By the turn of the twelfth century a process of disintegration had long begun. Apart from the Gabrades, some other provincial aristocratic families such as the Rupenids,

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[316] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, p. 277.

[317] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 139.

[318] Ibid., p. 139. The fleeing of the Constantinopolitan aristocrats after 1204 is explained by Kyritses as follows: "The major destination of the fleeing Constantinopolitans was the Lascarid state in Asia Minor, although a minority went to the Western Greek state of the Doukai Komnenoi, in the aristocracy of which the locally rooted families and the semi-autonomous toparchs played a much larger role than in Asia Minor." Ibid., p. 139. Angold's interpretation is as follows: "The bureaucrats and their counterparts in the church, the clergy of St. Sophia, made a pathetic sight as they abandoned their city with little idea of where to go. Aristocrats fled to their centres of power in the provinces, hoping to shore up some fragments against their ruin. This was most likely to mean, in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the city, a deal with the Latins." Angold, "Administration of the Empire of Nicaea," p. 12.

Hetoumids to the west of Tarsos and Kassianoi established some kind of autonomous regions within the eastern borders of the Empire.[319] The 'rebellious' provincial aristocrats existed in Nicaean period enhancing their political and social power in Asia Minor. The Nicaean rulers followed policies of hindering aristocratic control, one of which was promoting the Anatolian aristocracy over against the Constantinopolitan one. After Theodore I Laskaris was proclaimed emperor of the Greeks, the inhabitants of Nicaea, Prusa, Lydia, Smyrna and Ephesos recognized his authority.[320] His fresh reign was shaded by several individual rebels, challenged the Nicaean authority in the provinces. David and Alexios Komnenos appeared in Herakleia on the Pontos, Paphlagonia and Oinaion, the city of Sinope, and Trebizond; Aldebrandinus (having an Italian origin) ruled in Attaleia, another one governed in Rhodes. Beside their desire to hold fame and become tyrants, as Niketas Choniates told, these 'rebellious' individuals must have tried to secure their local interests.[321]

Theodore Mangaphas

A local man, Theodore Mangaphas (Morotheodoros), who was a native from a well known family in Philadelphia, would be another exemplar for a comprehensive understanding of the limits of local resistance against the central Byzantine

[319] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 128.

[320] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 350. The Nicaean state was depriving of the organization of a well-developed state mechanism, lost in 1204, having been moved its political center to the Asia Minor. The Byzantine world was in a mood of disorder. Theodore I Laskaris' reaction was to refuse financial crisis and political disintegration of the Empire. That was how it all his achievements began.

[321] Ibid., p. 351.

authority.[322] Theodore Mangaphas with hired bands of Turkish warriors gave great damage to the Byzantine inhabitants of Maeander region. His power may have reached extensive limits in the region, probably included also Kelbianon and Neokastra.[323] As a sign of political power, he had silver coins minted in Philadelphia in his own name.[324] The local support provided great strength to Mangaphas that his rebellion in 1188-9 was also supported by the Philadelphians. It has been suggested that he may have been one of the prominent provincial administrators of Thrakesion theme, a *doux* possibly.[325] This was an obvious challenge to Angelid rule in Constantinople. Mangaphas' control in Lydia was expanding until Isaac II Angelos put down the revolt with a military campaign in ca.1193 or in 1191 at the earliest.[326] After that, he received a private citizenship. This event shows the way in which Byzantine state approached the rebels in a very fragile period of civil disorder. The Byzantine state needed to balance their power by coming into an agreement with them, although the integrity of the Empire was exposed to serious threats. This was also because Mangaphas had a considerable public ground in Philadelphia.[327] However, as Niketas Choniates tells, Mangaphas fled to Konya and took refuge in Seljuk Sultan Kaykhusraw's court.[328] The silence did not last long. Already during

[322] George Akropolites, *The History*, pp. 119-120, #7.

[323] Ibid., p. 120, #7; Jean-Claude Cheynet, "Philadelphie, un quart de siècle de dissidence, 1182-1206," *Philadephie et autres études* (Paris: Byzantina Sorbonensia IV, 1984), p. 52.

[324] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 219; Michael F. Hendy, *Coinage and Money in the Byzantine Empire, 1081-1261* (Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1969), p. 149.

[325] George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 85.

[326] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, p. 276; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*…, p. 123.

[327] It should be taken into consideration that N. Choniates' account bears very negative terms not only for the rebel but also for the inhabitants of the city. Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 226.

[328] "… he resorted to negotiating peace terms and compacts to the effect that Theodore should lay down the imperial insignia and return again to the ranks of private citizen, while the city's inhabitants should be ruled by him who formerly was their emperor. Receiving hostages certain of their sons whom he chose, he returned to the megalopolis. Not a few valiant and highborn men perished because of this revolt." Ibid., p. 220.

the Angelid era, several local power-holders were challenging state's authority and declared their independence. He revolted again on the eve of the sack of Byzantine Constantinople in 1203, a still debatable date historically.[329] This time, Theodore Laskaris put down the revolt and occupied Philadelphia including the regions such as Maeander, Neokastra, etc. around it. In the summer of 1205, when he was handed in Theodore Laskaris according to Savvides, Lydia was incorporated to imperial territories once more.[330] His 'plunder' did not end, on the contrary, the inhabitants of Phrygia and Maeander region experienced great pillage by the hands of Mangaphas' men that their crops and properties were devastated. Theodore Mangaphas' threat reemerged just before 1204 for the Byzantine state; Lydia became part of his authority again.

Theodore Mangaphas acted 'ungratefully' and betrayed Theodore I Laskaris, who had granted him vast territories in Western Asia Minor including Chonae and Laodicea ad Lycum in late 1205/early 1206.[331] However, as Byzantium faced Latin threat, Theodore Mangaphas became probably a patriotic Byzantine since he is attested fighting against the Latin army commanded by Henry who was at the head of an army at Adramyttion in 1210 or slightly earlier.[332]

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[329] See Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*…, p. 135.

[330] Savvides, *Byzantium in the Near East*…, p. 63; Clive Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 77; Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, p. 276.

[331] Savvides, *Byzantium in the Near East*…, p. 61.

[332] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 331. See also Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis*, p. 77, fn.58, citing Niketas Choniates, (Bekker edition), p. 798. Michael Angold once noted the following: "Some Byzantine magnates attempted to organize resistance to the Latin conquest, but even this, at least in the aftermath of the fall of Constantinople, was probably done in the hope of securing a favourable bargaining position with the Latins. One of the great Byzantine magnates of Thrace, the Caesar Theodore Vranas, entered the ranks of the Latin aristocracy." Angold, "Byzantine 'Nationalism' and the Nicaean Empire," pp. 49-50, citing J. Longnon, *L'Empire latin de Constantinople et la principauté de Morée* (Paris: n. p., 1949), pp. 64, 134.

A Contender against the Central Authority: Sabbas Asidenos

Sabbas Asidenos was another powerful local aristocrat who had retained power over Sampson (ancient Priene) and was a landowner in the *episkepsis* of Sampson at the mouth of Maeander. As the decentralization increased throughout the Empire, he declared his independence over the Maeander region by 1204.[333] The rebellion seems not to have been very troublesome for the state compared to the ones outburst by David Komnenos, Manuel Maurozomes or Theodore Mangaphas, since neither Niketas Choniates nor George Akropolites reserve much place for that event. Choniates does not mention Sabbas among the three-headed monster (*polyarchy* in the East), he actually does not speak of him at all.[334]

Theodore I Laskaris, after he consolidated the state found in exile, needed to make local aristocrats loyal to the Nicaean court understandably for practical reasons. For that, the provincial aristocrats were given the grant of titles or specific duties. Sabbas Asidenos was attested in a document having granted the rank of *sympentheros* of Theodore I Laskaris. This seems to have occurred after his marriage into the imperial family and gained the high court title of *sebastokrator* and controlling Sampson and the surrounding region at least by 1214.[335]

This point leads us to the matter of incorporating ex-rebels into the imperial system by handing over titles or offices. As the all political formations alike, the Nicaean Empire sought political interest and continuity in the government. That policy, therefore, can be evaluated as an attempt for survival. Otherwise, the integrity

[333] George Akropolites, *The History*, pp. 84-85. See also Paul Orgels, "Sabas Asidénos: Dynaste de Sampsôn," *B* 10 (1935), pp. 67-80.

[334] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 347. For that evaluation see also Ragia, "The Inscription of Didyma (Hieron)…," p. 144, fn. 49.

[335] This information is revealed in a *prostaxis* of Theodore I Laskaris for the year 1214. See also Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations…*, p. 150, no. 213.

of the state may have been difficult. This tradition was also evident during the times the Komnenian government was in trouble by provincial rebellions.

A Fierce Rival of the Byzantine Empire: The Maurozomes Family

While the Empire of Nicaea was trying to stabilize her power in the provinces, there were some Byzantine families who were serving the Seljuk state. Manuel Maurozomes (Μουροζώμης), for example, received high positions at the Seljuk court when his power started to decline with the rise of Theodore I Laskaris after 1206. Transfer of provincial aristocrats well into the Seljuk bureaucracy and court continued for some generations. In that particular example of the Maurozomes family, we see Maurozomes' son who has found positions within the ranks of Seljuk administration in the thirteenth century.[336]

Rebellious families became really troubles for the central government when the backbone of the Empire began to crackle in the 1180s. Especially the territories in Asia Minor carried considerable weight of the imperial control. The Maurozomes family's rebellious state appeared shortly after the Empire began to lose authority in that period. The Maurozomes family had probably a Peloponnesian origin.[337] Its

[336] Savvides, *Byzantium in the Near East*…, p. 63. Kyritses explains this as follows: "Later Turkish legends preserved the tradition of Byzantine aristocrats from Asia Minor who apostatized, joined the Turks and started Turkish aristocratic lines. Byzantine sources, however, are completely silent and it is probable that later Turkish aristocrats exaggerated the social status of their Byzantine ancestors." See, Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 83.

[337] Alexander Kazhdan, "Maurozomes," *ODB*, vol. 2, p. 1319. A recent article has gathered together the evidences concerning the advancement of Maurozomes family within the Seljuk court: Sara Nur Yıldız, "Manuel Komnenos Mavrozomes and His Descendants at the Seljuk Court: The Formation of a Christian Seljuk-Komnenian Elite," in *Crossroads between Latin Europe and the Near East: Corollaries of the Frankish Presence in the Eastern Mediterranean (12th-14th Centuries)*, Stefan Leder, ed., (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag Würzburg, 2011). For Maurozomes' Peloponnesian origin, see Yıldız, "Manuel Komnenos Mavrozomes…," p. 57. Although the family's origin has been suggested in the Peloponnese, its domain remained more in Asia Minor provinces. Then a question would come to one's mind: Were the members of the family already scattered in the empire? The question is

members had been given various military positions in their long history. For example, the Seljuk sultan Gıyaseddin Kaykhusraw I assigned commandership of Turkish troops in Western frontier to Manuel Komnenos Maurozomes, who fought with Theodore I Laskaris' army.[338] A certain member of the family, Theodore Maurozomes, served in a military reinforcement for Amalric, the king of Jerusalem, sent to the Holy Lands probably in 1169 with a military mission.[339] In the battle of Myriokephalon (17 September 1176), Theodore Maurozomes was a general controlling a notable portion (left wing) of the Byzantine army.[340] As it can obviously be seen, Theodore Maurozomes, Manuel Komnenos Maurozomes' father, occupied important positions.[341] Later on, the Maurozomai sustained their vital positions in military cadre. Ioannes Maurozomes, another member of the family, helped Thessalonike with the forces under his command in 1185.[342]

Provincial families maintained their political role in one way by means of their political occupation and territorial power in the provinces. The story of the Maurozomes family provides suitable instances for that case. Having left empty-handed after several endeavors to find support against his brother Rükneddin Süleymanşah II to regain the Seljuk throne in Konya (1197), Gıyaseddin Kaykhusraw I took refuge in Alexios III's court.[343] He took refuge in Byzantine

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obvious, but there is no fixed answer yet. There may have been another branch in Asia Minor, or a case of dispersion of family members may have been possible.

[338] Ibid., p. 65.

[339] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 91; John H. Pryor and Elizabeth M. Jeffreys, *The Age of ΔΡΟΜΩΝ. The Byzantine Navy, ca. 500-1204* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), p. 415f.

[340] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 102; Birkenmeier, *The Development of the Komnenian Army*…, p. 129.

[341] Detailed information on his father can be found in Yıldız, "Manuel Komnenos Mavrozomes…," p. 57.

[342] Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," p. 281.

[343] See Paul Wittek, "Von der Byzantinischen zur Türkischen Toponymie," *B* 10 (1935), pp. 21-23. Ibn Bībī tells the story of slightly different. He mentions that the Byzantine emperor dispatched Kaykhusraw I to Manuel Komnenos Maurozomes. Ibn Bibi, *Anadolu Selçukî Devleti Tarihi. İbn*

court and, later on, married with the daughter of Manuel Maurozomes, who was a strong provincial aristocrat in Miletos region.[344] Years 1204 and 1205 testified similar events in both Byzantine and Anatolian Seljukid courts, both of which saw a change of ruler in each court. On the one hand, the Byzantine court had to move to Nicaea in 1204 due to Latin occupation in Constantinople. And on the other hand, there was the change of the ruler at Seljuk side, that is, Kaykhusraw I retook the reign from his brother and once again became the Seljuk ruler in February 1205, after Rukn al-Dīn's (his brother) death in the previous year. So, after the Latin capture of Constantinople in 1204, Manuel Maurozomes had to depart for his father-in-law in western Asia Minor.[345] The new Seljuk sultan was accompanied by his father-in-law, Manuel Maurozomes, on his way to Konya. Manuel represented a devoted figure to Keyhusrev for he helped the latter to go back to Seljuk territories.[346] This was possibly on account of his interests in the western Anatolian region. He may have hoped to be the single authority in the area. Then, Manuel Maurozomes rebelled against the central government of Theodore I Laskaris.

Kaykhusraw I's marriage has started a long intercourse of the Seljuks with the family of Maurozomes. Manuel Maurozomes was engaged in Seljuk provincial aristocracy with several lands as grants in western Asia Minor. In other words, he shifted to the Seljuk's side for he was looking after his own interests. The peace was

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Bibi'nin Farsça Muhtasar Selçuknâmesinden, (*History of Anatolian Seljuk State. From the Concise Persian Seljuk-nama of Ibn Bibi*) trans. by M. Nuri Gencosman, (Ankara: Uzluk Basımevi, 1941), p. 34.

[344] Emperor Alexius III had married this couple. Ali Sevim and Erdoğan Merçil, *Selçuklu Devletleri Tarihi. Siyaset, Teşkilât ve Kültür* (*History of the Seljukid States: Politics, Organization and Culture*) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1995), p. 452; Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 343.

[345] Sevim and Merçil, *Selçuklu Devletleri Tarihi*…, p. 452. As it was pointed out by Ibn Bībī, "Kaykhusraw was with his father-in-law, Manuel Mavrozomes, independent ruler in the Maeander valley, when he was approached with the news of his brother's death." George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 129, #8, fn. 22 citing Ibn Bibi, *Die Seltscukengeschichte des Ibn Bibi*, H. W. Duda, ed., (Copenhagen: n. p., 1959), pp. 30, 37.

[346] Ibn Bibi, *Anadolu Selçukî Devleti Tarihi*…, p. 40.

provided by the early 1206 between Theodore I and the sultan of Ikonion. Theodore I Laskaris ascribed Manuel the administration of the Maeander valley and the governorship of Chonai/Khūnas so that he created a buffer zone against Kaykhusraw I, who intended to expand Seljukid territories in Asia Minor.[347] Kaykhusraw I had to face with social oppositions in his Empire. Maurozomes' refuge to the sultan's court supplied a remarkable aristocratic support at that point to overcome these.[348] Today, when the inscriptions of the citadel of Konya are considered, a particular one draws our attention since it bears the name of Manuel Maurozomes. As Scott Redford has argued, this inscription is bigger in size and in script than any other ones. On the inscription, Manuel's name appears as "[Kumnan]ūs Kālūyān Mafruz[ūm]" which is probably preceded by "Komnenos," which indicates his place among other emirs and thus close relation with the Seljuk sultan.[349] Although this example indicates his Seljuk identity, his seal, as suggested by Métivier, contains Christian elements and symbols, therefore affirming his Christian identity.[350]

Ibn Bībī treats Manuel Maurozomes in his book as if the *melik* descended from noble ancestors going back to the 'Rum' emperors, who were known to the whole world with "moral probity and generosity of association." He mentions Maurozomes' estates on an island, yet no detail for the location of it has been

[347] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 350; George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 118, #6; Sevim and Merçil, *Selçuklu Devletleri Tarihi*…, p. 453. Kaykhusraw I had gained the support of other provincial elites/frontier chiefs on Eastern frontiers, which resulted in his local power increased considerably. Yıldız, "Manuel Komnenos Mavrozomes…," p. 62.

[348] Ibid., p. 68.

[349] Scott Redford, "Maurozomes in Konya," in *Change in the Byzantine World in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, First International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, Proceedings, İstanbul, 25-28 June, 2007*, Ayla Ödekan, et al. (eds), (İstanbul: Vehbi Koç Vakfı, 2010), pp. 48-49.

[350] Sophie Métivier, "Les Maurozômai, Byzance et le sultanat de Rūm. Note sur le sceau de Jean Comnène Maurozômès," *RÉB* 67 (2009), pp. 197-207; Yıldız , "Manuel Komnenos Mavrozomes…," pp. 69-70. Yıldız points out the existence of Christian elements in the Seljuk state. Ibid., pp. 70-72.

provided.[351] Manuel must have died a few years after he established his control over the Maeander region, since there is an inscription on the Sinope citadel saying that the ruler of Khūnas in 1215 was another person.[352]

After his refuge Manuel Maurozomes and his retinue were given high posts at the Seljuk court.[353] The Maurozomes family continued to take part in the Seljuk court in succeeding years. Manuel Maurozomes' son, Komnenos Maurozomes, served as a commander later in Alaaddin Keykubad I's army against the Armenian and Cypriot crusaders in 1225.[354] Ibn Bībī mentions Maurozomes' son possessing lands and fortresses in the lands of Rûm.[355] Moreover, a third or fourth generation Maurozomes was attested by an inscription on a sarcophagus dated to 1297 found in the Church of Maria Spilaiotissa in Sille.[356]

According to Niketas Choniates, the Seljuk sultan assigned lands, including the historian's homeland (Chonai), to Manuel Maurozomes. He narrates the events related with Maurozomes within a broader picture of the 'polyarchy' in Eastern territories, which caused trouble for the Nicaean government after the fall of

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[351] Ibid., p. 61 citing Ibn Bībī, Nāṣır al-Dīn Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad, *El-Evāmirü'l-ʿAlāʾiyye fī'l-Umūri'l-ʿAlāʾiyye*, Adnan Sadık Erzi and Necati Lugal (eds), (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1957), p. 57f.

[352] Redford, "Maurozomes in Konya," p. 48.

[353] Yıldız, "Manuel Komnenos Mavrozomes…," p. 63 referring to Ibn Bībī, *El-Evāmirü'l-ʿAlāʾiyye*…, pp. 81-83, and p. 90.

[354] Sevim and Merçil, *Selçuklu Devletleri Tarihi*…, p. 461. See Paul Wittek, "L'épitaphe d'un Comnéne à Konia," *B* 10 (1935), pp. 505-515; idem, "Encore l'épitaphe d'un Comnéne à Konia," *B* 12 (1937), pp. 207-211.

[355] Yıldız, "Manuel Komnenos Mavrozomes…," p. 68 citing Ibn Bībī, *El-Evāmirü'l-ʿAlāʾiyye*…, p. 305.

[356] Wittek, "L'épitaphe d'un Comnéne à Konia," pp. 505-515; idem, "Encore l'épitaphe d'un Comnéne à Konia," pp. 207-211; Redford, "Maurozomes in Konya," pp. 48-49; Yıldız, "Manuel Komnenos Mavrozomes…," p. 70. The sarcophagus is now in Konya Archaeology Museum. This had been noticed in *Anadolu Selçuklu Devleti Tarihi*, Ibn Bībī's abovementioned study, translated by M. Nuri Gencosman and notes added by F. N. Uzluk: "1.11.1297=13.1.697 [Hicra date] yılında öldüğü Rumca bir kitabede yazılmıştır, Selçuki usulündeki kabir taşında, Komnen ailesinden Trabzon İmparatoru Yuvanis'in oğlu Mikail olduğu ve anası tarafından Mavrozom familyasına mensup bulunduğu muharrerdir. Giyaseddin'in İstanbul'da iken bu aileden bir kızla evlendiğini İbn Bibi de yazıyor. Mikailin adı taşta, Emir Arslan diye yazılıdır." Ibn Bibi, *Anadolu Selçukî Devleti Tarihi*…, p. 34.

Constantinople.[357] In Niketas Choniates' account, Maurozomes was accused of having plotted against the Byzantine emperor in the Maeander region.[358] In *Historia*, Niketas Choniates' approach to Manuel Maurozomes would well be understood if his overall views about the threats for the Nicaean Empire, within which he was writing his book, and his anti-Komnenian attitude.[359] George Akropolites talks rather about the alliances made between the Seljuk sultan and Theodore I; nothing about conflict issues between them was mentioned in his account considering the years 1205-1206.[360] However, he gives the account of the battle of Antioch-on-the-Maeander, in June 1211, which took place between the Byzantine emperor and the Seljuk sultan.[361] The encounter ended with absolute victory of Theodore I Laskaris, also in one sense sealed his authority over rebellious dynasts. Akropolites names the independent rulers in Asia Minor as προύχοντες ('prominent men'). He connects the emergence of independent provincial aristocrats with the disorder caused by the 'sack' of Constantinople.' Akropolites identifies these men with their capacity on local ground and their free will on their own power, so does for Manuel Maurozomes.[362] On the other hand, while Akropolites and Ibn Bîbî claim that Kaykhusraw received great

[357] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, pp. 350-351, and also p. 343.

[358] Ibid., p. 343.

[359] Yıldız, "Manuel Komnenos Mavrozomes…," p. 59 referring Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 343. Based on Niketas Choniates' orations and letters, Mitsou summarizes the author's view on the rebel as being *Rhomaios* (Ρωμαῖος=Roman) by descent however he was different from any Byzantines by character and behavior, and "had proved himself an enemy of his fatherland." Ekaterini Mitsou, "Ideology and Economy in the Politics of John III Vatazes (1221-1254)," in *Change in the Byzantine World in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, First International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, Proceedings, İstanbul, 25-28 June, 2007*, Ayla Ödekan, et al. (eds), (İstanbul: Vehbi Koç Vakfı, 2010), p. 201.

[360] George Akropolites, *The History*, p. 124: "He [Kaykhusraw] proved to be of use to the emperor Theodore also, at a time when he was hard-pressed, giving him an alliance and making peace; for he called the empress Anna sister." Also, ibid., p. 129, fn. 23.

[361] Ibid., p. 131, #10.

[362] Ibid., p. 84.

honor by the Byzantine emperor, Niketas Choniates' account presents an objection to that by contradicting Byzantine alliances with Muslim rulers.[363]

The struggle between central authority and the landed aristocracy continued in the Nicaean period and was usually in the form of political and military issues. An example of such a confrontation can be found in the relationship between Theodore I Laskaris and one of his fierce rivals, Manuel Maurozomes, who challenged his authority in Asia Minor.[364] Maurozomes, having received Turcoman and Seljuk mercenaries, organized marauding attacks on the Nicaean region of Phyrigia. The Seljuk Sultan Kaykhusraw I benefited from this situation and developed good relationships with Maurozomes which were long established so that the latter had already become father–in-law of the Sultan before 1204.[365]

[363] For differences and similarities between these accounts, Yıldız notes as follows: "The major discrepancies between the accounts of Choniates and Ibn Bîbî lie in the framing of Kaykhusraw I's initial contact with Maurozomes. Thus, whereas Ibn Bîbî situates Kaykhusraw I's meeting with Maurozomes within the context of the sultan fleeing Alexios III's court due to the incident with the Frankish knight, Choniates remains silent on this point. Indeed, Choniates make no mention of the exiled Seljuk sultan's visit to Alexos III's court. Thus, the reader of Choniates is left to presume that, in accordance to the usual *topos* of the Byzantine rebel, Maurozomes may have approached the Seljuks at the frontier." Yıldız, "Manuel Komnenos Mavrozomes…," p. 64.

[364] Manuel Maurozomes, Theodore Mangaphas and David Komnenos were named "three headed monster" by Niketas Choniates. Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 343.

[365] That close contact with the Seljuk ruler caused Maurozomes serious problem and he was overthrown. Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

ECONOMIC BASIS OF POWER

Introduction: Economic Structure of the Empire

On the economic structure of Byzantium, Kazhdan argued that the Byzantine society was such an individualistic society that the private economy was a natural outcome of it.[1] He identifies the basic unit of the Byzantine economy as "private ownership" and "private enterprise." The nuclear family is situated at the center of the economic system. Yet, drawing a complex picture, Kazhdan holds that although the Byzantine economy contains the family, which possesses private holdings, practices and individual entrepreneurship at the very center, the state as a superstructure rises upon private *oikoi*.[2] As a result, private property, feudal property, and state property, according to Kazhdan, co-existed in Byzantine society. He asserts that "they did not exist in a sequential manner, so that, say, feudal relations came to replace the ones based on private property; and finally, while coinciding they supplemented rather

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[1] Kazhdan, "State, Feudal, and Private Economy in Byzantium," p. 88. For the phenomenon of individualism in Byzantine society, see Alexander Kazhdan and Giles Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies* (Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1982), p. 34. Kazhdan marks that 'private' or 'individualistic' nature of Byzantine society is a normal outcome since it was evident in moral and religious world of the Byzantines. The problem of salvation makes that character more 'reasonable': "…the Western church stressed God's ineffable predestination and the church's institutional administration of salvation ("no salvation outside church"), whereas the Byzantine church put the emphasis on the individual's deeds and thoughts (inseparably linked with God's will through the so-called *synergeia*); the acing force was man himself coupled with his spiritual father rather than the ecclesiastical institution, the means was obedience (humbleness, fear) to God rather than sacraments and it could be rewarded by the individual vision of the divine light." Kazhdan, "State, Feudal, and Private Economy in Byzantium," p. 87-88.

[2] Ibid., p. 99. *Oikos* means 'house' basically with its fiscal and economic definition. See A. Kazhdan, "Oikos," *ODB*, vol. 3, pp. 1517-1518; Magdalino, "The Byzantine Aristocratic *Oikos*," pp. 92-111; idem, "Aristocratic *oikoi* in the tenth and eleventh regions of Constantinople," in *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography, and Everyday Life*, Nevra Necipoğlu, ed., (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 53-69; also see J. Verpeaux, "Les oikeioi. Notes d'histoire institutionnelle et sociale," *REB* 23 (1965), pp. 89-99. For the discussion of epithets in thirteenth Byzantine aristocracy, the terms *oikos* and *oikeios*, see Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, pp. 12-20. The concept of '*oikos*' will be mentioned in details in the following pages.

than conflicted with each other."[3] Private ownership and individual labor were attestable at the core of Byzantine rural life.[4] Yet, that was the micro scale picture. In the larger picture, the state remained firm in its dominating image in economics until the late twelfth century.[5]

In the Komnenian period, Constantinople's monopoly continued in the production of many luxury goods and dominated the Byzantine market. Yet, a progressive deconstruction of the capital's economic hegemony became observable as the provincial economy flourished. As Kazhdan and Epstein have noted:

> [with regard to the late twelfth century] Perhaps the discrepancy between the political domination of the capital and the economic importance of the provinces was alluded to by Michael Choniates, who wrote that Constantinople lived off the provinces, the nobility never caring for the countryside, but only sending there 'the tax collectors with their bestial fangs'.[6]

Therefore, Byzantine provincial society has already been suffering from a kind of indifference until the turn of the twelfth century.

The economic supremacy of the capital had overshadowed the provincial potentials. From the late twelfth century onwards, however, as the provincial aristocracy's power reached an irretrievable level, the Byzantine state's economic superstructure became weakened. It was, nonetheless, towards the end of the twelfth

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[3] Kazhdan, "State, Feudal, and Private Economy in Byzantium," p. 86.

[4] Ibid., pp. 88-89.

[5] Kazhdan accepted the existence of the state's supreme ownership (*dominium directum*), swaying above all landowners from the simple peasants to the higher ranks of Byzantine aristocracy. Ibid., p. 95-96. Komnenian aristocracy is characterized with the supremacy of the dynasty in Kazhdan's approach. It was the result of that new structure that social mobility in administrative system was rather limited to the members of imperial households and some privileged aristocrats. See Hendy, "'Byzantium, 1081-1204': The Economy Revisited…," pp. 7-8 referring to Kazhdan, *Social'nyj sostav*…, pp. 177, 179 and 184. For Hendy's own interpretations on the Komnenian supremacy see ibid., pp. 44-45. For Kazhdan, Byzantium's economy was state–oriented. The Byzantine state participated in economic life actively. The economic supremacy of the state did not only derive from landownership or fiscal revenues, it also derived from trade revenues. Kazhdan, "State, Feudal, and Private Economy in Byzantium," pp. 83-100, especially pp. 96-98.

[6] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 46.

century that the state economy began to suffer from stagnation. When taken together with the aristocracy in the making, this background schema can delineate the economic basis upon which the power of the provincial aristocracy rested or from which it came out.

During the last two decades of the twelfth century and the Nicaean Empire, the conditions underwent some changes. The provinces developed separate networks which enabled them to create local economies, although for the latter the state kept firm control over the aristocracy. That formation led the provincial aristocrats to establish their own economic basis of power via different means. This chapter deals with how the provincial aristocrats used those means and in what terms their power derived from economic sources. It also points out the sources of wealth, distribution of estates, and the ways of investment of aristocratic wealth.

Scholars contributed a lot to the field having different priorities. Alan Harvey paid attention to demographic growth, distribution of land between the landlords and the peasants, extension of cultivated area in relation to that, and finally the improvements in agricultural production and state resources.[7] Paul Magdalino, however, has viewed Harvey's statement insufficient and lacking in larger context. He puts emphasis on three aspects: "the identity and location of the greatest landlords," "the geographical distribution of their estates," and finally "the implications of the geographical relationship between the landlord/consumer and the sources of production."[8]

The price of the land did not necessarily depend on its value. Personal relationships and links may have shaped the manner of assessment. That is why the grandness of a land or the income of its owner did not exclusively adequate for the

[7] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, "Consclusion," pp. 244-268.

[8] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 162.

land's expected high value. This is an important phenomenon, which is named "human factor" by Kazhdan.[9]

'Feudalism'

For a better understanding of the provincial aristocracy, it can be useful, at that point, to turn into the issue of 'feudalism' in the Byzantine Empire.[10] The developments in urban life, and rising of local powerful groups changed the overall picture of the Byzantine countryside in the eleventh century. The 'feudalization' process accelerated during the twelfth century. As the territorial losses multiplied, aristocratic desire for land did not relent. With this transformation in mind, the feudalization brought about 'decentralization' in the state bureaucracy, and made the state bearing more military character than hitherto.[11] Also, the trading centers have increasingly been fallen to the Turks and Normans from the eleventh century onwards. However, the Byzantine trade in provinces survived without any serious disturbance. It had multi polar structure that the increase of long-distance trade cleared the way for the growth of provincial cities in the twelfth century.[12] General evolution of medieval

[9] Kazhdan, "State, Feudal, and Private Economy in Byzantium," p. 93.

[10] One of the major works on the field is Ostrogorskij, *Pour l'histoire de la féodalite*. See also Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, pp. 5-12. For a short summary of the feudalism debate in Byzantium, see Michael Angold, "The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1118," in *New Cambridge Medieval History*, D. Luscombe and J. Riley-Smith (eds), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), vol. 4, part 2, pp. 217-253, at pp. 219-222. Moreover, Alexander Kazhdan expressed his views as follows: "In the twelfth century Byzantium was wealthy, flourishing, and civilized, but the "wild" West was active. Byzantium opened the path for two major elements that determined Western development –new urbanistic and feudal organization– but neither turned out to develop properly: no Byzantine town achieved communal independence and no feudal army evolved; the Komnenian "perestroika" was stifled by Andronikos I and the efforts of John Batatzes by the Palaiologan "grand idea." Byzantine feudalism came too late when it could do too little, and the ephemeral success under the Komnenoi and Laskarids gave way to the tragic disintegration of the country during the Palaiologan centuries." Kazhdan, "State, Feudal, and Private Economy in Byzantium," p. 100.

[11] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 119.

[12] Lilie, "Twelfth-Century Byzantine and Turkish States," p. 47.

society becomes evident as the main reason for Byzantium's social-economic environment, which became the marker more than the political and military activities.

If it is compared with the Western Europe, Byzantium's pace was slow in experiencing that evolution process. "Nevertheless," as well-put by Kazhdan and Epstein, "the urban growth and the nascent 'feudalization' of society implied serious changes in the social and cultural activity of the empire and were reflected above all in altered external forms of everyday life."[13] There appeared quasi-feudal properties/institutions in Byzantine lands. These can be subsumed under three categories: relations of the state and the "owner" (*pronoia*, *charistikion*),[14] lord-tenant relationship and *paroikos*–tenant relationship.[15] Byzantine aristocracy and Western nobility appeared as almost coeval. The Byzantines used some terms from Western vocabulary to identify the quasi-feudal relationships.[16]

The provincial military aristocracy has gained remarkable power in the Komnenian period. Military character of the Komnenian period/dynasty has led various unfavorable consequences for the state. According to Kazhdan and Epstein, and Vryonis, the conflicts between the central aristocracy and the provincial aristocracy resulted in Byzantium's bereft of logistics and human power.[17]

'Feudal' structure of the Byzantine Empire produced several results among which the rise of the provincial aristocracy concerns us at the moment. Some provincial aristocratic families –the Gabrades, the Rupenids, or the Brachamioi–

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[13] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, pp. 72-73.

[14] See Ostrogorsky, "Observations …," p. 8 and Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 61.

[15] Kazhdan, "State, Feudal, and Private Economy in Byzantium," p. 93.

[16] For this point, see ibid., p. 94.

[17] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, pp. 56-62; and Vryonis, *Decline of Medieval Hellenism*…, pp. 26; 76-78.

occupied prominent roles just because they resisted against the Muslim invasions along the frontiers of Byzantium. As opposed to some others, the provincial aristocrats –such as the Vatatzai– possessed large estates and retained their position through such an established wealth. Their fidelity to the Byzantine state later turned them as a reward. It provided them "legitimate" power in provinces. The sheer–direct contradiction with the Turkish invaders has created a powerful provincial military aristocracy in Asia Minor, whereas the Western parts of the Empire retained mostly the civil aristocracy. When they are compared with the high civil aristocracy, the provincial aristocratic power groups, of course, differ in their "power." To give an example not particularly from Asia Minor, while the Chamaretoi's area of influence did not exceed its limits, some distinguished families retained power both among the Constantinopolitan aristocracy and in the provinces.[18]

Urban Centers in Byzantine Asia Minor and Provincial Economic Prosperity in the Twelfth Century

Urban centers distinguished from villages in terms of non-agricultural economic activities.[19] In middle ages, they had sensitive economies depended largely on the agricultural potentials/production of their surrounding territories which is called hinterland. Each large urban center had its hinterland inside of which other smaller centers shared similar functions and were in relation with their own agricultural hinterland. In broader view, all these combined formed the Byzantine rural economic network. And thus, any problem in rural economy found its reflection on the

[18] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries…," pp. 22-26.

[19] For Niketas Choniates' description of cities, see Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 347, where he describes glamorous days of Byzantine cities. For ideal towns in Byzantine world, see John Haldon, "The Idea of the Town in the Byzantine Empire," in *The Idea and Ideal of the Town between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, G. P. Brogilo and Bryan Ward-Perkins (eds), (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 1-23.

immediate negative situation in towns' economics. This was a dependant relationship.[20] The capitals of the themes had more prominent position among these centers, since they embodied administrative staff and their retinues.

Central Anatolian plateau already included a small portion of the Byzantine cities by the ninth and the tenth centuries. A large number of them were along the coasts or in the coastal plains. Therefore, one cannot speak of a developed urban culture for the inner parts of Anatolia. This may be connected with the constant state of warfare with the eastern powers or with the wrong agricultural treatment of the soil which gradually and eventually came to a serious state throughout centuries. The latter had obviously influenced agricultural production in the plateau. Fertile coastlands and lowlands along the riverbeds remained as major sources for agriculture. However, this does not mean that inland cities did not participate in trade networks.

Urban centers in periphery are detectable in the eleventh –and the twelfth– century Byzantine Asia Minor.[21] The settlements had fortifications used in times of emergency. In the countryside, on the other hand, there were villages abundant in natural and agricultural resources. As indicated by the anonymous *Hudūd al-'Ālam*, by the latter years of the tenth century, the number of Byzantine cities in Anatolia decreased seriously.[22] Although information considering the Byzantine cities given

[20] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, pp. 198-203.

[21] Kazhdan and Epstein write on the Byzantine idealization and conception of the *polis*: "The Byzantines sought to define the polis not by its administrative or legal, nor by its social or economic peculiarities, but by its external appearance, or even by the virtue of its inhabitants." Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, pp. 55-56; Michael Choniates seems to have given particular attention to inhabitants of cities in his description. As Kazhdan and Epstein summarize, "according to Michael Choniates, a city's typical features included fortifications, an entrance bridge, and a large population. Moreover, he saw the peculiarity of the polis "not in the strong walls or tall houses, the creations of carpenters, not in markets and temples, as the ancients imagined, but in the existence of pious and courageous, chaste and just men." Kazhdan and Epstein, p. 56.

[22] V. Minorsky, ed. and trans., *Hudud al-'Âlam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), pp. 156-157. For another tenth century Arabic source, Ibn Khordâdhbeh, confirming that information, see

by this source show inconsistency,[23] it shows us at least the existence of the fortified urban centers of inner Anatolia. Haldon disagrees with that view. For him, the urban centers from the ninth century on experienced a revival.[24]

The middle Byzantine provincial cities were small unlike their late antique predecessors (e.g. Antioch).[25] The city of Sardis had been stuck inside the castle at its acropolis.[26] Moreover, many other cities had suffered great decline in Asia Minor. Odo of Deuil, in his journey as a participant in the Second Crusade (1147-1149), came to Ephesos after passing from Pergamon and Smyrna. He describes the city as lacking its ancient glory and in ruins.[27] The situation in eastern Anatolian cities did not differ much at all. Antioch, Edessa and Melitene withstood the Turkish advance a couple of years after a definite defeat in Mantzikert (1071) at the hands of the Turks. Antioch was conquered by the Turks in late 1084.[28] Nevertheless, towns and cities expanded correspondingly to the economic expansion throughout the twelfth century, which must have led to a considerable increase in provincial aristocrats' revenues collected from their urban estates.[29]

Michael Hendy, "Byzantium, 1081-1204: An Economic Reappraisal," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 20 (1970), p. 36.

[23] Speros Vryonis, Jr., "Hudûd al-'Âlam," *ODB*, vol. 2, pp. 954-955.

[24] Haldon, "Social Élites…," pp. 189-190.

[25] Cyril Mango, *Byzantium. The Empire of New Rome* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), p. 62.

[26] Bouras, "Aspects of the Byzantine City…," p. 507.

[27] Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione Ludovici VII in Orientem*, p. 107. Town life must have flourished during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Archaeological evidences suggest that the urban recovery was evident in these centuries of Asia Minor. In late Byzantine era, as an obvious contrast to early Byzantine urban culture, the provincial cities had less public buildings compared with Constantinople, and a couple of others, which were provincial administrative centers like Trebizond. Bouras, "Aspects of the Byzantine City…," p. 524. Arta and Mistra would be counted for such centers. Moreover, lack of city-planning, narrow settlement spaces and shortage of spoils for buildings contributed to "the lack of a monumental style." Ibid., p. 511. Byzantine provinces, becoming more provincial, on the other hand, reached an architectural refinement, which shows the point the Byzantine culture achieved. That architectural evolution was observed more in the provinces than in the capital. For the building activities under the Laskarids, see ibid., p. 504.

[28] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, p. 112.

[29] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, p. 226.

The Byzantine authors of the Komnenian period did not pay very much attention to serious droughts or famines that the Empire had experienced.[30] However, they must have existed and caused destruction. That may be the reason for both the abandoned cities of Antiquity and the decline of city-life in the Dark Ages of the seventh–ninth centuries. The picture changed rapidly during the Komnenian epoch. The prosperity in the twelfth century manifests that change[31] and this century witnessed the revival of city–life in Asia Minor.[32]

Provincial towns and cities were possibly in a kind of hierarchical order in economic and administrative terms. So the capitals of the themes attracted more people's interest, such as Thrakesion's capital city Ephesos, or Maeander's major city Antioch. The authorization to rule a city was given to certain *archontes* through chrysobulls. This was evident also during the Nicaean Empire. John III Vatatzes distributed the Macedonian cities by chrysobulls.[33] The Byzantine *archontes* were the real beneficiaries and the Byzantine city resembled much more "tyrannies or oligarchies than to democracies."[34] The Byzantine state had transformed the structure of the ancient city. Byzantine cities did not generate self-governing mechanisms. They were compelled to return tax revenues to the state extracted from their own lands. Thus all cities seem to have a "corporate identity, institutional structure and legal personality of a *civitas*."[35] No constitutional government existed in Byzantine

[30] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 142.

[31] Ibid., p. 140.

[32] Ibid., pp. 128-129.

[33] Angold, "Archons and Dynasts…," p. 244.

[34] Ibid., p. 246.

[35] John Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World 565-1204* (London: UCL Press, 1999), pp. 247-248.

cities.[36] Self-governance and political liberation did not exist in Byzantine provinces even if there had been considerable economic development between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Byzantine community did not produce dynamics leading the settlements to 'independent communes,' which emerged just on the edges of the Empire. Venice, Amalfi and Cherson were such communes eventually broke away from the Empire.[37]

A comparison between the Byzantine and Western provincial cities becomes a need to point out at the moment. Contrary to the Western models, Byzantine provincial cities did not lead to shifts in economic life of the provinces.[38] Different from the West, the Byzantine town settlers did not have a self consciousness of their urban identity. That notion was nonexistent in Byzantine culture. Yet, provincial settlers remained loyal to the state essentially. They did not transform into an independent mass. To put it differently, there was no self-governance in provincial cities. Those inhabitants were ever dependent on either Episcopal or local aristocratic representatives.[39]

Provincial centers enjoyed commercial networks among them. In the heartland of Asia Minor, regional trade developed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Regional trade centers, such as Euchaita and Amorion, became knot points in small scale trade networks. For the latter, an inter-regional status may possibly be attributed. Moreover, trade had probably been undertaken between coastal cities and

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[36] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 159. "Constitutional development during the period of exile at Nicaea was in two main directions. Efforts were made, on the one hand, to reconcile imperial absolutism with aristocratic privilege and, on the other, to place it in a 'Hellenic' context." Angold, "Byzantine 'Nationalism' and the Nicaean Empire," p. 55.

[37] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, pp. 55-56; ibidem, p. 52, citing A. P. Kazhdan, *Centrostremitel'nye i centrobežnye sily v vizantijskom mire (1081-1261)*, (Athens: n. p., 1976), p. 18. As opposed to the West, Byzantine urban self-consciousness and innovative institutions were nonexistent. Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 46 and pp. 55-56.

[38] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 46.

[39] Ibid., pp. 55-56.

inner lands of Asia Minor. Agricultural products of the coastal regions may have been exported to the markets of inner regions.[40] Cilicia, Cyprus, Trebizond, and other provincial centers created their own network systems. In the Komnenian period, cities had more intimate relations with each other than they had with Constantinople.[41] In the thirteenth century and onwards, the Byzantine cities became no longer isolated centers, which only at best had connection with their close environment. Artisanal production increased, while at the same time the Byzantine cities entered into a challenging contest within a larger area of markets and commercial networks.[42]

Expansionist Economy

As already alluded, the Byzantine economy in the twelfth century experienced a general comfort in agriculture, trade and several industries.[43] The revival of Byzantine economy was not restricted only to the capital; it was an overall revival including the provinces as well. Cities led the revival there. Their structure revealed a wide range of social groups, consisting of landed aristocrats, members of administrative offices, dignitaries of high ecclesiastical aristocracy and lower ecclesiastical aristocrats, merchants, proletarians, and artisans.[44]

Urban recovery seems to be an imperial objective ambitiously undertaken by every Komnenian emperor, even by the last one: Andronikos I Komnenos (r. 1183-

[40] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 137. Examples of towns from Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, pp. 208-213.

[41] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 128.

[42] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 182.

[43] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, pp. 120-243.

[44] Peter 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 (1978), p. 69.

1185). In his two-year reign, Andronikos I Komnenos found the Empire in a dissolution process. He followed a policy to revive the life in cities. As contended by Niketas Choniates, his generosity for the 'poor' amended the status of people whose properties were appropriated by the unlawful power holders. He took a severe stance against the provincial aristocrats, who were dominating the cities and extended properties albeit occupying the ones of common people. His punishment fell upon those and the rebels, which at the end led to an increase in the population of cities.[45] The office of the *praetor* was revitalized via either the members of the senate or the aristocrats in order to reinstate justice in provinces.[46] Thus, some aristocrats dissident to state authority were replaced by others entirely subdued to the emperor's order.

Change in physical world had very much to say about human society. The increase of the recession of forest areas in inhabited and cultivated lands suggest that there was a population rise between the ninth and the thirteenth centuries, which resulted in "a more economic management and a more rational organization of space"[47] and consequently the extensive occupation of the rural areas.[48]

There have been several suggestions about the economic conditions of the Byzantine Empire in the eleventh and twelfth centuries among the modern scholars. According to Vryonis, Asia Minor entered into a serious decline in financial, military

[45] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, pp. 179, 186, and 197. Andronikos I Komnenos' words to those notables had an authoritative tone, having been inspired by some parts of the Bible. He intimidated those exploiting the positions their offices provided: "Let it be known by those who pursue the avaricious life that, if they do not voluntarily desist from desiring the properties of others, they will be deprived of their own possessions and will sigh with the indigent, just as the dust is blown away from the face of the earth by a furious storm; and this shall be so especially for those who fall upon ships and plunder their cargoes, sometimes wrecking and dismantling them. If any of you, therefore, administers an Office on behalf of our throne, and if any of you is the owner of landed properties along the seaboard, foster first in yourself and then in your subjects the fear of God, and deference and reverence towards my rule; otherwise, any wrongdoing on the part of the governor of a province or the land-owner shall be required of your soul many times over, and, if you be innocent in hands and pure in heart, then your assistants will pay for the unlawful deed." Ibid., pp. 180-181.

[46] Ibid., p. 182.

[47] Lefort, "Rural Economy and Social Relations in the Countryside," p. 107.

[48] Ibid., p. 106.

and administrative system of the Empire with the coming of the Seljuks in the eleventh century.[49] Speros Vryonis regarded the eleventh century as a declining period for the Byzantine state. [50] This view has long been debated, and currently the view asserting an economic prosperity in the eleventh and twelfth century became prevalent among the Byzantinists.[51]

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[49] Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism...*, p. 71 and pp. 78-80. There are also other interpretations on city life, and economical activities of the cities. For Titcev's and Foss' analysis see also Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 36; Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis*, pp. 66-67.

[50] Speros Vryonis, Jr., "Byzantium: The Social Basis of Decline in the Eleventh Century," *GRBS* 2 (1959), pp. 159-175; for Vryonis' interpretation, see also, Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 36.

[51] Economic decline is an argument widely discussed for the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Yet, the argument can be questioned in several aspects. On the other hand, some scholars rejected the idea. They have put forward new evidence which enabled them to evaluate the twelfth century not as a period of decadence but as a period abundant in many resources as well as a relative revival in city life. A Galesion monk who travelled to Lydia to buy grain suggests the surplus being accumulated in Lydia. According to Haldon, the revival of urban centers began already from the ninth century on. Haldon, "Social Élites…," pp. 189-190. Military triumphs of the tenth and eleventh centuries have led to a recovery of urban life. Foss, *Byzantine and Turkish Sardis*, pp. 66-67. Among the revisionist side, Hendy explains his ideas contrarily defending an economic boom in Byzantine economy throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries: "…rather than declining away from the ninth and tenth centuries, Byzantine economic life was expanding rapidly throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries; (…) this expansion may have only come to an end with the Fourth Crusade." Hendy, "Byzantium, 1081-1204: An Economic Reappraisal," p. 52. Examples given further will present more evidences suggesting that view. Hendy also states misinterpretations among scholars of Byzantine history about Byzantine state's economic conditions in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Contrary to the general tendencies, as he argues, "Byzantine economic life was expanding rapidly throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries; and that despite the beginnings of political reverses under the Angeli (and mercenaries and magnates notwithstanding), this expansion may have only come to an end with the Fourth Crusade." Hendy, "Byzantium, 1081-1204: An Economic Reappraisal," pp. 51-52. This view of Byzantine economy expanding in the eleventh and twelfth centuries is also shared by Alan Harvey in idem, *Economic Expansion*…, p. 244. This view is also shared by Kazhdan and Epstein. They think that due to economic prosperity in tenth-twelfth centuries, urban centers were generally developed in their economies. Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 31 and p. 39. On the issue of economic and commercial growth in Mediterranean basin as a whole, see in general Hendy, *Studies*…; Harvey, *Economic Expansion*...; Contrary to what has been generally assumed, Byzantine Empire passed through an abundant period in the Komnenian era in terms agriculture, animal breeding, and demographic increase. In Alexios I Komnenos' reign, the economy became stabilized, when the Byzantine *nomisma* regained its former standard. Philip Grierson, "Notes on the Fineness of the Byzantine Solidus," *BZ* 54 (1961), pp. 91-97; Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…," pp. 25-29. In Eusthatios of Thessaloniki's letters and writings of Michael Choniates and Elias Ekdikos, an apparent development in agriculture can be observed in the twelfth century Byzantine Empire. Ibid., pp. 30-31. All these repercussions owed very much to Komnenian policy in economics and coinage. The *besant*'s (the Byzantine gold coin) value was recovered under the Komnenoi. It contributed the current state of economic welfare in the twelfth century, and made the state economy a challenging one in that part of the world. Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 147. For the debasement and stability of the coinage in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, see ibid., pp. 151-155; for the debasement of the gold coinage during the Nicaean era, see Geanakoplos, *Byzantium*…, pp. 299-300 citing Pachymeres, *De Michaele et Andronico Palaeologis*, vol. 2, (Bonn, 1935), pp. 493-494. As attested in Venetian sources, the *hyperpyron* of the Komnenian

The twelfth-century Byzantine Empire experienced a great prosperity all over its territories whereas the Greek lands maintained more welfare than particularly the territories in Asia Minor, whose potential was realized by the Nicaean government.[52] However though Asia Minor had relative prosperity compared to the eleventh century. It has been argued by Charanis and commonly observed in the cities of Byzantium that the expansion of urban population, industry and trade were attestable especially in European provinces rather than the Asian territories.[53] At any rate, Byzantine cities' production capacity was lower than the European cities' which resulted in the domination of European goods in the Byzantine market. Yet, there were still some Byzantine cities exporting their goods.[54] For apparently dynamic trade potentials and agricultural productivity of some European cities such as Thebes, the European provinces made more progress in economic expansion.[55] That relative prosperity continued through the late twelfth century though provincial conflicts shaded over the process. On the other hand, after the Latin occupation of Constantinople in 1204, the socio-economic conditions of aristocracy and peasantry remained unaltered. Both were engaged in the new environment as they used to be.[56]

Another sign illustrates economic condition in Byzantine Asia Minor. A letter of a Jewish inhabitant (a physician) of Byzantine town of Seleucia, the capital city of Isauria, and who was actually a native of Egypt, may allow us to comprehend the

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era preserved its value in international trade in the Mediterranean region. Angeliki E. Laiou, "Byzantine Trade with Christians and Muslims and the Crusades," in *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, Angeliki E. Laiou and Roy Parviz Mottahedeh (eds), (Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection , 2001), pp. 156-196. For trade in Manuel I's empire see Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, pp. 142-143.

[52] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, p. 259.

[53] Hendy, "Byzantium, 1081-1204: An Economic Reappraisal," p. 47, and later on idem, "'Byzantium, 1081-1204': The Economy Revisited…," p. 19.

[54] Bouras, "Aspects of the Byzantine City…," p. 515.

[55] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, pp. 222-223.

[56] Charanis, "On the Social Structure and Economic Organization…" p. 96.

economic situation of Byzantine provinces at least along the Mediterranean coasts during the Komnenian era. Although its address is not known and the beginning is lacking, the rest of the letter and the date (21 July 1137) are available to the reader. As Goitein noticed, this letter is obviously a sign of considerable prosperity and security of Byzantine Seleucia.[57] It is apprehensible from several aspects. First, the writer of the letter mentions high dowry that he gave to his son-in-law in return for his daughter's marriage. Various kinds of goods and precious pieces as dowries may possibly have been signs of economic wealth that the eastern Byzantine lands had been experiencing. In addition, the writer talks about his wealthy state of living conditions. He recovered his losses and extended his prosperity. As he contends, he possessed valuable properties including a house costs 200 dinars.[58] The letter also shows the Jewish population living in Seleucia.[59] It is understood that the Jewish physician was a foreigner in Byzantine land and has come from Fatimid Egypt and served in the Fatimid navy previously. Hence, he was a foreigner in the Byzantine commonwealth. This was possibly the reason that hampered him to find a permanent job in Constantinople. He moved to reside in the province, thus established a new life there. There must have been such a suitable environment to pursue a career in the area so that the Jewish owner of the letter invites his relatives to live in a more secure and wealthy environment of the Byzantine Asia Minor at the time the letter was written. [60] In short, we can conclude with D. Jacoby's words pointing to the trade movement between Byzantium and Egypt and the Levant and the West:

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[57] S. D. Goitein, "A Letter from Seleucia (Cilicia) Dated 21 July 1137," *Speculum* 39 (1964), pp. 298-303.

[58] Ibid., p. 300.

[59] Ibid., pp. 301-302. The document by itself is important since it provides evidence for Jewish existence in civil and economic life in Byzantine cities. As Goitein points out, this letter is the only source proving Jewish existence of Seleucia. See ibid., p. 302.

[60] Ibid., pp. 302-303. His wife bore a Greek name; she was a descendant of the city.

> The First Crusade created turmoil in Asia Minor for a short period. Soon afterwards, however, the establishment of the Latin states in the Levant resulted in the consolidation of the triangular trade between the two countries, as well as between the West, the Crusader Levant and Egypt. The two networks converged along the southern shore of Asia Minor, to the benefit of the ports of this region.[61]

People's wealth and mobility within the borders of the Empire increased in the rural areas of Byzantium. Some developments in agricultural production and investments in agriculture made the countryside no longer destitute.[62] The organization of landscape, economic and social conditions developed in Byzantine rural world throughout the Middle Byzantine period.[63] The Byzantine countryside has long been in a process of physical transformation in various aspects (esp. both demographically and in terms of landscape). The increase in human population is followed by considerable increase in craftsmanship in rural world of the Byzantine Empire in the eleventh-thirteenth centuries. The arguments on the population changes in the eleventh and twelfth centuries varied in the field of Byzantine studies. While Oikonomides and Svoronos have stated that the Byzantine population decreased in the late eleventh century, some other scholars, such as Kazhdan, Harvey and Lefort argued the contrary view, drew attention to the increase in both population and economy between the tenth and the twelfth centuries.[64] Alan Harvey reminds that for

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[61] David Jacoby, "What Do We Learn About Byzantine Asia Minor from the Documents of the Cairo Genizah?" *Η Βυζαντίνη Μικρα Ασια (6ος-12 ος αι.)* (*Byzantine Asia Minor (6th-12th cent.))*, Stelios Lambakis, ed., (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 1998), p. 94.

[62] Lefort, "Rural Economy and Social Relations in the Countryside," p. 109.

[63] Ibid., p. 113.

[64] Angeliki E. Laiou, "The Byzantine Village (5th-14th Century)," in *Les villages dan l'Empire byzantine. IVe-XVe siècle,* Jacques Lefort, et al. (eds), (Paris: Lethielleux, 2005), p. 40, fn. 56. At that point, one should mark the reason behind that population boom. It was apparently something affected the physical living conditions. Agricultural production should have reached considerable and abundant level before that period and this set off the economic rise as an accelerator in the process. Various approaches have been proposed so far about this phenomenon. Svoronos has argued that the agricultural expansion existed in the tenth and first half of the eleventh century, and it started to decline by the late eleventh century since high aristocracy and landowners did not prefer to invest

Asia Minor, the population fluctuated downward due to Turkish invasions in the late eleventh-early twelfth centuries, whereas the situation remained as the general trend for the later part of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries for western Asia Minor.[65]

An archaeological field study has shown that a settlement with fortifications of the twelfth-thirteenth centuries at Mastaura of the Meander region must have been wealthy. This tentative conclusion is derived from what has remained from the settlement, such as twenty-six cisterns.[66] For the eleventh and twelfth centuries, in sum, there was no economic decline in Byzantium, but a relative boom in manufacture of goods, trade, and security within the Empire's territories.[67]

Urban and Aristocratic Demand for Production

The rise in demand and consequently in production reached a high level in the eleventh century. This revitalized the economy. The prosperity in the twelfth-century influenced the demand for production/manufacture in urban centers. Urban centers monopolized the demand for manufactured products, and thus became the financially 'castles' of rural society with the extension of landed properties. The dependence on

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their wealth for providing more momentum to agricultural production. Teall, beside in agreement with Svoronos on the subject, extends the agricultural expansion period between ninth and the early eleventh century. See Nicos Svoronos, "Remarques sur les structures économiques de l'empire byzantine au XIe siècle," *Travaux et Mémoires*, 6 (1976), pp. 60-63 and John L. Teall, "The Byzantine Agricultural Tradition," *DOP* 25 (1971), pp. 53-59.

[65] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, p. 245.

[66] Hugh Barnes and Mark Whittow, "The Survey of Medieval Castles of Anatolia (1992-1996): the Meander region," in *Ancient Anatolia: Fifty Years' Work by the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara*, Roger Matthews, ed., (London: The British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, 1998), p. 353.

[67] For relevant examples (e.g. the inhabitants of Lake Pousgouse) from the frontier regions concerning the revival of economy and urban culture and to see how the society there sought its self-interests by establishing links between different cultures, see Nevra Necipoğlu, "The Coexistence of Greeks and Turks in Medieval Anatolia (Eleventh-Twelfth Centuries)," *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 5 (1999-2000), pp. 58-76. She focuses on the social, cultural and economic contacts between Byzantines and Turks in Asia Minor. Some of the points raised are mentioned by Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, pp. 21-22, #37&38.

rural areas in terms of items for consumption brought about delicate state of towns from rural economy, rather a passive situation.[68] The growing inclination toward luxurious items obviously increased that role of cities. Since the aristocrats belonged to an urban culture in Byzantium, it seems reasonable that cities were effective in that traffic.[69] The urban *mesoi*, interestingly, did not stay behind the provincial aristocracy.[70] As the middle class developed interest to luxury items, semi-luxury items with lesser cost were manufactured. Although Constantinople was still the principal industrial production and consumption center, particularly on account of the existence of Italian merchants in the twelfth century, provincial centers engaged in regional networks as the demand for manufacture was no longer monopolized by Constantinople. Byzantine cities, especially after the eleventh and the twelfth centuries, raised a huge demand for agricultural and industrial products as administrative officials tended to reside in these centers.[71] The demand, in other words, was also decentralized.[72]

The thirteenth century shows a decline in demand. It also influenced the produced items in markets. A growing tendency towards manufacturing products cheaper than it was in the past became the trend in that century.[73] Expensive goods

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[68] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, p. 203.

[69] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 132.

[70] It is nominally mentioned in the sources that the *mesoi* were a class in middle Byzantine society whose members did not have titles or offices. They were artisans, merchants, and people from other professions or well-off property owners. Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, pp. 204-205.

[71] Ibid., pp. 206-207.

[72] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 132.

[73] Considering the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the Byzantine state and the aristocracy were no longer very rich compared to the past. Italian merchants dominated the Byzantine market. This situation resulted in a decline in demands of aristocracy and eventually led to a change in Byzantine manufacturing and trade specifically from the mid-fourteenth century on. Ibid., p. 182. Rural fairs used to serve commercial centers organized weekly or annually. For they became less evident in the sources from the 1340s onward, the agricultural production must have been seriously declined. See Klaus-Peter Matschke, "Commerce, Trade, Markets, and Money, Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries," in *EHB*, vol. 2, pp. 779-781.

were substituted with the ones cost cheaper. As a result, the materials used in manufacturing luxury objects changed as it can be observed in Byzantine cameos. Their luxurious quality in the twelfth century left its place to extensively-manufactured objects, similar in shape and iconography, made with glass paste which made them "available to a much larger and diversified market."[74]

The view asserting that the Byzantine towns and cities were rather the centers of consumption, not centers of production has been much frequented. It assumes that the Byzantine city was living off commerce and trade as opposed to producer settlements, like villages. Thus, the merchant class was likely to occur in such kind of settlements. From this side of the coin, the Byzantine city can be understood as 'market.'[75] As centers of attraction for the provincial aristocracy, the Byzantine cities had more than that. The Byzantine aristocracy's demand for luxury or semi-luxury items would be an indicator for that point. The cities were also production centers for such objects; therefore, their role in production cannot be ignored. Hendy disregards the capacity of the Byzantine city as a producer-center. He attributes a parasitical nature to it, deriving all its wealth and logistics from the rural areas, and its agricultural economy being narrow in geographical terms.[76]

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[74] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 183. Several centers in the provinces provide the archaeologists ceramic findings, which are at a high quantity suggesting our point of urban revival in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. That can be seen, for instance, in the sites of Corinth in mainland Greece and also in cities of Asia Minor such as Sardis, Pergamon and so on. The provincial renewal was more observable in the production of industrial goods. Constantinople, from the late eleventh and twelfth centuries on, lost its single and unique place in manufacturing of different industrial goods. Production of goods (e.g. silk) was observed not only in the heart of the Byzantine Empire but also in the provincial centers (e.g. Thebes and Corinth in silk industry). Kazhdan and Epstein call this "decentralization of craft skills." Different artworks and books in particular were other media that can be attested in provincial economical activities. Production of some luxury goods, however, remained peculiar to Constantinople. Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, pp. 40-43. For more information on that, see ibid, p. 40, fn. 70.

[75] For the city as 'market', see Max Weber, *The City*, trans. and ed. by Don Martindale and Gertrud Neuwirth, (London: Heinemann, 1958), pp. 66-69; Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, pp. 150-151.

[76] Hendy, "'Byzantium, 1081-1204': The Economy Revisited…," p. 42.

Furthermore, the state bureaucracy established its provincial system via a structure of well-developed chain of administrative mechanism in provinces. In other words, the cities sheltered administrative class, who actually differed from the settlers in many ways (e.g. cultural, economic, and so on). The administrative aristocracy had the opportunity to participate in commercial activities.[77] Also, contrary to the idea expressed a few lines above on the Byzantine city as 'parasitic,' it has been argued that production was being actively held in Byzantine cities.[78]

Economic Basis of Power in the Byzantine Provincial Society

Thanks to the monastic documents revealing considerable amount of information on Smyrna and its environs, modern Byzantine historians are able to understand the economic activities of the provincial aristocrats of the region.[79] In this macro scale picture many families engaged in the economic life of the area by owning lands, handing over properties, investing money on certain media, etc. Other regions beside Smyrna also provide some evidences on the provincial aristocracy's economic basis of power. These will also be covered in relevant parts of the chapter.

[77] It means the aristocracy's affiliation to more than one group.

[78] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 133. On the counter argument(s) of that view, see ibid., p. 133, fn. 137. On the other hand, the structure of the rural economy revealed much complexity than before. For that argument, see Lefort, "Rural Economy and Social Relations in the Countryside," p. 111. On the craftsmanship in the Byzantine Empire, see Charalambos Bouras, "Master Craftsmen, Craftsmen and Building Activities in Byzantium," in *EHB*, vol. 2, pp. 539-554.

[79] Smyrna region has provided precious knowledge about the local aristocratic estates. A monumental study, which was published almost half a century ago, on the aristocratic environment of the region of Smyrna is still being used in order to figure out the aristocratic society of that part of the Byzantine Empire: Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la région de Smyrne…," pp. 1-204.

Economy and the System of Land-owning

In broad terms, the land could mainly be held by three different parties in Byzantium: the state, the small-medium-large land-owning aristocrats (including all the officials in provinces, ecclesiastical institutions, foreigners, merchants, etc.),[80] and the free peasants. Leaving aside the others, this part seeks to explain the land-owning by the small and medium land-owning aristocrats excluding the ecclesiastical members.

In Byzantine cities of the period between the eleventh and the thirteenth century, there were leading citizens. They had established local ties and maintained strong existence that had already been inherited by their ancestors and they benefited from their close economic and political ties with the capital. Before the Komnenian era, as opposed to the state as the main owner of the Empire's lands, a small number of the aristocratic families owned the lands, too.[81] The provincial aristocrats attempted to increase their properties. For example, in the Byzantine provinces of southern Italy, not only the high military officials, but also native aristocrats were frequently renting lands of monastic or ecclesiastical foundations.[82]

However, the setting was changing in favor of the provincial aristocracy. Taxation rights were gradually sold to these 'powerful' people, which in the end turned the provincial aristocracy into new collectors of the regional revenues. Even as late as 1280-1281, the dignitaries in Asia Minor were sometimes granted villages for which judicial and some other civil affairs were entrusted to an official called *prokathemenos tou vestiariou*.[83] In other words, the provincial aristocrats became the

[80] Merchants were not considered as a group of the aristocracy. See Haldon, "Social Élites…," p. 198.

[81] The real ownership of a land or an estate necessitated a *chrysobull* or *prostagma* given by the imperial power. Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 60.

[82] Falkenhausen, "A Provincial Aristocracy…," p. 221.

[83] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 50.

holders of varying pieces of allotments for which they had extended using rights. As a result of that tendency, in general, the tax revenues of the state decreased.[84] It cleared the way for a challenging environment among the future contenders in regional base: the provincial aristocrats.

The medium had reached such a point that these players were so dauntless and powerful already during the twelfth century. For the sake of example, a case for demanding rights over a property deserted by one of the rich monasteries around Smyrna by a common peasant would be helpful at this context. Property disputes emerged between different parties as a document dated to 1133 from the monastery of Lembos near Smyrna indicates. In that case, a peasant had proclaimed rights over some properties which were originally belonged to a monastery before the Turkish occupation of the Turks. When the area was re-conquered from them the landlord and the personnel of the monastery (as it was a monastery property, its landlord naturally became the Patriarch of Constantinople, thus it belonged the Church) brought the dispute to the court.[85] The very example illustrates that the properties once and for a long time left untapped could be acquired by people residing close by, who would use it for their own benefit. There may have been many similar cases since vast lands were often changing hands between the Byzantines and the Turks in the period under consideration, but we have a few evidences from Asia Minor.

Land ownership by the provincial aristocracy should be emphasized at that point. Land could be held in various types of possession: large or small domains

[84] This was also the primary factor for the debasement of the coinage and the collapse of the fiscal and tax systems in the 1070s.

[85] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 128 referring to MM, IV, pp. 62-63.

(*episkepseis*), country estates (*proasteia*), villages (*choriai*), trading posts (*emporia*), *stratiōtika ktēmata*/*strateiai*[86] and other rural or urban properties.[87]

Large *episkepseis* were mostly in possession of the relatives of the emperor or monasteries but rarely were granted to some other individuals.[88] About the distribution of the *episkepseis* in the twelfth century, there are two different views. Michael F. Hendy, on the one hand, argued that the imperial government followed a fiscal policy that was a drawback from Asia Minor, left large domains mainly to the monasteries. Hendy contended that it was an intentional attitude of the imperial government to keep its financial balance.[89] However, on the other hand, Magdalino sees his explanation in need of detailed observation. He suggests that the monasteries (e.g. Myrelaion) continued to have estates in Asia Minor (e.g. near Ephesos and Miletos) after its recovery from the Turkish dominion.[90]

The *proasteia*, (sing. *proasteion*) situated in the countryside, from the eleventh century onward were populated with the *paroikoi*. These types of estates can be considered as suburban country houses.[91] The provincial aristocracy could own large amount of lands. They had sometimes village (*choria*) or villages, whose revenues collected by a provincial aristocrat brought about social power to him beside a financial one. A member of the Philes family, which was counted as one of

[86] See Hendy, "'Byzantium, 1081-1204': The Economy Revisited…," pp. 9-10.

[87] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p.164.

[88] The *episkepseis*: large domain units; a fiscal unit in a theme. It was a term identifying fiscal property either of emperor or imperial family members or aristocrats. The term had been in use for other meanings: to refer to a fiscal division of a theme or to refer to the administration of imperial property. Mark C. Bartusis, "Episkepsis," *ODB*, vol. 1, p. 717. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 168; and Bartusis, "Episkepseis," p. 717.

[89] Hendy, *Studies*…, p. 135.

[90] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, pp. 165-166. As Magdalino defends, "There is no reason to doubt that the Myrelaion, which possessed large *episkepseis* near Ephesos and Miletos in the eleventh century, reclaimed these properties after their re-conquest from the Turks. The Great Church clearly did reclaim its rights in the region of Smyrna." Ibid., p. 165.

[91] Mark C. Bartusis, "Proasteion," *ODB*, vol. 3, p. 1724.

the major families in the Byzantine Empire by Pachymeres (I, 93.10-11), Theodore Komnenos Philes and his mother-in-law, Eirene Komnene Branaina, owned Prinobare, a village near Smyrna.[92]

In addition, the *emporia* (sing. *emporion*) were the sub-urban centers in which trading activities or lively economic facilities were taking place.[93] And finally, *stratiōtika ktēmata*/*strateiai* were amounts of estates which entailed certain obligations. During the eleventh-thirteenth centuries, the holder of a military *strateia* had to do his own military service or provide soldiers to the state in return for the properties attached to the *strateia*.[94]

In terms of inheritance, provincial territories consisted basically of two types of estates. They were hereditary estates, on the one hand, composed of large lands which were received as grants mostly, in the possession of the aristocracy; and *pronoia*–holdings, which were less extensive, controlled by the *stratiotai*, military men from the ranks of the lesser notables on the other.[95]

After 1261 the state hesitated to cede its rights to aristocratic powers. Donations to monasteries and hereditary *pronoiai* appeared at this context. On the other hand, the agricultural base of the Empire did not remain stagnant; on the

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[92] MM, IV, pp. 213 and 225-226; Hélène Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, "La politique agraire des empereurs de Nicée," *B* 28 (1959), pp. 59-60.

[93] See Kazhdan, "Emporion," *ODB*, vol. 1, p. 694.

[94] Eric McGeer and Alexander Kazhdan, "Strateia," *ODB*, vol. 3, p. 1965. There were also 'maritime *strateiai*,' especially for the maritime themes/regions, such as Kibyrrheotes. They were, as Lemerle has stated, "the financial liabilities falling on the maritime regions, for the supply of ships of war with their crews; and it is these revenues which henceforth, diverted from their particular purpose, will be swallowed up in the treasury, with this latter under the obligation to see to the pay of the crews when necessity obliges the triremes to put to sea." Paul Lemerle, *The Agrarian History of Byzantium from the Origins to the Twelfth Century* (Galway: Galway University Press, 1979), pp. 235-236.

[95] Ostrogorsky, "Observations…," p. 18. For how the inheritance of aristocratic properties was practiced and the stability & instability of holdings, see Kyritses, p. 184 and pp. 209-212. On the hereditary aspect of the properties and lands, see Jean-Claude Cheynet, "Aristocracy and Inheritance (11th-13th Centuries)," English translation of "Aristocratie et heritage (XIe-XIIIe s.)," *La transmission du patrimonie*, G. Dagron and J. Beaucamp, ed., (=*Travaux et Mémoires*. Monographies 11), (Paris: De Boccard, 1998), pp. 53-80. [Printed in idem, *The Byzantine Aristocracy and Its Military Function*, no. IV.]

contrary, it was still functioning enabling the finance/subsistence of large army. Thanks to the expansion of the towns and cities, landlords' and state's incomes must have increased, yet, this did not obviously surpass the revenues derived from agricultural rural sources.[96] That situation stopped when Turkish presence became detrimental for Byzantine agriculture in the 1340s as the contraction in territorial base reached an alarming level.

It has been suggested that there were four types of fiscal land in Byzantium: Land belonging to the emperor directly (private control over it); land owned by the fisc; land subjected to full fiscal taxation duty (small and middle landowners); land belonging to the relatives of the emperor.

The second type (land owned by the fisc) comprised of landlords, mostly resided in the capital in order to benefit from the physical proximity to the imperial government. These landlords administered their extensive lands and properties from a long distance. The Constantinopolitan landlords possessed estates in the provinces apart from the Constantinople proper. They contained also the large institutions, such as the Great Church of Constantinople, which actively held considerable estates. For example, the Lembos Monastery situated close to Smyrna was the possession of the Great Church.[97] It was rather the Constantinopolitan aristocrats, however, who possessed the most arable and easily accessible land in maritime routes. The richest lands were under their possession.[98]

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[96] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, p. 226.

[97] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 164. The Great Church of Constantinople owned estates from the variety of places throughout the Empire, even including a whole island (Aigina). Ibid. In the long-run the revenues of the Church declined, and its power and wealth transferred to the Turks. Vryonis, *Decline of Medieval Hellenism*…, pp. 288-350, especially p. 350.

[98] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 166.

The Constantinopolitan aristocrats dominated the arable-usable lands of the Empire not only in Constantinople and its surroundings but also in most part of the rural territories as well.[99] Contrary to the Constantinopolitan aristocrats, the landed aristocrats of provinces had their estates in a modest scale. Their lands were not exceeding the borders of their vicinities, or at most their provinces.[100]

Yet, there was another sub-type under the land owned by the fisc: that of the ecclesiastical character. The landlords, being the bishops or other individuals from the ecclesiastical aristocracy at that point, were rather concentrated in the provinces. Many examples can be given from the Balkan territories of the Empire (e.g. ecclesiastical estates of the monasteries of Mount Athos) as having ecclesiastical nature and being so wealthy. But, in any way, a generalization cannot be derived out of that phenomenon.[101] The Komnenian emperors did not tend to be generous donors to the monasteries as it is apparent in Manuel I's legislation in 1159, which put a hindrance in front of the monasteries to retain immovable properties.[102]

The surplus out of the crops or other products was collected by the landlords either in cash or in kind. For the twelfth century Komnenian epoch, the Constantinopolitan landlords (and thus their *oikoi*) were at the top of a system in which there were two ways serving the aristocrats' interests.[103] One of them was cash surplus dues, obtained by the peasants selling their products in the local market and giving the cash to the landlord for his expense in Constantinople. Another way was

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[99] Ibid., pp. 160-171.

[100] Ibid., p. 164.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid., citing *Jus graecoromanum*, I. and P. Zepos (eds), vol. 1. (Athens: n. p., 1931; repr. Aalen: n. p., 1962), p. 387.

[103] "The prime agricultural land around the Aegean consisted of the same units, and was farmed for the benefit of the same kinds of powerful landlords, among whom those of Constantinople predominated. Such changes as occurred from the ninth to the twelfth century occurred around and within this basic framework." Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 168.

the surplus collected in produce. It was collected from the peasants in kind and shipped to the capital for individual use of the landowner or for restricted sale.[104]

At that point, our major question needs to be evaluated: What were the sources of wealth for the provincial aristocrats? Sources frequently mention the economic land-base of imperial family or high aristocrats; nonetheless rarely speak about properties of the provincial aristocrats or citizens of more modest background. This may be based on the relative unbalance between these two social levels in terms of land-possession. Very few evidences that one can infer data about the economic condition of the provincial aristocrats were unfortunately restricted to either a specific period of time (due to the scope of a related historical source) or a region (e.g. Smyrna region, due to the quantity of historical evidences). For instance, Theodore Laskaris's land grants to Maurozomes or the lands of David Komnenos are mentioned by Niketas Choniates.

Pronoia

The *pronoia* (πρόνοια) was mainly composed of conditional land allotments originally belonged to state and a system providing revenues for feeding-keeping soldiers. An individual or a group of individuals could be given *pronoiai*. These

[104] Ibid., p. 169. Lefort, moreover, mentions a burgher from Thessaloniki selling his surplus products in the market of the city: "These aristocratic farms must have been similar to that managed by Theodosios Skaranos in thirteenth-century Chalkidiki. Skaranos was neither an aristocrat nor a peasant, but a burgher from Thessaloniki, a widower turned monk, who had connections in the emperor's entourage. He obtained a small estate, granted by the emperor, along with the tax revenue of a dozen or so peasants, and led the life of a gentleman farmer in the monastery he acquired. There he housed about fourteen people and cultivated 24 modioi of vineyard, and perhaps as much as 300 modioi of land, with his own livestock and tools, and the labor of his "paroikoi." The surplus of his production –wheat and mostly wine– Skaranos evidently sold in Thessaloniki." Lefort, "Rural Economy and Social Relations in the Countryside," p. 109.

agents were called the *pronoiar*s.[105] The emergence of the institution of *pronoia* cannot be detected with certainty, instead a rather evolutionary process should be assumed for it.[106] The first attestable case of grant of *pronoia* appeared in both *Synopsis historion* and John Zonaras' *Epitome historion*. A man of the *protovestiarios* rank, Constantine Leichoudes, was given a control of some estates of the Mangana by Constantine IX Monomachus in ca. 1059.[107]

The *pronoia* as a development of the eleventh century was liberal distribution of revenue-producing grants.[108] It was granted to an individual for a specific period of years, usually his lifetime, in return for services rendered or to be rendered. It was never hereditary unless it was specifically declared so by a special measure, that is the reign of Michael VIII Palaiologos. The state lands were allotted to the people, who at the end became the new masters of the peasants, who were coming from lower ranks of the urban society such as tailors, cobblers, smiths, stable-boys, brick makers, etc.

The military system of the Empire was directly influenced by the *pronoia* system. The recruitment of the army changed as in the land system. Local armies appeared out of that new context, created by the *pronoia* system.[109] The holder of a military *pronoia* was not a small peasant, but belonged to the aristocracy. Byzantine aristocratic class in Macedonian and Doukas dynasties consisted of the civil noblemen who were the members of the senate, but under the Komnenoi it was the

[105] *Pronoia*-holder (*pronoiars*) was the person to whom the taxes were paid. "The *pronoiars* were knights and masters of the *paroikoi* who tilled their lands." Ostrogorsky, "Observations…," p. 11.

[106] Lemerle, *The Agrarian History of Byzantium*…, p. 222.

[107] Geanakoplos, *Byzantium*…, p. 69.

[108] For *pronoia* and *pronoia*–holders, in general, see Haldon, "Social Élites…," pp. 287-289. There has just appeared a new publication that I could not reach: Mark C. Bartusis, *Land and Privilege in Byzantium: The Institution of Pronoia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[109] Ostrogorsky, "Observations…," p. 11; Lemerle, *The Agrarian History of Byzantium*…, p. 223.

knight or *pronoiar* from the lower or middle gentry. Thus, the role of the senate decreased under the latter.[110] This change transformed the general layout of the aristocratic class that military aspect becomes crucial.

Pronoia system forms a part of Alexios I Komnenos' administrative reforms. The *pronoiai* were also given as reward for state officials, which were particularly given to the military members in the late Komnenian period.[111] It was extensively used to reward the soldiers due to financial difficulties restricting the state to pay its troops. The extension of military *pronoiai* as Alexios I's grants, as Angold points out well, led to an exhaustion of state's public lands, not the imperial demesne as has been the tradition hitherto.[112] That was a turning point in the decline of Byzantine state economy. The *pronoia* grants were further extended by Manuel I Komnenos and were transformed into a commonly and systematically practiced policy. Manuel I's policy of extending the *pronoia* system might have brought acceleration to the "feudalization" of Byzantium.[113] Furthermore, the Nicaean government did not give up the system. The period testified the settlement and enrollment of foreigners onto the Byzantine territories. John III Vatatzes allotted lands and *pronoiai* to those people.[114]

[110] Ostrogorsky, "Observations…," p. 12.

[111] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy (8th-13th Centuries)," pp. 29-30.

[112] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, p. 126.

[113] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 177; Lemerle, *The Agrarian History of Byzantium*…, pp. 233-234.

[114] Ibid., pp. 229-230.

Sources for Wealth: Economic Power of the Provincial Aristocrats

Economic wealth would be a decisive factor for an aristocrat's social position. The economic power of high aristocracy made the members of this social class having positions in court, administration and army. Lesser positions were often filled by low aristocracy and the provincial aristocracy.

The provincial aristocrats did not have single source of wealth, but four in general.[115] The ones occupying certain offices had their revenues mainly from their land-base estates (e.g. *proasteia*, domanial estates). Moreover, imperial gifts (*dorea*) assured considerable amount of income. Apart from those, the administrative offices that they held provided the salary (*rogai*) the government paid to them. And finally, there were the inherited wealth, transmitted from ancestors.

The prosperity of the provincial aristocrats came both from firstly the lands they owned, that is, personal wealth, which was a result of individual effort including rents from urban businesses and trade incomes, and mostly composed of landed estates.[116] Secondly, the granted properties and the income their office provided were another source of wealth for the provincial aristocrats consisting mainly of gifts from the emperor (the aristocracy received the largest estates).[117] Gifted properties were tools in rewarding system. And then, cash salaries were paid to the high-middle-low ranking aristocrats and the office-holders; some were made for lifetime while others were made revocable *ad nutum*.[118] Finally, every aristocrat *de jure* gained the estates

[115] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy (8th-13th Centuries)," pp. 23-25; Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 157.

[116] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 58.

[117] The imperial gifts to the members of the aristocracy and leading officials were mostly given for the life of the receiver, so not hereditary in character.

[118] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy (8th-13th Centuries)," p. 24. A local aristocrat could have wealth through various ways: the wealth inherited from the family, the wealth accumulated by his own

and properties that were descended from the ancestors. This forms the last source for the ways of accumulating wealth for a provincial aristocrat.

In cases of the first one, the aristocrat was gaining wealth through his own lands/properties on which he had peasants working and cultivating the field. Here, the main source for wealth was agricultural production. The provincial aristocrats obtained much of their revenues from their rural estates.[119] This was nothing to do with state-oriented grants, which constituted the case for the second.

The Komnenian government allowed the aristocracy to own large estates. The aristocrats were provided with several advantageous conditions that can be summarized as the increase in *rogai* and exemptions from taxes. But still the state held the absolute control over all these that they could be taken back. The Byzantine emperors did not lose anything from their authority in the eyes of the public. What has been just created was a kind of representation of authority in the locale in between the emperor and the common people. The landed wealth made this class obviously 'leaders' of local communities.[120] That situation continued more or less during the Angelid and Nicaean periods.

Yet, as Alan Harvey has cleverly framed, precise amounts of which category brought what as income cannot be estimated. Harvey illuminates the point:

> An economic consequence of economic expansion was the strengthening of the economic base of the aristocracy. Its revenues were derived only partially from its lands. It also benefited from its share in political power and gratuities from the state. However, this depended on imperial favor, which was not always forthcoming. Unfortunately, little is known of the revenues which were obtained from landed wealth and what proportion they were of the total

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effort (through salaries, or income from properties), the wealth could be obtained as a result of marriage in the form of dowry, which sometimes included imperial grants, the wealth gained from imperial gifts/grants.

[119] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, p. 227.

[120] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy (8th-13th Centuries)," p. 42.

> revenues of landowners. This varied according to the official positions which a landowner occupied.[121]

There were three major modes of exploitation of the landholders: appropriation of taxes through imperial grants for the right to collect them, obtaining land directly, and leasing the properties to tenants.[122]

The provincial aristocratic functions on the development of agricultural production in the countryside cannot be ignored. Since they had the wealth to provide infrastructures for agriculture and industry, the aristocrats were the main investors in rural society of the Empire.[123] Eustathios Boilas, for example, had freed his slaves and given them "previously uncultivated and uninhabited" spots upon which they became tenant farmers.[124] The landowners had to develop strategies in order to rationalize the outcome from their estates. For that, they charged the estate steward (*epitropos*). This man's task was to maximize the production on behalf of the landowner.[125]

To what extend the provincial aristocrats' participation to provincial economy is open to debate. How did it influence on the agrarian economy? Did it cause a decline or a rise? There have been various approaches to these questions. Ostrogorsky thought that the teeming and growing land estates of the "*dynatoi*" made

[121] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, p. 162.

[122] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 145.

[123] A possibility for the local *archontes* participating actively in investing in silk production in Thebes has been put forward by David Jacoby in his "Silk in Western Byzantium Before the Fourth Crusade," *BZ* 84/5 (1991-1992), pp. 477-480.

[124] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 104, citing Paul Lemerle, *Cinq études sur le XIe siècle byzantin* (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1977), pp. 15-63. "Eustathius Boilas describes his wealth as consisting of movables, that is both self-movables and easily movables, and in particular of slaves, bullion, stuffs and livestock. He also owned immovable properties consisting of eleven estates, several of which are described as *monidia*, presumably identical with Philaretus' *monatata*, and probably referring to their independent fiscal status (that is, they were probably *idiosystata*), all of which were in Armenia." Hendy, *Studies*…, p. 211 referring to Lemerle, *The Agrarian History of Byzantium*…, pp. 20-29.

[125] Teall, "Byzantine Agricultural Tradition," p. 56.

the agrarian economy decline. Counter arguments have been voiced by Michael Hendy and Alan Harvey. They attributed significant role to the provincial aristocrats in cities (*archontes*) in Byzantine economy.[126]

The high demand for agricultural products in provincial centers due to the administrative apparatus deployed there especially the governor and his retinue, eventually created an environment in which provincial aristocrats could make use of in economic terms. It was a similar reason why this was the case in frontier regions, where the military garrisons created the agricultural demand.[127] At that point, the *kastra*, although often had administrative function, could serve as "centers for the administration of their lands."[128]

Harvey points out parallelism between the urban possessions and rural estates of great landowners. They rather tended to control market phases in transaction of their goods; therefore these provincial aristocrats preferred their estates close to each other simply for its convenience in administrative issues. A certain Basil Gabalas, in 1216, pursued that idea and decided to sell his properties at Phygella situated distant from where he resided (Ephesos). He acquired some estates near his residence.[129] Agglomerating land properties close to each other around a town would offer advantageous circumstances to the provincial aristocrat. Since the peasantry, as another holder in agricultural production yet a weak rival for him, had to meet their immediate needs and sell the surplus just for self-sufficiency, the large landowning aristocrat could accumulate and launch his surplus during economic fluctuations.[130] In the Nicaean era, agriculture was still the basis of economy, so was for basic

[126] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 161.

[127] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, p. 207.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, p. 227 referring to MM, VI, pp. 174-175.

[130] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, pp. 227-228.

resource of the provincial aristocracy, yet the market economy caused more growth for the towns. The products of the provincial aristocrats provided them great amount of money. This dynamism triggered more demand for money at the local level, which consequently developed local manufactures.[131]

It was a common phenomenon in its history that the Byzantine state took possession of the surplus coming out of the countryside as mode of tax, and also as rents.[132] The state had a pivotal role as an agent over aristocratic properties.[133] The producers paid their rents to the landlords and taxes to the state. Redistribution worked effectively via exchanges in local markets and payments of the government to its officers. As members of imperial governmental system, the provincial aristocrats would receive their portion as well. Although the grants were rarely made hereditary, landed income became main source for the provincial aristocrats.[134] Indeed, there had always been the most privileged group in the Byzantine society. That group, being the emperor's relatives and his intimate statesmen-commanders could have income from the tax-farming system. The *paroikoi* were made dependents of that 'prominent' group and were paying taxes not to the state treasury but to the hands of the aristocrats.[135]

Financial relations of the provincial aristocracy with the state are another point enabling the viewer to realize their positions in state economy. Lay landowners (and also monasteries)[136] had no obligations *vis-a-vis* the treasury. They had financial

[131] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, p. 260.

[132] Laiou, "The Byzantine Village (5th-14th Century)," p. 31.

[133] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 144.

[134] Haldon, "Social Élites…," p. 195.

[135] Stephenson, "The Rise …," p. 28.

[136] Aristocrats and monasteries were able to possess estates in the eleventh century. Lands and estates that the imperial family donated to the members of the aristocracy (civil or military) were the property of the latter for a life time, not hereditary in the eleventh century.

and legal immunity. The intervention of the state officials has been abandoned in the cases of monasteries and lay landowners.[137]

Every urban center has come under control of a certain *archon* or a *dynast*, who in a way represented local interests, and was collector of local tax revenues. Such *de facto* cases were observable particularly during the times of deep crisis in government.[138] In these periods, even the areas with no rebellious and independent past began to raise antagonism to the central state.[139] The rise in the number of peasants employed in Lavra multiplied its revenues consequently. That policy gave great opportunity to the 'feudal' landowners to extend their wealth and sustained "centrifugal tendencies in the empire."[140] The only thing we can attest would be advantages in logistical issues. If one's lands or estates situated close to a provincial urban center or a big center, then, that proximity would not have necessitated much efforts or budget for transportation, thus, cost would have been lesser.[141]

Actually, majority of the provincial aristocrats were more or less engaged in the state bureaucracy either through the positions/titles they were given or familial or strategic ties with the state. Therefore, this second group of provincial aristocrats can well be defined as state-oriented. Most of their economic power derived from state-originating grants and sources.[142] Grants as land and tax privileges and donations

[137] Ostrogorsky, "Observations…," p. 8. As a long term consequence, the increase of hereditary *pronoiai* gradually came at a fatal level for the state, according to this approach. During Michael VIII's reign, a process of making *pronoiai* hereditary was accelerated. "Michael Palaiologos recognized its [*pronoia*'s] force and gave in to it in 1259, making *pronoiai* inheritable. In this way, the military organization based upon the *pronoia* came to centre on the cities. It may be that this had already happened before 1204 at Adrianople. It was an important military centre in the late twelfth century and it was around such bases that *pronoiai* were initially created." Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, p. 245.

[138] Ibid., p. 177. Also, see Angold, "Archons and Dynasts…," pp. 236-253.

[139] Stephenson, "The Rise…," p. 31.

[140] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, p. 162.

[141] See ibid., fn. 204.

[142] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 144.

were used to content the individuals to whom they were bestowed. A considerable expansion of that privilege is attested in the Komnenian era. These grants were not only given to the members of military and court circles, but also to the monastic establishments. Alexios I Komnenos made them systematical in order to satisfy his close environment and the military aristocracy.[143] The Komnenian government, thus, became much depended on grants and the aristocracy. That aristocracy was rapidly growing via blood relationships with the Komnenian family and benefitting from those privileges.[144] A considerable amount of land was granted to Bohemond by the emperor Alexios I Komnenos.[145] He was allowed to benefit that grant until his death.

As already pointed out, in the twelfth century, the Byzantine aristocrats gradually possessed properties and became the holders of private economic power.[146] The landowning aristocrats found suitable grounds to multiply their land estates. The emperor grants and the lands were two major means of the great landowners for accumulation of wealth. The former were sometimes given as a right to rule a city. Anna Komnene mentions an individual who was granted with a city: Trebizond was awarded to Theodore Gabras at the end of the eleventh century.[147] Not only the big cities but other rural towns and castles also came under local aristocratic power.[148]

In her narrative, Anna Komnene quotes from Bohemond that he had another *chrysobull*, which gave him an entire unknown dukedom.[149] Manuel I, in his reign, legalized the privileges and privileged properties. The land transfer was prohibited.

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[143] Stephenson, "The Rise…," p. 29.

[144] Ibid., p. 30.

[145] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 430.

[146] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 62.

[147] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 265.

[148] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, pp. 53-54.

[149] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 432.

However, the high military and civil aristocrats were exceptional. The new practice carried out in this manner was no longer held after his death.[150]

The Byzantine state satisfied the provincial aristocracy with basically two types of grants that can be considered as sources of wealth. One was land grants which were totally hereditary grants composed of either lands or properties including the revenues obtained via these sources. The other one was revenue grants which had something different from the land grants. The basic distinction was that the aristocrat was allowed to collect the fiscal revenues of lands and properties, which belonged to private houses/*oikoi* or peasants. The collector, however, could not hold judiciary authority over the owners of these estates; therefore, it was not an extended prerogative. This application began during the Komnenian dynasty, a period which (with regard to the abovementioned part) the relation between the provincial aristocrats and the peasants transformed.[151]

Furthermore, the *roga* (stipend) system was another source of wealth, basically derived from "concessions of land or of state revenue either for life or forever."[152] The provincial aristocrats were given *rogai*, payments handed in for bureaucratic services.[153] The payment distributed to office-holders was so high in

[150] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 62.

[151] Lemerle, *The Agrarian History of Byzantium*…, pp. 213-214. The 'dependence' of the peasantry will have resulted in local aristocracy's seizure of properties of the *paroikoi* and therefore this situation will have allowed them to accumulate more wealth.

[152] Nikolas Oikonomides, "Title and Income at the Byzantine Court," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, Henry Maguire, ed., (Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997), p. 212.

[153] Stephenson, "The Rise…," p. 27. "During the middle Byzantine period, court officials received an annual pension, the *roga*, from the emperor. Under the Komnenoi this payment was discontinued and replaced by grants of the fiscal income of certain areas, or other sources of income that would normally belong to the state. During the period under study, there is no mention in the sources of direct payments to court officials. It is very possible that the emperor provided for their means of subsistence through grants of various wealth–producing sources. Unfortunately we cannot know whether the income sources granted to an official corresponded to standard amounts, fixed according to the particular office, or whether the amounts depended entirely on the discretion of the emperor." Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 52. On the distribution of *rogai*, see Hendy, *Studies*…, p. 192. Between 1058 and 1079 the *sakellarios* became responsible officer for that duty until 1196. See ibid. referring to N. Oikonomides, "L'évolution de l'organisation administrative de l'empire byzantine

state's budget. Haldon notes the gradual rise and fall of the imperial *rogai*: "From the early tenth century the sale of honorific titles was regularized, but eventually became too expensive to maintain–the situation became so bad that under Alexios I the *roga* attached to imperial honorific titles was abolished."[154]

Finally, inheritance constituted another source for one's individual wealth. In Byzantium, the estates and properties inherited from the ancestors could be transmitted from the succeeding generations. In the provinces, aristocratic families preserved their economic prosperity via such way of transmissions, which became possible in two occasions: the marriage of the children and the death of the parents. The main principle of the inheritance was to keep it within the family. The concept sustained its significant place in the provincial aristocrats' lives and economic basis of power throughout the period that is considered n this thesis.[155]

The smallholding soldiers constituted another group engaged in land-holding activities in the Byzantine provincial society. Bartusis has the intention to describe smallholding soldiers through fiscal and economic concerns. He understands them as a group in the society deriving income from a specific property, thus, they are described as holders of their own small holdings or as proxy holders conducting military duties of soldiers possessing small holdings.[156]

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au XIe siècle (1025-1118)," *Travaux et Mémoires* 6 (1976), pp. 135 and 137. See also Alexander Kazhdan and Paul Magdalino, "Sakellarios," *ODB*, vol. 3, pp. 1828-1829. Alan Harvey presents another view on the topic: "The stratiotikon and the eidikon disappeared after 1088and the sakellarion after 1145." Harvey, "Financial Crisis…," pp. 171-172.

[154] Haldon, "Social Élites…," p. 194, and also p. 192. In order to have a general opinion about the rates-sums of rogai for administrative ranks in eleventh century, see Paul Lemerle, "'Rhoga' et rente d'état aux Xe-XIe siècles," *REB* 25 (1967), pp. 77-100, esp. p. 94 reproduced in Hendy, *Studies*…, p. 185.

[155] Cheynet, "Aristocracy and Inheritance (11th-13th Centuries)," pp. 1-6 and p. 35.

[156] Mark C. Bartusis, "On the Problem of Smallholding Soldiers in Late Byzantium," *DOP* 44 (1990), p. 23. Bartusis attracts the reader's attention to the difference between smallholding soldiers and *pronoia* soldiers. While the former had direct connection to his land, the *pronoia* soldiers maintained a kind of distant relationship with the land because they did not deal with farming but eventually expected the income produced out of the economic instruments. Ibid., p. 20.

Moreover, there were the *prosalentai* who were free peasants given lands near the sea in return for their service in the Byzantine fleet. These people had conditional service to imperial military forces. Supported by some evidences by Bartusis, they were not dealing with low crafts as contended by Pachymeres. For the mustering reasons for the army, small-holding soldiers and the *prosalentai*, as well as Tzakones (guards and marines) settled in certain regions as a community.[157]

On the other hand, the Byzantine military system had another element, which distinguished from the ordinary soldiers in some ways.[158] They were called the *akritai*. The *akritai*, which is a modern term attributed to the people living in highlands (τὰς ἄκρας), were "an independent group of frontier settlers only nominally under Nikaian control who, without much organization or discipline, defended their lands and harassed their opposite numbers in Turkish territory as best they could."[159] While the soldiers were commanded by an imperial commander, no such leader was needed for the frontier highlanders. The Nicaean emperors granted them *pronoia* lands as well as financial supports to their budget, such as tax exemption or gifts. Yet, in the final analysis, they did not belong to military class.[160] Until the re-conquest of Constantinople from the Latins, there has been stability for the highlanders. Michael VIII's reign marks a new phase in their position that their lands were either held by the imperial state or given out as *pronoiai*.[161] The *akritai* were mutually interacted with the other frontier cultures (i.e. frontier society of the

[157] Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[158] The Cumans are the only known ethnic group served as the *akritai*. Peter Charanis, "On the Ethnic Composition of Byzantine Asia Minor in the Thirteenth Century," in *Studies offered in Honour of St. Kyriakides (Prosphora Eis Stilpona P. Kyriakiden)* (Thessalonike, 1953), [Reprinted in Peter Charanis, *Studies on the Demography of the Byzantine Empire* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1972), No. VIII], p. 146.

[159] Bartusis, "On the Problem of Smallholding Soldiers in Late Byzantium," p. 3.

[160] Ibid.

[161] Ibid., pp. 3-4, fn. 11.

Seljuks) in terms of cultural aspects. Their faith has been interpreted as unstable, thus there was always possibility for shifting alliances along the borders. The emperor may have never trusted their faithfulness.[162] The communities or settlements laid along the frontiers showed different strategies for survival. Turkmens and Greeks in these lands had semi-independent status, which sometimes caused fights. In this context, the city of Attaleia had to pay tribute to the neighboring nomadic groups for the sake of its safety.[163] Lilie notes that this may have been the case for other cities on the borderlands.[164]

John Haldon makes an overall evaluation on the soldiers' position in society up to the Komnenian dynasty. According to him, from the eleventh century onwards, the main element for the change in position was civilianization of the provincial administration, the provincial aristocracy becoming more prominent in the local affairs with the help of titles and offices they possessed, and their expandable income.[165]

As Byzantine sources provide evidences, modern historians can find ways of reconstruction for the Byzantine provincial aristocrats' economic conditions. The available data form the backbone of our knowledge, which comes from a variety of places in Byzantine territories, with a considerable density on the Smyrna and its surroundings. Through Ahrweiler's studies we are provided with considerable evidences on how and where the provincial aristocracy held lands. Even for a restricted part (i.e. Smyrna and its surrounding area), this study has shown the

[162] Charanis, "On the Ethnic Composition…," p. 146.

[163] Lilie, "Twelfth-Century Byzantine and Turkish States," p. 48 citing William of Tyre, *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum a tempore successorum Mahumeth usque ad annum domini MCCXXXIV. edita a Venerabili Willermo Tyrensi Archiepiscopo*, Recueil des Historiens des Croisades. Historiens occidentaux I. 1-2 (Paris, 1844), XVI. 26, p. 750s.

[164] Lilie, "Twelfth-Century Byzantine and Turkish States," p. 48.

[165] John Haldon, "Military Service, Military Lands, and the Status of Soldiers: Current Problems and Interpretations," *DOP* 47 (1993), p. 62.

density of the provincial aristocrats in Byzantine countryside. There are many individuals owning modest or big amounts of lands. For the period that is being considered in this study historians are lucky for Smyrna and also the Maeander valley. Other regions or cities in the Byzantine Asia Minor are not likewise fortunate. Yet, sources convey evidences for the rest of Asia Minor, sometimes with poor or no convincing proofs for some regions.

In the Byzantine countryside, similar to what was the case for Constantinople, the majority of lands belonged either to emperor's *oikeoi* or members of the high aristocracy of the capital. The Church and the monastic establishments were other prominent holders of country estates. Beside these two most distinguished holders of estates, the provincial aristocracy constituted another player in provincial wealth. Depending on the power of the provincial aristocrats, the amount of the estates was not the same in every part of the Empire. The following examples will illustrate the point.

Before 1204, Kontostephanos and Kammytzes families had considerable properties in the Meander valley. The Kammytzes family preexisted in the Byzantine social-political environment.[166] An Eustathios Kamytzes served as the *chartoularios* of the stables in 1094 and afterwards we see him the *doux* of Nicaea. The family was among the great landowning families according to Pachymeres in the thirteenth century. Another member of the family, George Kammytzoboukes, was the *doux* of the Thrakesion theme in 1241.

The lands were owned by some powerful individuals and families challenging to the state control as well as by modest local aristocrats. In 1207, a Basil Mangaphas

[166] For the Kammytzes family, see Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*…, p. 122.

and his nephew owned some lands at Pege, in the bishopric of Hieron.[167] Many agents were taking part in the list of landowners in Neokastra and Thrakesion themes in the thirteenth century. For example, the Tarchaneiotai owned estates in Bare, a village close to Smyrna.[168] A Tzyrithon, possibly from minor ranks of the aristocracy, can be attested as a property-holder in the same village.[169]

The Kastamonites family was another landowning family in the region. It originated from the town of Kastamon in Paphlagonia and has been among the major families of Byzantine provincial aristocracy since the eleventh century in all around the Empire. Michael Kastamonites, a *proprietor*, served in Hellas in the late-eleventh century, while other members found places in the military administration, such as Niketas Kastamonites, the *doux* of the fleet under Alexios I Komnenos. Although the family fell into favor in the twelfth century, they obviously owned lands in Smyrna region by the year 1234. Correspondingly to such an economic background, some members reached prominent positions in local administration. Stephen Kastamonites, held an important ecclesiastical office, the *chartophylax* of Smyrna between 1257 and 1267. Some families benefited other means of rising up in the administrative hierarchy. The Kourtikios family established marital links with the emperor John III Vatatzes. A particular John Doukas Kourtikes held the governorship of the Thrakesion theme in the 1230s. This post may explain how the family had properties and lands in Smyrna region.[170]

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[167] MM, VI, p. 151.

[168] MM, IV, p. 254. For members of the family (the twelfth and thirteenth-fourteenth centuries) attested by seals, see Vitalien Laurent, *La collection C. Orghidan* (Paris: n. p., 1952), pp. 235-236, no. 469; idem, *Les bulles métriques*…, p. 76, no. 209. For Nikephoros Tarchaneiotes, see George Akropolites, *The History*, #36, #40, #49.

[169] Ahrweiler, "L'histoire et la géographie de la région de Smyrne…," and MM, IV, pp. 215-216.

[170] Alexander Kazhdan, "Kastamonites," *ODB*, vol. 2, p. 1110; Alexander Kazhdan, "Kourtikios," *ODB*, vol. 2, pp. 1157-1158.

If an overall economic prosperity of towns and the countryside during the eleventh and twelfth centuries of Asia Minor, one can attribute similar density of the aristocratic landowners and lively economic basis of powerful individuals for other parts of the Byzantine Empire, although the sources do tell a few about them. Nevertheless, there are handful indications. For example, a Nikephoros Melissenos owned estates around the city of Dorylaion during the Alexios I Komnenos' reign. Some other members of the same family (maybe a different branch) were possessing lands in the Smyrna regions in the thirteenth century.[171]

Oikos: Households in Byzantine Provincial Contexts

Oikos is a term that covers the relationship within a Byzantine family. The layout of the Byzantine aristocratic *oikos* as a social organism was not complicated, consisting of the master of the house (*despotes*), his wife (*despoina*) and their children, and the servants of the house.[172] The network of official or aristocratic *oikoi* constituted one of the ways made the court integrated into the urban life. While some of them situated near the court, some other remained within the city or in its suburbs.[173]

There were also monastic *oikoi*, which differed from the lay *oikoi* in terms of the latter's availability to create new *oikoi* for their generations. No division within the monastic *oikos* has been attested unlike the secular *oikos*. The monastic *oikoi*

[171] Alexander Kazhdan, "Melissenos," *ODB*, vol. 2, p. 1335.

[172] Magdalino, "The Byzantine Aristocratic Oikos," p. 96. For general information, see also, Paul Magdalino, "Medieval Constantinople," [English translation of idem, *Constantinople Médiévale. Études sur l'évolution des structures urbaines*, (Paris: De Boccard, 1996), pp. 7-117], in idem, *Studies on the History and Topography of Byzantine Constantinople*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 45-55. To the aristocratic *oikos* within the walls of Constantinople, the so-called 'House of Botaneiates' would be a striking example. Its sections illustrate the dimensions. Michael Angold has translated its inventory into English. The text helps to figure out its elements and extended plan. Michael Angold, "Inventory of the So-called Palace of Botaneiates," in *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*, Angold, ed., pp. 254-266.

[173] Magdalino, "Medieval Constantinople," p. 45.

outside Constantinople needed security which was provided by building towers around monastic establishments due to possible rural circumstances.[174] Thus, an *oikos* was a part of an individual (secular *oikos*) or institutional (religious *oikos*) wealth, including land estates and properties, even sometimes in almost city dimensions.[175]

The Byzantine household, if it is scrutinized well, can shed some light on provincial society. Yet, for the middle Byzantine period, the household accounts did not come down to present day. There are a few wills and some descriptions of non-imperial secular houses. The paucity of the middle Byzantine archaeological studies and the remains of Byzantine material society, together with the others hitherto mentioned create a very narrow field in terms of the sources.[176] Although the sources have unequal data for simple households, one can find more allusions for larger households.[177]

Magdalino presents examples of the wills and monastic *typika* referring to the aristocratic households. Unfortunately the absence of documents cast light on the aristocratic *oikos* hindered us to comment further on the twelfth century. On the other hand, for the eleventh century and the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries some documents, such as a pre-Komnenian example (the will of the *protospatharios* Boilas) from around the year 1059, have survived.[178]

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[174] Magdalino, "The Byzantine Aristocratic Oikos," p. 96.

[175] Kazhdan and McCormick, "The Social World of the Byzantine Court," p. 189. Still, it should be remembered that Byzantine cities were not exclusively composed of aristocratic or religious *oikoi*. The population of Constantinople had reached up a considerable level by the Komnenian era and contained variety of citizens from various social and economic strata of society. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180,* pp. 120-121. See ibid., p. 120 referring to Villehardouin's estimate on Constantinople's population which was 400,000 in 1204.

[176] Magdalino, "The Byzantine Aristocratic Oikos," p. 94.

[177] Ibid., p. 98.

[178] See Speros Vryonis, Jr., "The Will of a Provincial Magnate, Eustathius Boilas (1059)," *DOP* 11 (1957), pp. 263-277. Magdalino, "The Byzantine Aristocratic Oikos," pp. 98-101. *Protospatharios* Boilas "was a Cappadocian who never visited Constantinople, and spent his whole career in the

Magdalino has put emphasis on the *oikoi* since they tell much about provincial society and the Byzantine aristocracy. He thinks that an *oikos* represented a social model in the Byzantine aristocratic society.[179] The *oikos* served as the fundamental component of Byzantine provincial society in different metaphorical media. It played major role in economic wealth and ecclesiastical administration.[180] It was a nucleus in society that reflects social and economic relationships between different communities. For instance, Magdalino writes as follows:

> …the Byzantine *oikos* cannot be discussed as a social phenomenon without some reference to its physical appearance. A fine house was clearly a basic symbol of aristocratic status, and there is some evidence of official concern that men should live in houses appropriate to their rank. Among the features which gave the Komnenian nobility distinct and unprecedented status as 'princes of the blood' was the magnificence of the residences which they built for themselves, "resembling cities in magnitude and not at all unlike imperial palaces in splendor".[181]

He takes an important point into consideration that every prominent man of distinguished aristocratic families may have had their own *oikoi*, for which these

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service of a higher court dignitary, which enabled him, though largely through his own efforts, to leave his two daughters a modest landed estate on the eastern frontier." Paul Magdalino, "Court Society and Aristocracy," in *The Social History of Byzantium*, John Haldon, ed., (Singapore: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 226.

[179] Magdalino, "The Byzantine Aristocratic *Oikos*," pp. 92-111.

[180] "*Oikos* was an economic metaphor for the relationships between a landlord and those on his estates. It was a political metaphor for the relationships between the emperor and other rulers, and a monastic metaphor for the relationships between spiritual fathers or mothers and monastic brothers or sisters." Leonora Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950-1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 67; "The *oikos* was also the basic unit of ecclesiastical administration. Episcopal and monastic establishments resembled those of lay magnates not only in that the bishop's household and the cenobitic monastery formed the hub of a large complex of diverse and scattered sources of landed wealth, but also in that architecturally and functionally they had much in common." Magdalino, "The Byzantine Aristocratic Oikos," p. 94.

[181] Ibid., p. 95, citing Zonaras (Bonn), III, p. 767. For more examples, such as the "House of Botaneiates," see Kazhdan and McCormick, "The Social World of the Byzantine Court," p. 189, fn. 117. For the aristocrats' country houses, see Magdalino, "The Byzantine Aristocratic Oikos," p. 95.

individuals owed not only inheritance through their parents' large *oikoi*, but some other acquisition as well.[182]

If one looks at the structure of provincial society and family, there may be various factors operating in terms of familial-social connections. Associations between households were formed via obtaining familial access between different families. That creates a brotherhood between families, which enables familial access from one to other; thus, one could get a part in another household to which he/she had already been included with familial links, spiritual kinship (e.g. ritual brotherhood and fraternities), baptismal sponsorship, or through becoming part of a monastic household. A poorer family could gain prestige by changing its household.[183] There were also cases of child adoption between families which created another type of contact between households. Although most of the adoption cases were due to one's charitable intentions to orphan children, it still served another way of establishing associations between households.[184]

Neville has pointed out the nature of relationships within and outside the households in provincial society. The provincial households were in a competition to perpetuate their connections with the imperial household and to act as subordinate components of imperial system.[185] In the tenth and eleventh centuries, the provincial households had the potential to establish links with each other, and thus sometimes formed associations as well as to lead hieratic competitions among themselves. As already pointed out, there were four ways of becoming part of a household.

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[182] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 120.

[183] Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950-1100*, pp. 85-90.

[184] Ruth Macrides, "Kinship by Arrangement: The Case of Adoption," *DOP* 44 (1990), pp. 114-115.

[185] Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950-1100*, p. 99.

Proximity to a higher household could be gained by possessing titles.[186] The tradition of title-giving became de facto symbolic, having signified the dimensions of relationship with the imperial household. Title-holders' main aim was to come closer to the imperial circles as much as possible, more than having merely administrative functions.[187]

Some provincial inhabitants could possess a great opportunity that they could use it to seek their benefits. They could obtain a privileged position or make a situation inconsistent with their interests reverse through intercession since they may have been in close contacts with people from central administration cadre. That marks how a provincial power-holder could overwhelm a condition against his self interest as long as he used the influence of people from higher positions even if it meant disregard to provincial administrators.[188] This intercession could well be seen in fiscalization issue. Friendship between the tax payer and the tax official may have resulted in advantages for the former. The authority of provincial aristocrats could turn out to be a kind of oppression over local officials after the latter's duty ended.[189] As Neville states: "The relative apathy and ignorance of the central authorities in Constantinople about provincial situations allowed prominent households and communities to have considerable autonomy in regulating their affairs and gave a decisive advantage to those who could gain access to imperial officials in Constantinople."[190]

[186] Ibid., p. 165.

[187] "Actions of the imperial administration in the provinces were more often matters of favors and personal appeals than regular administrative processes." Ibid., p. 166.

[188] Ibid., p. 99.

[189] Ibid., p. 118.

[190] Ibid.

Magdalino rightly puts the limits of the aristocratic *oikos* as a social entity. For him, the line occurs in between the large and narrow households.[191] For the social status in the province, Neville explains, there were three factors determining the individuals' status in society. These were "community perception and judgment of honorable conduct, wealth, and the ability to call on the help of a more significant household appear in our sources."[192]

Provincial landowners usually preferred to live in Constantinople or in towns and cities of the area close to their estates. In such cases, a representative would be responsible for maintaining the needs and duties of estates in absence of his 'lord' since the cultivators were not the owners but the resident *paroikoi*. An eleventh century source on the European lands of the Empire, the *Cadaster of Thebes*, illuminates the varying sizes of estates belonging to the landowners.[193]

There were various symbols that indicate the 'nobility' of a man of a distinguished wealth and network (i.e. blood relation with the imperial family) among which an aristocratic house bears significance. It must have reflected the status of the individual and been appropriate to his place in the society. Magdalino's well-defined restructuring offers that the Byzantine *oikos* held a prominent role in daily life. The difference between the residence of the ordinary citizen and aristocratic residence would be an appropriate exponent of that statement.[194]

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[191] Magdalino, "The Byzantine Aristocratic Oikos," p. 98.

[192] Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950-1100*, p. 78. For the urban society as the sum of the aristocratic *oikoi* and the rest of the population from different segments of society, see Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 120.

[193] Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950-1100*, p. 83.

[194] Magdalino, "The Byzantine Aristocratic Oikos," p. 95. Magdalino describes how a transition from 'poor' to 'powerful' status of the Philokales happened in the case of a fine house of Philokales. Ibid., p. 95. For the Philokales family, see Alexander P. Kazhdan and Anthony Cutler, "Philokales," *ODB*, vol. 3, p. 1656.

Due to the lack of active imperial government, the imperial authority could not become a reason of fear in provincial society. It was rather the opposition between different households causing a state of danger.[195] Personal connections had crucial role in individuals' relation with provincial administrative organs and legal system exercised by an imperial official. The provincial households sought for gaining benefits from imperial officials through any possible ways.[196]

The members of the Mavroi family were breakers of law by stealing from and creating harm to their neighbors.[197] It shows how a family became influential in the province. Then, quite autonomous structure appears in the provincial society that "the responsive nature of provincial administration, combined with the centralization of authority in Constantinople, meant that people frequently appealed directly to friends or relatives in the city rather than work through the local administration."[198] It has been argued that being a member of a powerful and wealthy household would provide a Byzantine individual automatically some kind of 'authority' in provincial society. What was the major thing being a constraint in front of provincial Byzantines' freedom is the freedom of their neighbors. The households often appeared as direct intervening element before the central state.[199]

Did the Local Aristocracy Engage in Trade and Commercial Activities?

The issue of trade and commerce has to be evaluated within the large framework of the economy. Did the provincial aristocracy engage in commercial activities? As it

[195] Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950-1100*, p. 135.

[196] Ibid., pp. 102-103 and p. 114.

[197] Ibid., p. 137.

[198] Ibid., p. 107.

[199] Ibid., p. 167.

was often postulated, the Byzantine aristocrats did not participate in trade activities.[200] This statement seems to be true for the 'high' aristocracy, since we have the evidences for small and medium aristocrats engaged in trade.

It is generally accepted that the Byzantine Empire's trade had been dominated by the Venetian and other Italian merchants.[201] The period between 1025 and 1204 is called the domination of the Latins on the seas of the Empire in terms of both trade and military/naval capacity.[202] During the reign of Isaac I Komnenos, there were severe conflicts of interests in the Aegean Sea. The Italians had already taken some big cities and became de facto new contenders in economic terms in northern Aegean shores.[203] The Byzantine state gave off concessions for the Venetian merchants in return for their help to drive the Normans out. As often postulated, that is the beginning of the hegemony of the Venetians at sea and the decline of Byzantine merchants. Venetian, Pisan and Genoese merchants benefitted immunities, which were bestowed grants by the imperial government.[204] The political existence of the

[200] See Angeliki E. Laiou, "Commerce and Trade," *ODB*, vol.1, pp. 489-491. For Byzantine trade during the reign of Manuel I Komnenos, see Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 142 ff.

[201] Hendy, "'Byzantium, 1081-1204': An Economic Reappraisal," p. 31.

[202] On the Italian trade activities in Byzantium in pre-1204 period, see David Jacoby, "Italian Privileges and Trade in Byzantium Before the Fourth Crusade: A Reconsideration," *Anuario de studios medievales* 24 (1994), pp. 349-369. [Reprinted in idem, *Trade, Commodities and Shipping in the Medieval Mediterranean* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1997), no. II]. For the navy, see Pryor and Jeffreys, *The Age of the ΔΡΟΜΩΝ…*, pp. 76-122. The merchants of Venice and Amalfi were in Constantinople undertaking commercial activities already by 944. (Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 143)

[203] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 197.

[204] The proportion differed from each other. While the Venetians received complete immunity from the initial years of Alexios I (i.e. 1082) onwards, the immunity was %4 for both the Pisans after 1111 and for the Geneose after 1155-1157/1160. The amount of the *kommerkion* (a tax on merchandise goods) was regularly 10% of the total amount. Hendy, "'Byzantium, 1081-1204': The Economy Revisited…," p. 21; See also Jacoby, "Italian Privileges and Trade…," pp. 349-368. For the commercial privileges of the Italians, see Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, pp. 143-144.

Italians provided a secure basis for Italian economic rising in the Aegean. Italians already took some big cities in Thessaly on the eve of Isaac II Angelos' reign.[205]

A gradual disadvantage for the Byzantine merchants arose, and the advantageous situation was given to the Venetians, who remained the most privileged group on Byzantine waters and economy until 1204.[206] Thus, the impact of Western involvement into the Byzantine trade had already been existed before the establishment of the Venetian trade colonies following 1204 and Genoese ones after the recapture of Constantinople from the Latins in 1261.[207] However, as Hendy argues: "It is the eleventh and twelfth centuries, on the contrary, that represent the apogee of Byzantine mercantile development, the fragmented economies of the thirteenth –despite a modest and mainly agricultural prosperity in Asia Minor– being too overshadowed by the colossal disaster of the Fourth Crusade."[208]

However, regardless of all above-mentioned arguments, Laiou and Morrisson suggested that Constantinopolitan merchants and bankers were active in investing their money in trade:

> The economic power and wealth of the Constantinopolitan merchants and bankers, however, seems to have continued and even increased, if we are to judge by one of the few merchants known to us by name, Kalomodios who, in the late twelfth century, was both a banker and a merchant investing in long distance trade.[209] At times of crisis, during the Third Crusade and again in the reign of Alexios III (1195-1203) this group emerges as one of recognized political clout, honored, once again, with court titles.[210]

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[205] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 197. For the role of the Latins increased in trade, see Hendy, "'Byzantium, 1081-1204': The Economy Revisited…," p. 24. On the view against the negative aspect of the dominance of Italian merchants, see Hendy, *Studies*…, pp. 590-602; Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, p. 224.

[206] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 147.

[207] Hendy, "Byzantium, 1081-1204: An Economic Reappraisal," p. 41.

[208] Ibid., p. 50.

[209] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 172.

[210] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, pp. 141-142. On the eleventh century, see Lemerle, *Cinq études*…, pp. 287 ff.; on the late twelfth century, see Angeliki E. Laiou, "Byzantine Trade with

Mercantile and artisanal groups of people, as Hendy argues, must have been in prosperous conditions for the twelfth century Byzantium.[211]

The merchants from Asia Minor and Greek merchants actively participated in the Mediterranean trade networks in the eleventh century. Attaleia had been a prominent commercial city in that period. The Genizah letters have shown that there was dynamic commercial activity in the Mediterranean cities of Asia Minor, which had focal or transitional role in that maritime network.[212] That participation had initiated the negotiations with mercantile states of Venice and Genoa.[213] In the twelfth and thirteenth century the Byzantine trade had long gone beyond regional and small-scale activity. The Byzantine merchants established commercial links with the Seljuks. This marks one of the factors that flourished the Nicaean economy.[214] In short, oriental commerce re-flourished and economic prosperity prevailed during the thirteenth century Asia Minor.[215]

Vera von Falkenhausen mentions a bit of evidence that the provincial aristocracy had engaged in commercial activities before the Komnenian era. Depending on the chronicle of Anonymus Barensis, she refers to a particular

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Christians and Muslims and the Crusades," in *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, Angeliki E. Laiou and Roy Parviz Mottahedeh (eds), (Washington D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001), pp. 176-178.

[211] Hendy, "'Byzantium, 1081-1204': The Economy Revisited...," p. 23.

[212] David Jacoby, "What Do We Learn about Byzantine Asia Minor…," pp. 91-92. The rise in trade interactions was also accelerated by migrated merchants from Asia Minor as the Seljuks were advancing into the eastern Asia Minor. For a case from Melitene, see ibid., pp. 88-89.

[213] Savvides, *Byzantium in the Near East*…, pp. 131-132. Similar contacts had also been achieved between the Seljuks and the Italians through several pacts. Ibid., pp. 132-133. See also M. E. Martin, "The Venetian-Seljuk Treaty of 1220," *The English Historical Review* 95 (no. 375) (1980), pp. 321-330.

[214] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, p. 258.

[215] See, Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1967), p. 28; Savvides, *Byzantium in the Near East*…, pp. 186-187.

individual named Maraldus Ycanatus (from Greek *hikanatos*), who belonged to a family that possessed a challenging power in Bari's provincial politics.[216]

Traders did not represent a coherent whole, though they had different social-economic backgrounds. Some were doing trade based on his resident place so preferred to be a city-dweller selling his goods at markets, fairs, etc., whereas some others sought their income in long trade routes, thus had to be on the move.[217] Trade had not been a monopoly of non-aristocratic parties of Byzantine society. Not interestingly, the aristocrats actively took part in trade activities, investing quite amounts in particular items, such as their investment in silk industry in Thebes.[218] As proclaimed by David Jacoby, there is an increasing amount of evidences showing the engagement of provincial aristocrats into trade.[219] A *praktor* of Samos was participating in corsair acts with his own ships. It has been suggested that he was possibly undertaking commercial activities.[220]

Trade and the group associated with that activity did not deserve at least some concern for many Byzantine authors. The traders were exposed to bias and contempt in Byzantine sources. These authors more likely attributed lower value and 'social and cultural arrogance' to these people. It was until the fourteenth century that "Byzantine authors on the whole willfully overlooked the activity of traders belonging to the higher ranks of society."[221] Provincial traders being subjected to derogatory designations were even considered after the Venetians if a sort of

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[216] Falkenhausen, "A Provincial Aristocracy…," p. 221.

[217] David Jacoby, "The Byzantine Outsider in Trade (c. 900-c. 1350)," in *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider*, Dion C. Smythe, ed., (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2000), p. 129.

[218] Ibid., p. 131. On the commerce, industry of empire's centers: Western Anatolia; Pontus; Eastern Anatolia, see Savvides, *Byzantium in the Near East*…, pp. 114-115.

[219] Jacoby, "The Byzantine Outsider in Trade (c. 900-c. 1350)," p. 131.

[220] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 144 referring to P. Gautier, "Diatribes de Jean l'Oxite contre Alexis Ier Comnène," *REB* 28 (1970), p. 31.

[221] Jacoby, "The Byzantine Outsider in Trade (c. 900-c. 1350)," p. 131.

hierarchy among the traders should be defined.[222] Although the act itself was seen 'shameful profiteering' (αἰσχοκερδεία), the trade was obtained as one of the ways of accumulating wealth for provincial aristocrats.[223] It has also been pointed out that some merchant families or middlemen could have held official functions beside their engagement in commercial activities.[224]

Yet, no Byzantine high aristocrat seems to exist in trade before the year 1204. Even after 1261, since the aristocrats had their income almost exclusively from land, mainly Italian based capital was still dominating the trade.[225] Nevertheless, for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there are clear evidences that native aristocracy engaged in trade activities, held regionally or inter-regionally.[226] As the participation of the aristocracy to trade increased, non-state actors gained more ground in commerce. That eventually, as Harvey described, presented suitable bases for the centrifugal tendencies in the Empire.[227]

[222] Ibid., pp. 132-133.

[223] For indications of the view that argues the incorporation of local aristocracy into trade, see Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 139, n. 128; and pp. 144; 149-150; 156-59; 170, n. 243. In the last reference, he puts forth the possibility of the engagement of bureaucratic families in commercial acts. On the ideological positioning and Christian view of the commercial profit, see Angeliki E. Laiou, "Economic Thought and Ideology," in *EHB*, vol. 3, pp. 1123-1144.

[224] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries…," p. 21.

[225] Haldon, "Social Élites…," p. 203.

[226] It has been stated by Laiou and Morrison that "…after 1261, the properties of the state became progressively much reduced. Manufacturing became small-scale. The participation of Byzantines in inter-regional and international trade diminished, although in local and regional trade it may have increased." Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 168. On the participation of high aristocracy in commercial transactions, see Angeliki E. Laiou-Thomadakis, "The Byzantine Economy in the Mediterranean Trade System; Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries," *DOP* 34-35 (1980-1981), pp. 198-205.

[227] Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, p. 243.

Investments and Donations

How did the aristocracy invest wealth? The aristocracy invested its wealth mainly for its own benefits. The families and individuals usually preferred to invest in "posts and sinecures, state 'pensions'," as Haldon once has noted, "often amounting to considerable yearly incomes in gold and precious cloths, as well as thesaurized coin, jewelry, plate and so on."[228] The provincial aristocrats lend their money in commerce (πραγματεία) and the field which brought them 'shameful' income, including exorbitant commercial profit as well as "crime such as forgery, and the extortionate abuse of power," as Kekaumenos mentioned.[229] This question relates also with the way the aristocrats accumulate wealth. Donation and investment may sometimes help for holding positions in the Byzantine bureaucracy. Some Lombard local upper class members might have entered into Byzantine service through their remarkable donations to the churches and monasteries. In very late ninth and early tenth century, we encounter a Lombard family in the Byzantine government. Grimoald, son of a wealthy Lombard aristocrat and held an imperial office (*spatharokandidatos*), "pursued a political career to become a *protospatharios epi tou khrysotriklinou* in 938, his gifts must have been only a part, maybe a small part, of his fortune: but again, we do not know whether he had been attracted or recruited by the Byzantine government because he belonged to the local upper class, or whether he had risen socially and economically through Byzantine service."[230] As it has been shown, the

[228] Haldon, "Social Élites…," p. 186.

[229] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 156 referring to Kekaumenos, ed. Litavrin, pp. 194ff, 212, 220, 224, 236-238. For Kekaumenos' descriptions, see also Hendy, *Studies*…, pp. 565-566.

[230] Falkenhausen, "A Provincial Aristocracy…," p. 217.

tensions between the Byzantine state and the local powers competing with each other for provincial control are evident in that example.

There were certainly reciprocal benefits in the relations between the *strategoi* and local holy men. The Byzantine governors in southern Italy invested in public buildings and donated churches or monasteries. Reinvestment of money by the civil aristocracy is well attested. They seem rather to have preferred to choose their hometowns to do that, not the place where they were appointed for a few years. In 1042, a *strategos* from the region of Lucania, Eustathios Skepides, may have had familial relations with two individuals, who built two churches in their hometown, today's Soğanlı, Cappadocia.[231] Undertaking or financing church constructions proliferated a while ago for especially Cappadocia region.[232] On the other hand, Falkenhausen mentions several cases of donations by military aristocrats in southern Italy. Some members of the local aristocrats had their own churches built, while some others were making donations to already existed churches or monasteries.[233] Investing money on religious constructions was evident in the Nicaean period. George Kaloeidas, who occupied the position of *prokathemenos*, for almost a thirty-year period between the 1250s and the 1280s, donated a *metochion* of St. George to the monastery of Lemviotissa. This individual owned other estates in Smyrna region

[231] Ibid., p. 214. Michael Skepidês, the *protospatharios*, built the Karabaş Kilise in 1060/1061 and John Skepidês, *protospatharios epi tou khrysotriklinou*, *hypatos* and *strategos*, sponsored the Gök Kilise. For reinvestments, also see Paul Magdalino, "Honour among Romaioi: the framework of social values in the world of Digenes Akrites and Kekaumenos," *BMGS* 13 (1989), pp. 205-206; idem, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, p. 152.

[232] An earlier example would be Tokalı Church founded by famous Phokas family in the tenth century. Cf. Nicole Thierry, "La peinture de Cappadoce au Xe siècle. Recherches sur les commanditaires de la nouvelle église de Tokali et d'autres monuments," in *Κωνσταντῖνος ὁ Πορφυρογέννητος καὶ ἡ ἐποχὴ τοῦ* (Athens, 1989), pp. 217-245. For the activity of 9th-11th century *dynatoi* as patrons of art, see Nicolas Oikonomides, "The Social Structure of the Byzantine Countryside in the First Half of the Xth Century," *Symmeikta, Institute for Byzantine Research* 10 (1996), p. 122.

[233] Falkenhausen, "A Provincial Aristocracy…," p. 222.

(i.e. in the plain of Memaniomenos).[234] The landed aristocracy was establishing monastic foundations as *ktetores*, which reminds castles in the Western due partly to their exterior outlook.[235] All in all, the idea behind the aristocratic reinvestment of wealth on charitable services seems to be a show of prestige and a display of aristocratic honor. Thus, aristocratic wealth was not exclusively directed for financial gains.

Investment in trade made the aristocrats to utilize 'straight loans' (including maritime loans) in which they received remarkable capital.[236] Laiou and Morrisson point out the capital which once could be forfeited from the hands of aristocrats, now was for their benefit. Although the monks or the ecclesiastical class seem to use that favorable situation, some land-based aristocrats made use of it, too.[237]

Investing one's wealth was not restricted to the aristocratic or the Greek members of the society. Non-Byzantine enterprise was also attested. In the twelfth century, a Venetian factory at Smyrna illustrates an investment by foreigners. It also shows how attractive Smyrna's economy was.[238]

Other Agents in Rural Economy

Land-based properties and the resources related with agricultural production remained to be the major sources of aristocratic wealth throughout the Byzantine period. Thus the land and its cultivators were two fundamental elements in the

[234] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, p. 265 referring to MM, IV, pp. 102-103; Ahrweiler, L'histoire et la géographie de la région de Smyrne…," pp. 157-158.

[235] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 61.

[236] Nikolas Oikonomides, "The Role of the Byzantine State," in *EHB*, vol. 3, pp. 1009-1010.

[237] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 141.

[238] See, Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, p. 257.

Byzantine economy. The condition of the Byzantine peasants (*paroikoi*) in the eleventh century should be underlined, as they were standing out with their economical activity.

The peasants' role in agrarian economy may help to visualize the provincial aristocrats' position since the latter found a place above such an infrastructure. In order to understand the provincial aristocrats' wealth better in context, it may be useful to look at shortly the peasants' means of revenue. Poly-activity and poly-culture were economic characteristics for agrarian community in Byzantium.[239] Other than merely crops of the plants, the Byzantine peasants held various revenue-producing agricultural activities such as animal husbandry,[240] bee-keeping, wax production and so on, but not the horse breeding since it was held in estates.[241] The landlords provided the animals (e.g. oxen) for the peasants to cultivate the land, since the latter had hardly possessed those.[242] The peasants in Asia Minor were experiencing prosperity in the first half of the thirteenth century.[243]

The *paroikoi* (i.e. dependent peasants) also possessed property as we are informed by documents revealing their tax responsibilities. The amount of the tax

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[239] For polyculture, see Laiou, "The Byzantine Village (5th-14th Century)," p. 45. "A number of products were both for auto-consumption and for the market, whether they were marketed by landlords or peasants: grain, wine (an important cash crop), legumes, vegetables, fruit." Angeliki E. Laiou, "The Agrarian Economy, Thirteenth-Fifteenth Centuries," in *EHB*, vol. 1, p. 347.

[240] Byzantine peasants had to take the risk aversion into consideration, since the agricultural crops did not present regular harvest every year depending on climatic conditions. Therefore, poly-activity and poly-culture was a need for the peasants. Self-sufficiency, as it has been argued, was peasants' precaution for a possible drought or any seasonal-climatic situations. Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 112.

[241] Jacques Lefort, "The Rural Economy, Seventh-Twelfth Centuries," in *EHB*, vol. 1, p. 246; and on horse-breeding estates, see Oikonomides, "The Role of the Byzantine State in the Economy," p. 994.

[242] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 178. Also, see Angeliki E. Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society in the Late Byzantine Empire: A Social and Demographic Study* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 174. This case refers to the situations in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

[243] Demetrios Kyritses and Kostis Smyrlis, "Les villages du littoral égéen de l'Asie Mineure au Moyen Âge," in *Les Villages dans l'empire byzantin (IVe-XVe siècle)*, Jacques Lefort, et al., (eds), (Paris: Lethielleux, 2005), pp. 437-451.

was determined according to the value of the land being taxed. After the eleventh century we see a rise in landownership by the *paroikoi*.[244] After the turn of the eleventh century, they became both owners of the lands of high efficiency such as gardens and vineyards and tenants in their farms. Lefort does not believe that "the situation of the tenant was always less enviable than that of the small owner."[245] During the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, each *paroikos* belonged to fiscal classes set with respect to the quality of land and number of its animals (i.e. oxen).[246] Several *praktika* demonstrate that fact in the thirteenth century. In 1235 it was registered in the documents of the Monastery of Lembos. On the other hand, Kostis Smyrlis indicates how the fiscal practices were transformed by pointing new criteria functioned in calculating the taxes. The peasants of the Monastery of Iviron in 1262 had vineyards, boats, fishing ponds taken into consideration in that assessment. The fiscal classes were no longer used by the later thirteenth century, instead now the *paroikoi* were taxed also for their other properties.[247]

Land ownership was also accessible for the *paroikoi*, however, often limited. If a statistical analysis is done on the property of the peasants, a small part had full team of oxen while most of them owned none. It suggests cooperation among the peasant groups. On the other hand, it illustrates landlords' domination over the

[244] On the land-owning *paroikoi*, see Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 106 and p. 110.

[245] Lefort, "Rural Economy and Social Relations in the Countryside," p. 112.

[246] "The peasants were divided into fiscal classes reflecting in principle their workforce that is the number of oxen they possessed: the *zeugaratos* was a farmer with two oxen, the *boidatos* had one ox, the *aktemon* had none." Kostis Smyrlis, "Taxation Reform and the Pronoia System in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium," *Change in the Byzantine World in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, First International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, Proceedings, İstanbul, 25-28 June, 2007*, Ayla Ödekan, et al. (eds), (İstanbul: Vehbi Koç Vakfı, 2010), p. 211. The value of both land and *pronoiai* were set in terms of *nomismata* or *hyperyra*.

[247] Ibid., pp. 212-216. A change would also be attested in the method of assessing *pronoia* in the thirteenth century. "The pronoiai begun to be expressed in terms of sums of gold coins, referring to the taxes burdening the assets ceded to the beneficiary by the state, usually peasants and land." Ibid., p. 211. What is often agreed is the system was generalized in that period. Byzantine fiscal system and *pronoia* went under a transformation in late 1250s. See ibid., pp 211-217.

properties that the peasants were allowed to use landlords' teams of oxen. Land property was also limited for the *paroikoi*, since it is known that they had no land in some villages. Yet, some other *paroikoi* owned land which was "sufficient for survival" (around 25-50 *modioi*).[248]

Contrary to the great landowners' abounding properties, the size and component of a farm seem to be self-sufficient rather than letting the peasant to accumulate wealth out of that. Jacques Lefort clearly point out the topic:

> In these conditions, it is difficult to speak of the "average farm." In twelfth –and fourteenth– century Macedonia, a typical farm must have comprised approximately four people, not, as is often said, a full team of cattle, but only half a team –which implied agreements between families to effect the plowing– some small livestock, a few small garden or vineyard parcels, and fields. The latter constituted the bulk of the cultivated land.[249]

In the thirteenth century, agrarian economy reached its summit. The Emperor John III Vatatzes' efforts concentrated on reviving the self-sufficiency of peasantry in main agricultural products and livestock breeding. The Byzantine peasants in that process owned some means of production such as olive trees and vineyards.[250]

Although the imperial capital depended on the provinces financially, industrial developments, artisanal and manufacturing production let some cities grow. In manufacturing certain goods provincial cities became local trade centers, and thus, became engaged in local networks of economy. Amorion and Sardis have been centers of glass production.[251] On the other hand, as far as pottery production is concerned, some cities appeared as production centers in Asia Minor in the eleventh-

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[248] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 178, citing Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society*…, p. 174. In the twelfth century the status of a *paroikos* "was not fully hereditary can be found in the twelfth century." Ibid., p. 153.

[249] Lefort, "Rural Economy and Social Relations in the Countryside," pp. 107-108.

[250] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, pp. 170-171.

[251] See Christopher S. Lightfoot, "Glass Finds at Amorium," *DOP* 59 (2006), pp. 173-181.

twelfth centuries: Amorion, Nicaea, Phocaea, and Sardis.[252] Proximity to the sources for production made the towns and cities the outlets of their region, which in the end contributed their rising prominence in provinces.[253]

Beside all of these activities, the silk production also constituted another field for the Byzantine peasants in Asia Minor.[254] Although it remained marginal, the farming system that the lay aristocrats engaged in animal breeding in large scale was preferred in rural areas after the eleventh century. The duties were not undertaken all by local aristocrats, they were mostly assigned to an intermediary person, an intendant. In that way the landlords happened to deal with their estates.[255]

The peasants engaged also in artisanal production as an economic activity. Pottery production, the production of metal objects and textiles were some of them produced for local markets.[256] It has been argued that artisanal production was instigated by extensively urban dynamics: "The coexistence of local centers of production and the widespread diffusion of certain types of ceramics show the strength of domestic and foreign demand for these products; certainly an urban demand, possibly a rural one."[257] All in all, however, the state remained the uttermost

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[252] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 118.

[253] This was observable especially in the European provinces. For the example of textile production and correspondingly prominent position of cities in Greece mainland, see Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, pp. 234-235 and pp. 242-243.

[254] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, pp. 110-111. In the Byzantine Empire, Thebes was the major city producing the most amount of silk. There were also some other provincial centers relatively smaller than Thebes. However, the center for the silk industry was always Constantinople up until the Fourth Crusade sacked the City. After that, some provincial centers emerged. For Laiou and Morrisson, there may have been some centers producing silk cloth in Asia Minor, too. Ibid., pp. 127-128.

[255] Lefort, "Rural Economy and Social Relations in the Countryside," p. 109, fn. 48: See for instance, about the wealth of Symbatios Pakurianos and his wife, *Actes d'Iviron*, Jacques Lefort, et al., (eds), (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1985), vol. 2, p. 174.

[256] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 111. For pottery manufacture, there was definitely Sardis among the local production centers, and with fewer evidences may be Amorion. See, Clive Foss and Jane Ayer Scott, "Sardis," in *EHB*, vol. 2, p. 620.

[257] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 121.

institution above all candidates for power. It was the case also in economic capacity and power that the landlords' economic power was limited since not every resource was available for them.[258]

Free village community who owned their own land and in the most part cultivated it themselves between the seventh and ninth centuries. However, in the course of the ninth and tenth centuries, the free village community was seriously compromised by the tremendous expansion of the large estates (lay, ecclesiastical and monastic). The state began to bestow some villages to particular beneficiaries or to the civil aristocrats. It entailed a reorientation of taxes, now being paid to these new 'landlords' instead of the state. The change became regularized by the latter half of the eleventh century. The taxpayers in villages still owned the land and they were called the *paroikoi*.[259] It never ceased to exist in Byzantine society until the end of Byzantium.[260] In the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries a usual tax for a *paroikos*, if the land was one's own property, was generally one *hyperpyron* for every fifty *modioi*. The surplus left after paying the taxes would belong to him.[261]

Small family holdings have occupied the basic space in the Byzantine rural economy. Provincial population was mainly composed of small landowners, yet in the tenth century, the growing aristocrats and ecclesiastical establishments gradually made the situation change. For Thrakesion, the *paroikoi* remained the main element of the provincial society in the tenth century.[262] Thrakesion became the magnet for the Constantinopolitan aristocracy, both civil and ecclesiastical. The fertility of its

[258] Ibid., p. 112; Hendy, "'Byzantium, 1081-1204': The Economy Revisited…," p. 25.

[259] Lefort, "Rural Economy and Social Relations in the Countryside," p. 112.

[260] Charanis, "On the Social Structure and Economic Organization…," pp. 115-123.

[261] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 178. The rate was lower when it is compared with the rate on the first and second quality of land in the eleventh century. See Laiou, "The Agrarian Economy," p. 332.

[262] Oikonomides, "The Social Structure of the Byzantine Countryside…," p. 125.

lands brought preference.[263] We are informed by the sources that Basil II protects peasant properties (996).[264] Since the peasant small landholders were faced with these entrepreneurs or powerful people/institutions, and with the economic and climatic reasons, they had to sell their lands to the latter consequently.[265] The ex-small landowners, now, became the simple *paroikoi*, who were expected to cultivate the lands.[266] Those conditions seem to have been dissimilar in every parts of the Empire. A story of John Xenos would provide a good example. He was an ascetic seeking to gather a handful property to establish the monastery of the Theotokos Antiphonetria. The inhabitants of Pege bestowed some *zeugaria* of land for agriculture, which with other lands gifted by them reached an adequate level for his purpose. Lemerle thought that "these peasants of modest condition are those of the free commune, and that they are personally masters of their land and their animals."[267]

In other words, we may draw a schema about the flow of taxes in general. Although the landlords became the collector of taxes from the *paroikoi*, the state perpetuated to be the direct receiver of taxes yet from other tax payers. On the other hand, now the landlords also partook in tax-farming process. The dependent peasants paid their taxes for the lands they owned directly to the state or an individual (possibly an *oikeios* of the emperor) who was granted with benefitting the dues and taxes.[268] The *paroikoi*, who were deprived of their own land, were either dwelling on

[263] Ibid., p. 125.

[264] See Geanakoplos, *Byzantium*…, pp. 245-247, especially p. 247 citing J. Zepos and P. Zepos (eds), *Jus graecoromanum*, (Athens, 1931), vol. 1, pp. 263-267.

[265] Examples are abounding for the great property–owners in the sources for that period. For example, Nikephoritzes of Maurex from Heraclea Pontica. Lemerle, *The Agrarian History of Byzantium*…, p. 204, citing Bryennios, II 26-27, P. Gautier, ed., (Brussels, 1975), pp. 197ff.

[266] Oikonomides, "The Social Structure of the Byzantine Countryside…," p. 105.

[267] Lemerle, *The Agrarian History of Byzantium*…, pp. 204-205.

[268] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 145.

and/or farming the land in control of one of these parties. For the former, they were supposed to pay tax and for the latter, *choropakton*, a due amount charged from the peasants.[269]

Agriculture occupied basic role in medieval economies, so did it for the Byzantine economy. The majority of the population was part of the great rural society. Agricultural production got through a 'change' in the eleventh century in a striking way. It was particularly observable when the aristocrats (both Constantinopolitan and provincial) gained dominance on agricultural production and formation of military forces, which were basically composed of highly-paid mercenaries. Agriculture was also put into the privileges of the state under the Nicaean Empire. Agrarian condition in the Nicaean Empire under John III Vatatzes' reign can reveal the emperor's special concern on self-sufficient economy. He followed an encouragement policy, leading the public to the ways for better yield via different methods in agriculture and animal husbandry.[270]

Moreover, this period testified the emergence of the dependant farmer (i.e. *paroikos*), as it has already been touched in pages above.[271] A dependent farmer was supposed to rent someone else's land, cultivate it and share the crops with his landlord. Poor subject was becoming more depended on the 'powerful' provincial notables increasing their capital by purchasing the lands and properties of small farmers. Furthermore, state's need to recruit armies and labor force has accelerated

[269] Gennadij G. Litavrin, "Family Relations and Family Law in the Byzantine Countryside of the Eleventh Century: An Analysis of the Praktikon of 1073," *DOP* 44 (1990), p. 193.

[270] Geanakoplos, *Byzantium*…, pp. 248-249 citing Nicephorus Gregoras, *Byzantine historia,* I. Bekker and L. Schopen (eds), (Bonn, 1829), vol. 1, pp. 42-43.

[271] The peasants were composed mostly of dependent *paroikoi* in the Palaiologan period.

this process.[272] The burden on the small landowners was doubled with natural disasters such as draughts and famines already at the turn of the tenth century. Their power was weakened by high level of taxation which eventually made them near bankruptcy.[273] It was achieved through an intolerable taxation upon the people, who could not bear such conditions and raised oppositions consequently. Therefore, there appeared several uprisings in the twelfth century, mostly having a provincial character.

The peasants were supposed to undertake corvée labor in all of the Empire's territories in order to meet the load that the obligatory taxes brought. This way of working free, in a way, became a response for tax gathering mechanism.[274] In the countryside, the main economic element has become the estate with the Komnenian dynasty. As the lands became more and more owned by the great landowners mainly because of the unbearable corvée labor on the peasantry and taxes permanently constituting a negative factor for the peasants, the role of the independent peasants decreased, and eventually they became the tenants on the land, (i.e. 'dependent' peasants). These conditions, together with the extensive immunities and tax exemptions for the landowners, prepared the way for the peasants to become tenants of their old lands.[275] The general instability of the period, continuous wars, heavy taxes and the ruthlessness of officials brought general ruin to the peasants and forced many of them to sell their possessions. Although large estates extended rapidly in the eleventh century, free peasants still perpetuated their lives in Byzantine rural

[272] Stephenson, "The Rise…," p. 25. Stephenson points that "the 'poor' were immediately subject to a massive increase in extraordinary levies and corvées, and if they could pay were obliged to sell up and enter the service of the 'powerful'." Ibid.

[273] Birkenmeier, *The Development of the Komnenian Army*…, p. 34.

[274] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 179.

[275] Lefort, "Rural Economy and Social Relations in the Countryside," pp. 237-239.

society.[276] The *paroikoi*, who did not own the land (tenant farmers) according to the legal literature in the Empire, were working on the estates of either the state or the Church or 'big men', and could own various estates including the land, vineyards, etc. after the eleventh century on.[277]

The Byzantine Village

The Byzantine villages in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries were close to main routes or roads and in safe locations in Asia Minor.[278] Any change in economy and city life had its repercussions in village society in Byzantium. As Laiou has argued, the Byzantine villages were affected by the economic development –or at least prosperity– in the twelfth century Asia Minor.[279]

There was social and economic cohesion among the Byzantine villagers. They helped each other by sharing different agricultural instruments (e.g. oxen) or by cooperating in constructions of various buildings (e.g. mills). Moreover, the elder members of the village, as some kind of social leaders of the community, undertook the duty of establishing social cohesion among the villagers.[280] These elders of the village community were the representatives, the *oikodespotai*, and they also participated in local assemblies. The Byzantine village community shows solidarity and unitary character within itself via villagers' active participation in local

[276] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 58.

[277] Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, pp. 106 and 109. It should be admitted that there must have been regional differences in generating such a group (*paroikoi*) in the countryside. Oikonomides attributed an earlier date for emergence of free peasant smallholders gradually appearing in the tenth century. Oikonomides, "The Social Structure of the Byzantine Countryside…," p. 125.

[278] Laiou, "The Byzantine Village (5th-14th Century)," p. 42.

[279] The influence of the economic well-being was also observable in other regions of the Empire more or less paralel with Asia Minor. Ibid., pp. 53-54.

[280] Ibid., p. 47; Laiou and Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy*, p. 101.

administrative affairs. That situation was evident in other media. For example, the *paroikoi* sometimes applied to share–cropping contracts for cultivating their lands. It entailed an interest sharing between the tenant and the landlord.[281] Developments in agricultural production methods contributed the prosperity of countryside. Catch cropping practices multiplied the crop, which resulted consequently in gradual rise of peasant welfare.[282]

For Kazhdan, "the Byzantines created their wealth individually or by family and family-like groups" contrary to the Russian view which suggests the existence of communal economy/collective organizations.[283] Although the Byzantine village community had accommodated individual labor at the very center, it generated its own environment in which the villages acted collectively in a variety of matters.[284] Byzantine individual entrepreneurship appeared in the field of religion beside the economic life. Byzantine monasteries were formed around family-like groups (*metochia*), composed of a manor house and farm buildings, in which a few monks were in charge of the management of their properties.[285] The peasants were the probable agents for the field work, which is held in return for their usage of the land and crops, or as corvée labor.[286]

The village did stay as a major agent in rural community in terms of orientating social relations. Thus, it retained an economic and political focal point beside its role as just place for people to settle in.[287]

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[281] See ibid., p. 108.

[282] Lefort, "Rural Economy and Social Relations in the Countryside," p. 109.

[283] Kazhdan, "State, Feudal, and Private Economy in Byzantium," p. 86.

[284] Ibid., pp. 88-89.

[285] Ibid., p. 87.

[286] Lefort, "Rural Economy and Social Relations in the Countryside," p. 109.

[287] Laiou, "The Byzantine Village (5th-14th Century)," p. 54.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Byzantine cities played an important role in the socio-political history of the rural society in Asia Minor. The towns and cities never developed a corporate institutional identity in the Byzantine Empire. They served as the centers of the institutions of the central authority and constituted as well the major basis of the provincial aristocracy, since the latter had their financial resources and social-political bases there. Therefore, the social stratification in Byzantine cities should be comprehended to contextualize the provincial aristocrats' power. The elements of a Byzantine city were the landed notables (different from the *archontes*, who were the upper aristocracy), the administrative officials, especially the part that occupied the lesser positions, church dignitaries of high and lower ranks, small merchants and artisans, peasants[1], and laborers who were eking out a living by working in the field in town or in countryside. The people of lower ranks are considered the *demos* in Byzantine texts. They were from the lowest parts of the social hierarchy, including mostly the poor, either laborers or others, small merchants and artisans.[2]

Byzantine urban revival was very influential in the rise of the provincial aristocracy and the aristocratic lifestyle in the provinces especially in the twelfth century. This phenomenon has been supported with substantial arguments and

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[1] For peasants' status (dependent, semi-dependent, semi-free, free), see A. Bryer, "The Estates of the Empire of Trebizond: Evidence for Their Resources, Products, Agriculture, Ownership, and Location," *Αρχεϊον Πόντου* 35 (1979): 421 in pp. 370-477.

[2] Peter Charanis, "The Role of the People…," pp. 69-70.

examples throughout the thesis.[3] The networks in minor regions may show the socio-economic status of different members of an aristocratic family.[4]

In order to visualize the socio-political environment in which the Byzantine aristocracy reemerged in the ninth century, it is utterly necessary to look at the dynamics that made this possible. The Empire's theme system and the matter of provincial security had gradually created a group of power-holders consisting of high military personnel of the state in the provinces basically from Asia Minor. The military element seems obvious in this process. The military aristocracy remained dominant in the region for the following centuries. As the military aristocrats accumulated wealth and gained fame in regional base, they tended to protect their self-interests and maintain power at hands against the central authority. Basil II (r. 976-1025) had to deal with two great rebellions led by the military families of Asia Minor at the beginning of his reign. He established an absolute control over the aristocracy; however, the steady environment did not last long. The end of his reign brought about many problems. The integrity of the state territories in an environment occupied by powerful aristocratic families became a need for the state. Aristocratic families resumed to take part actively in state politics and the socio-economic life of the Empire in the eleventh century. The following century was a period of transformation for Byzantine Empire in political, social and cultural aspects. For a thorough comprehension of the context, the process that leads to the ascension of the Komnenian family needs more elucidation.

The Komnenoi came to the throne after a severe conflict between the military aristocrats and the state. The dynasty got the throne as a result of the comprehensive

[3] Moreover, for George Tornikes' letters concerning the life in provinces and the ones of Michael Choniates on the same matter, see Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, pp. 129-130.

[4] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 139.

support of the military aristocracy, which probably determined the characteristic attitude of the Komnenoi: the favoritism and the title system. The Komnenian emperors probably considered that they owed the throne to the aristocrats' aid. At the end of the eleventh century the aristocracy was changing hands. More families were becoming integrated into aristocratic society. That period, on the other hand, symbolizes the contentment of the power-holders by the state authorities. It brought about an inevitable rise of the provincial aristocracy deriving its power from both political and economic basis.

The system of honors functioned efficiently at the center of the state mechanism. It created a group of aristocrats bound to the state and state's ideal. The aristocrats received honorary titles from the Byzantine emperor so that they could pursue their own interests and thus in this way secured their prestigious status in the society. The system was not all-inclusive, it certainly excluded some groups. Komnenian rule represents inflation in bestowing titles to individuals extensively. The title-giving system now turned out to be a *sui generis* approach with the Komnenian dynasty that the familial relations with the imperial family prevailed and dominated the picture in Byzantine politics.

Official grants, administrative offices and titles became major tools for the state in order to preserve the solidarity of the provinces in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The more the aristocratic parties were tied to the state the more the ruling dynasty felt assured and they probably had more control over the provinces. Behind the scene was obviously the need to keep the provincial aristocrats content with the circumstances so that on the one hand Byzantium could perpetuate the provincial administration without a break, and on the other hand, the prerogatives (either in the shape of titles or administrative posts or the like) could keep them connected to the

state with loyalty. What Manuel I Komnenos was applying seems rather strategic as Magdalino expresses it well: "…Manuel was deliberately reinforcing the political authority of the most senior local potentate in order to make his own absolute seniority more authoritative."[5]

In the period between the ninth and the eleventh centuries, fiscal and judicial administrative affairs of provinces were not separated. A *strategos* could hold military, judicial and administrative functions at the same time. He was left merely with the military functions by the eleventh century; the other two were given away to provincial judges. New implementation of offices was attested in the sense that Alexios I Komnenos' reforms changed the hierarchy of administrative posts to a larger extent.[6]

The Komnenian regime confirmed that the provincial aristocracy, who was bestowed by titles and conferred with administrative offices, played an instrumental role in the reinforcement of state authority. Varied in their backgrounds several provincial aristocrats were integrated into the provincial politics. Nevertheless, the biggest element in state politics continued to be the emperor's relatives or distinguished family members of the Constantiopolitan aristocracy, who occupied the "high" offices in the provinces, as the case of Andronikos Katakalon shows. He was the *doux* of Cilicia in ca. 1162 and owed his position to his familial links with Alexios I Komnenos. Beside the relatives of the emperor or high aristocrats of Constantinople, these "high" offices were rarely filled by the provincial aristocrats. The provincial aristocrats were mostly holding lower offices in the provinces. The general picture of the integration of the provincial aristocrats into provincial politics

[5] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 77.

[6] See Paul Magdalino, "Justice and Finance in the Byzantine State, Ninth to Twelfth Centuries," in *Law and Society in Byzantium*…, pp. 93-116.

seems apparent that they belonged to middle and lower ranks in hierarchical administrative schema.

The officials were not necessarily from the Greek stock of the Empire. Constantine Kalamanos had a Russo-Hungarian root but reached up to the office of the *doux*, served in Cilicia extraordinarily for about ten years. Such examples can be multiplied. A foreign individual, John Ises (ʻĪsā) of Turkish origin, received a commandership under the generals Michael Gabras and Joseph Bryennios ca. 1165. It shows that the Byzantinized individuals could participate in aristocratic ranks.[7]

The favoritism was also highly appropriated in later decades. Theodore I Laskaris had an inclusive attitude towards the local aristocracy of Asia Minor. On the other hand, Theodore II Laskaris seems that he had the intention to put forward a challenging actor (George Mouzalon) against the rising Constantinopolitan aristocracy (i.e. Michael Palaiologos). This specific example can also explain the reason behind his priority for the aristocracy from Asia Minor.[8]

Social mobility was a characteristic aspect of Byzantine society throughout its history. An aristocrat from Constantinople could be appointed to an office in the province just as a provincial aristocrat could reach up any office in the capital. The mobility could be observed on the other way round. A man of Constantinopolitan aristocracy, John Kamateros , the keeper of the emperor's inkstand, and Theodore Choumnos, a man of Constantinopolitan aristocracy, could well be appointed to a provincial/ecclesiastical office.[9] Therefore, when the provincial aristocracy is

[7] John Kinnamos mentions that the individual "had participated in Roman upbringing and way of life." John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, p. 179.

[8] George Akropolites *The History*, p. 297, #60; Ruth Macrides, *George Akropolites The History*, "Introduction," p. 88, citing Puech, *L'Aristocratie et le pouvoir à Byzance*…, pp. 344-346 and 388-394. Chapter 3 touches that point more extensively.

[9] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 152.

considered, it should be understood as it contains individuals or families having different social and cultural backgrounds.

Geographical distribution of the provincial aristocracy seems to have a pattern within itself. The distant provinces in Asia Minor contained more suitable ground for sheltering the local aristocracy. The distance from Constantinople sometimes became a reasonable factor for the rise of the provincial aristocracy in regional base. Their power derived also from another factor: some of them were native inhabitants of the area. That brought them local support in terms of social relation within the area, proximity to the financial sources, and possible fame among the society. While some of them remained exclusively at the local level whereas some others enjoyed great area of influence owing to a variety of prerogative conditions, depending on economic well-being and aristocratic familial networks.

Then, to what extend did the provincial aristocracy take part in provincial politics and social life in the provinces? The present thesis aims to propose three aspects for the provincial aristocrats' involvement: political, economic, and military. Each of these should be read as both independent and interdependent phenomenon. The power in the provincial society was based on three instruments: one's individual career, familial links and/or local power base (political and economic basis of power) or combination of two or all of these.

How did the Byzantine provincial aristocrats maintain power in regional base? First of all, they received a variety of governmental positions in the provinces. These were basically administrative, fiscal, and military offices. Occupying an office provided an individual local prestige, further rise in his career, a source of income, a chance to establish familial links with other aristocrats and even with the imperial family. The common treatment in appointment of an official was generally practiced.

According to that tradition, a holder of a provincial administrative office could occupy a certain office generally for a couple of years for the same region; nevertheless, there were some exceptions. For instance, John Komnenos Vatatzes held the office of *megas domestikos* and *doux* of the Thrakesion theme for seven years starting from 1176.[10] He had obviously links with imperial family as his patronyms illustrate. There were also the provincial aristocrats or aristocratic families who held a particular office in certain regions for long duration. The Gabrades' case can illustrate that very well, although other branches of the family can be attested in other parts of the Empire.

The relations between the state and the provincial aristocracy sometimes became tense. What was becoming the norm in the late twelfth century Byzantine Asia Minor was the dramatic transformation of power in the periphery. The growing influence of the provincial aristocrats never challenged the imperial authority except for a short duration of decentralization process on the eve of the Latin occupation of Constantinople in 1204. The rebellions intensified at that period, although there appeared many others out of that time period. The rebellions that have been analyzed in this thesis represent three different periods. It seems rather possible to derive plausible remarks by examining each.

Provincial rebellions are so illustrative in order to see the limits of the provincial aristocracy. They came out as oppositions against the central authority. Great masses involved in revolts of the provincial aristocrats in the tenth century. The support behind the local rebellions led by the provincial aristocrats in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was not that extensive. Even if the potentials of rebellions decreased in these centuries, it should not be forgotten that the state was not that

[10] Ibid., pp. 109-110.

powerful as in the tenth century. The main idea behind all these rebellions were not mostly to overthrow the emperor and ascend to the throne, but to secure self-interests in defined borders, because the new system strengthened the ties with the emperor, "from whom they now held the most important part of their properties."[11] However, some of the rebellions showed separatist tendencies. Although we see such cases throughout the period we investigate here, the majority occurred within the period between 1180 and 1204, which can be classified as anti-government and anti-Latin. These were even influential upon the Constantinopolitan populace.[12]

How did the Nicaean state approach the provincial aristocracy? For Theodore I Laskaris, the struggle to be the prevailing actor in Asia Minor was challenging since there were two fierce rivals (David Komnenos and Manuel Maurozomes, the father-in-law of the Seljuk Sultan), who had either strong local power and/or family connections with the Seljuk court. The Byzantine emperor needed to campaign against them in order to reestablish Byzantine authority in the region.[13] The Nicaean emperors commenced forthwith to reinstate the imperial authority over the territories dominated by the local aristocrats, who were breaching the imperial orders, in a way created their own authoritative zone. In conclusion, the story narrating the transition from the peaceful coexistence of the Byzantine state and aristocracy into two vying sides is actually related with an attempt for being victorious over the other. Later in the thirteenth century anti-aristocratic rebellions also occurred in Byzantine Asia Minor. Alexios Philanthropenos' revolt indicates this social movement directed mainly against the aristocrats and also demonstrates that the tension was not solved

[11] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy…*, p. 391.

[12] Magdalino, "The Empire of the Komnenoi (1118-1204)," p. 655. For some rebellious individuals, see Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, pp. 231-233; and as Niketas Choniates called the rebellious aristocrats in Asia Minor as "tyrannies," see ibid., p. 350, #638.

[13] Angold, *A Byzantine Government n Exile*…, pp. 61-62.

after the dynasty of the Palaiologoi.[14] The provincial aristocrats' political basis of power came with the administrative occupations, local public recognition, and sometimes ended with extreme situations like rebellions in Byzantine Asia Minor.

Secondly, economic status of an individual can indicate his/her social capacity in regional base. The sources for economic wealth depended on three phenomena: accumulation of revenues from estates, imperial grants, salaries (*dorea*), and inherited wealth. All these coming together or partly embodied at the hands of the provincial aristocrats created an individual who was rising above the other segments of the provincial society. The financial opportunities cleared the way for acquiring estates in the countryside. They may not have been engaged in property holding within cities, since there must still have been powerful high aristocrats holding most of the urban properties. On the other hand, the provincial aristocrats, who were the individuals occupying lesser status than the high aristocracy, had rural estates. As stated in Chapter 4, these included large or small domains (*episkepseis*), country estates (*proasteia*), villages (*choria*), trading posts (*emporia*), *stratiōtika ktēmata*/*strateiai*[15] and other rural or urban properties. The provincial aristocrats usually had estates in small towns and rarely in large urban centers like Smyrna and Magnesia.[16]

Finally, the military constitutes another aspect of the provincial aristocracy's power bases. During the times of emergencies or imperial campaigns, state army required local support from the provinces. Since the old thematic armies were no longer existed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the provincial armies were redesigned comprised mainly of mercenaries and foreigners, nonetheless, the

[14] See Laiou, "Some Observations on Alexios Philanthropenos and Maximos Planoudes," *BMGS* 4 (1978): 89-99; Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 319.

[15] See Hendy, "'Byzantium, 1081-1204': The Economy Revisited…," pp. 9-10.

[16] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*…, p. 108.

provincial aristocrats had critical role within the overall military organization of the Byzantine Empire. Their military titles reflect traces of long-live virtual circumstances peculiar to Asia Minor from the ninth century onwards, when the aristocracy reemerged with the military aristocracy of the provinces. The provincial aristocrats took part in construction of defense walls, castles, or in covering the expenses of a group of soldiers, or more specifically *pronoia*-soldiers. They integrated into the defense system of the Byzantine provinces not just because their position or offices necessitated but also because they had their own interests upon the land and they basically wanted to guard initially their estates and properties (See Appendix).

The powerful individuals or families in provinces –with their economic power and their military capacity– constituted a serious problem for the integrity of the Empire during the eleventh century all the way including the Nicaean period, with the density varied. It reached such a high level that the state could not establish full authority over the border areas where the rebellious aristocrats had their bases. Some members of the Gabras family or later some of the Maurozomai can serve examples at that point.

The rise of the Komnenoi can shed light on the rise of some families. The same situation can also be observed in the Angelid era or during the Nicaean period. Some aristocratic families found the opportunity to increase their power while some of them disappeared or were disregarded. On the other hand, some families were efficient in European side, but non-existent in Asia Minor. The Branas family, for example, seems to have no appearance in the sources. The areas that they were influential remained rather on the European territories of the Empire.

Collaborations among the communities were quite evident in frontier areas. Shifting alliances played remarkable role in that context. There were cases illustrating the situation well. For example, the inhabitants of an island on the Pousgouse Lake did not prefer to take part of the Byzantines since the economic-political conditions were more advantageous if they would side with the Seljuk Turks.[17] On the other hand, many examples may show that the provincial aristocrats could shift sides as long as their self-interest would be met. As in the cases of the Maurozomes family the interest groups intended to establish alliances.

The power of individuals or families can also be explained with the fame or the power to lead people. According to Weber's theory, this potential is named "charismatic authority," which would have had religious aspect as well as political and other social dimensions. In the case of Manuel Maurozomes' local power, his personal links with both Byzantine and Seljuk court brought about power that enhanced his charismatic leadership in Phrygia.[18] This leadership is connected with 'social status' of an individual, which is based on one or two or all of the following norms: "mode of living, a formal process of education which may consist in empirical or rational training and the acquisition of the corresponding modes of life, or on the prestige of birth, or of an occupation."[19]

The Komnenian system of government symbolizes the relative control over the provincial aristocrats or 'a strategy for survival' for the Komnenian dynasty. On the other hand, the dynasty of the Angeloi witnessed a great loss of authority along

[17] Niketas Choniates mentions that subject. Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, pp. 219-220, 232, 290. Also see Charles M. Brand, "The Turkish Element in Byzantium, Eleventh-Twelfth Centuries," *DOP* 43 (1989), pp. 1-25; and Necipoğlu, "The Coexistence of Turks and Greeks…," pp. 58-76.

[18] Keith Hopwood, "Nicaea and Her Eastern Neighbours," in *The Ottoman Empire: Myths, Realities and 'Black Holes.' Contributions in Honour of Colin Imber*, Eugenia Kermeli and Oktay Özel (eds), (İstanbul: Isis Press, 2006), p. 43. Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, ed. by S. N. Eisenstadt, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 206.

[19] Ibid.

with many provincial unrests and rebellions. The provincial aristocrats used that vacuum of power and tended to separatist movements, among which four of them were particularly examined here. For the Nicaean Empire, except for the initial years occupied the state with the suppression of the fragments of the rebellions from previous decades the provincial aristocracy was exposed to absolute state control over the provinces.

Certainly the study does not touch on some issues. The religious attitudes of the provincial aristocrats have not been investigated in this study. It would give very interesting results to look at how religion functioned in the provincial society. As we know at least one of the Gabrades accepted Islam, and there were some Muslim Maurozomai in Asia Minor. This topic can be related with the individuals' charismatic authority. Yet, in the final analysis, it remained out of the scope of this thesis. Moreover, the lifestyles of provincial aristocrats are not touched on very much. Also their artistic patronage is not mentioned. The culture of the provincial aristocratic society whether it was sophisticated, or whether the provincial aristocrats were educated, and thus literate or not would be some topics for further studies. It may enable the viewer to investigate cultural aspects in constructing one's wealth and social position.[20] Can someone mention any Byzantine aristocrat women for the period under consideration? This question is not answered either. These can be subjects of a separate study.

In this thesis, the 'change' in various aspects of Byzantine society is underlined by an evaluation of three periods and thus three different setting for the provincial aristocracy. Understanding the provincial aristocracy would be helpful to

[20] See Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 156. For literacy and illiteracy within the aristocrats and military officials (i.e. *stratégoi* and *katepans*), see, for example, Falkenhausen, "A Provincial Aristocracy…," pp. 222-223.

understand the province. The present thesis aimed that by making definitions, comparisons/contrasts of general state of provincial aristocracy with its relation to the Empire. It looked at three bases of aristocratic power in the provinces: political, economic, and military. What is needed for future studies seems to be case-oriented comparisons, or comparisons between the Byzantine provincial aristocracy and similar groups in other medieval societies (e.g. Seljuks) in terms of their development, structure, and role in society.

APPENDIX

MILITARY BASIS OF POWER

The Komnenian epoch was, for one aspect, characterized with military efforts to return the Empire to its heydays. For that purpose, the Komnenian rulers applied strategies mainly by establishing new infrastructures upon which the new dynasty built up its system of government. The first three Komnenian emperors took that job seriously and pondered at how they accomplished to retain Byzantine territories.[1] To begin with, the Byzantine provinces, especially the ones in Asia Minor, underwent important reconstruction. The movement embodied basically in construction and reconstruction of defense systems (i.e. castles). The Byzantine *kastron* appeared at that context. There was even no difference between the Byzantine definition of *kastron* and of *polis*.[2] The directions of Turkish campaigns and the construction of

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[1] It is summarized by Hélène Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, who writes "Aléxis I créa une ligne dedéfense maritime et commença le nettoyage de l'intérieur; Jean construisit des fortresses ἄπληκτα, et libéra des regions lointaines (Pont et Pamphylie); Manuel enfin organise le territoire, et construisit des fortresses sur la nouvelle ligne frontier entre le sultanat de Roum et Byzance, ligne qui se maintiendra sans grandes modifications jusqu'aux invasions turcomanes de la fin du XIIIème siècle." Eadem, "Les forteresses construites en Asia Mineure face a l'invasion Seldjoucide," in *Akten des XI. Internationalen Kongresses* (Munich: n. p., 1960), pp. 188-189. (Reprinted in Hélène Ahrweiler, *Etudes sur les structures administratives et sociales de Byzance* (London: Variorum Reprints. 1971), no. XVII)

[2] A *kastron* may have various meanings in eleventh century Byzantium: a simple castle, city's citadel, or a city which is fortified for people and refuge in times of attack. Nikolas Oikonomides, "The Donations of Castles in the Last Quarter of the 11th Century," in *Polychronion. Festschrift Franz Dölger*. Peter Wirth, ed., (Haidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1966), p. 413. "The Byzantines sought to define the polis not by its administrative or legal, nor by its social or economic peculiarities, but by its external appearance, or even by the virtue of its inhabitants. According to Michael Choniates, a city's typical features included fortifications, an entrance bridge, and a large population. Moreover, he saw the peculiarity of the polis "not in the strong walls or tall houses, the creations of carpenters, not in markets and temples, as the ancients imagined, but in the existence of pious and courageous, chaste and just men". Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, pp. 55-56; "…*kastra*: fortresses from which the authorities could control the emperor's soldiers and taxpayers and the orthodoxy of their beliefs." Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 150; "The term *kastron* had three meanings – a simple castle, the citadel of a town or the whole of a fortified town. Some *kastra*, which were intended mainly as places of refuge for the rural population in case of attack, had room for only a very restricted permanent population." Harvey, *Economic Expansion*…, p. 200. "*Kastra* which were no more than fortified villages were common and the administration treated them as essentially rural communities." Ibid., p. 201; "Together with the large number of much smaller garrisons forts and outposts of a purely military nature (although sometimes

Byzantine castles at strategic locations showed parallelism. The construction efforts were mostly concentrated in frontier areas and north-western part of Asia Minor.[3]

The military decline of the themes was hastened after the battle of Mantzikert (1071). As Anna Komnene calls the period of post-arrival of the First Crusade, that was the time of turmoil in every part of the Empire.[4] The state army gradually had to use mercenaries to compensate the military manpower.[5] Beside the *tagmata* (in the tenth-eleventh centuries it was the main army of the provinces), imperial forces were created in provinces. The soldiers were recruited from among the local inhabitants within the system of feeding the local army sponsored by the provincial aristocrats. Therefore, every province created its own standing armed forces, without becoming a fiscal burden for the state.[6] The Byzantine Empire had regional forces in times of urgency against sudden outside attacks. Eumathios Philokales, the governor of Cyprus, defended the island when it was attacked by the Pisan army, which was plundering the island.[7] Philokales had a thematic-provincial army that was compensated mainly with soldiers provided by *pronoia*-holders.

The period beginning with John II Komnenos's reign (1118-1143) testified a threshold in regional forces. A serious decline in their recruitment shows the general corruption in the Byzantine administrative system in twelfth century. The revenues collected from naval taxation were no longer left for the expenses of the provincial

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associated with village settlements nearby or below them), such provincial kastra (which were also called, confusingly, poleis by their inhabitants and by many writers who mention them) and frontier fortresses, generally sited on rocky outcrops and prominences, often also the sites of pre-Roman fortresses, typified the East Roman provincial countryside well into the Seljuk period and beyond, and determined the pattern of development of urban centres when they were able to expand once more during the tenth and eleventh centuries." Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*…, pp. 250-251.

[3] Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, "Les forteresses construites en Asia Mineure…," pp. 182-189.

[4] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, pp. 381-383.

[5] Herrin, "The Collapse of the Byzantine Empire in the Twelfth Century…," p. 190. The mercenary troops increased in Komnenian regime.

[6] Ibid., p. 189.

[7] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 362.

necessities. After his reign, the revenues were directed to the state treasury instead of allotting to province's needs. Naval taxation was no more reused in provinces. Therefore, one can clearly observe a reorientation of regional revenues in provincial economics. But something was problematic in redistribution mechanism, since apparently naval and land forces declined and inevitably the *archontes* could not retain their situation.[8]

The aristocrats under the Komnenoi were strictly tied to the emperor, who granted many of their properties. Late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries were the period of the fragmentation of the Empire. That period created such a political vacuum that the provincial aristocrats rebelled against the state. This change is important due to its resemblance with the European aristocracy-state relationship and also the "antagonistic" nature of confrontation of aristocrats with the state.[9] The provincial aristocracy's military power –independent from the state army– became gradually evident during the Angelid period. Did they create an independent form of forces? How did they protect themselves/their lands-properties in public? Did they have guards, troops under their own service-command? For sure, the *pronoia*–holders (*pronoiar*) or some powerful provincial aristocrats had their own suite (οἰκεῖος, ἀνθρωπος or οἰκεῖος ἀνθρωπος), but their power could not go beyond the imperial power. In other words, they did not have their own armies; they had to act within the established system of the Empire as dependants to the state.[10] However, some kind of limited numbers of armed corps served for them.[11] The *pronoiar*s were

[8] Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government…," pp. 278-279. Yet, still the *horia*, main administrative division within the province, remained, but its role was totally changed in the late twelfth century. Ibid., p. 279.

[9] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 392.

[10] Ibid., pp. 392-393.

[11] Manuel Komnenos Maurozomes possessed a vast estate and his own detachments.

supposed to create local armies in times of emergency, therefore, had crucial role in defense of the provinces.

The military authority of the Byzantine state gradually decreased vis-à-vis the Byzantine provincial aristocracy. The process already got started in the tenth century with the families such as the Phokai in Caesarea accelerated during the late twelfth century. By then, the local rebels (e.g. Theodore Mangaphas in Philadelphia) could have the means to foment city-dwellers against the state, and raised a strong resistance.[12] Actually on the other hand, this was not the case, when 'rebellious' aristocrats are considered. Cheynet gives the reasons behind it:

> Of course the aristocrats, from amongst whom the great majority of officers were recruited, entertained close links with the common soldiers. In all likelihood, the latter's families often lived on their estates or at least in the areas where their prestige was felt. The great warriors, men like Kourkouas, Phokas, Diogenes, the Komnenoi, gained loyalty of their soldiers through victories which spared the shedding of their blood and by enriching them through shared spoils of war. This loyalty of men towards their leader was even more deeply felt when they were foreigners, a natural solidarity prevailing against the Greek majority whom they distrusted. If the generals revolted, they could rely on their troops, whose officers frequently came from the same province as they did and included some of their relations.[13]

These positions provided the provincial aristocrats opportunities to enlarge their power. Some aristocrats were holding soldiers, who were by and large paid by the former. The view arguing that the existence of private armies of aristocrats made the aristocracy uncontrollable in the late twelfth century seems to be baseless.[14] There were no private armies before the Palaiologan period. Despite everything, the

[12] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy (8th-13th Centuries)," p. 37.

[13] Ibid., pp. 37-38.

[14] See ibid., pp. 32-33, citing Hélène Ahrweiler, "Recherches sur la société byzantine au XIe siècle: nouvelles hierarchies et nouvelles solidarities," *Travaux et memoires* 6 (1976), p. 117; see also Ostrogorsky, "Observations…," p. 14. Although Ostrogorsky accepts the absence of direct evidence for the 'army' of aristocrats, he identifies the 'military' formation around the *pronoiar* as a 'retinue,' which means ready armed guards indeed. Ibid.

aristocrats did not hold private armed forces and castles impenetrable to the emperor. The emperor's sole rule over them was obvious that the aristocracy was still at the service of imperial power.[15] Cheynet clarifies the subject well:

> The instances of private militia, those of Maurix, Bourtzes and Gabras mentioned by H. Ahrweiler, reintegrating into the regular army corps, are ambiguous. Other names, Apokapes at Edessa and Brachamios at Antioch, could be added to the list. In all cases it is a question of Byzantine army officers, who had lost contact with the central power because of the Turkish invasions. They simply gathered troops who were still in a condition to fight so as to organize resistance on autonomous lines. It is true that the instability of central authority in the last third of the eleventh century, when the emperors succeeded each other at an accelerated rhythm, sometimes cast them in the lot of rebels.[16]

What were the sources of human power recruited for the army? The *pronoia*-holders were one of them raising considerable amount of soldiers, recruited in times of military campaigns. Alexios I Komnenos recruited soldiers from coastal cities of Asia Minor.[17] His army consisted of mainly three sources of manpower, which were mercenaries, the Pechenegs, and retinues of his relatives or his close men. There were almost no provincial military troops, regionally held under a local aristocrat's command.[18] As Haldon points out, "apart from motley town militias and the retinues of local landlords and imperial officials in the provinces, the imperial army was the only effective force available to deal with attacks on three different fronts."[19] Geographic conditions may have played an important role in recruitment of troops. Dispatching of an army to provinces would be demanding and need longer durations. It seems that any military need, therefore, was met by provincially recruited troops,

[15] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy (8th-13th centuries)," pp. 32-35.

[16] Ibid., pp. 35-36, fn. 139; Ahrweiler, "Recherches sur la société byzantine…," p. 118.

[17] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 379.

[18] Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*…, p. 94.

[19] Ibid., p. 94.

transmitted immediately during the reign of Manuel I Komnenos. For instance, Andronikos Vatatzes was once at the head of an army sent to repel Turks in Amaseia. Its soldiers were from close provinces: Paphlagonia and Herakleia Pontike.[20]

As the local rebellions hazardous for the central authority frequently occurred in the areas where military aristocrats had local bases, local military commanders were no longer selected from those. The state preferred an outsider for the duty from the eleventh century onward.[21] That was particularly to ensure relative security in provinces remained out of the limits of instant intervention of state in case of emergency. Regionalism, as Magdalino calls it, appeared consequently. Given that the communication was not as easy as today's world, the government and defense was locally organized in provinces.[22]

Another source for the army was the *archontopouloi* (the sons of the *archontes*), the first and only known implementation initiated by Alexios I Komnenos. These were distinguished in military capacity and probably standing troops "for young officers."[23] As Birkenmeier described the way they were trained, "the *archontopouloi* appear to have been trained from scratch, but we can assume that this was an economy measure, and that officers' sons had the means to equip themselves."[24] According to Anna Komnene, that distinguished corps was trained by the emperor himself, and initially recruited among the sons of the victims of the battle of Dristra in 1087. As it is told by her, he gathered two thousand strong young men in the aftermath of the battle. In another case, three hundred of these capable

[20] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 103.

[21] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 150.

[22] Ibid., p. 151.

[23] Birkenmeier, *The Development of the Komnenian Army*…, p. 232.

[24] Ibid., p. 157.

men became new victims in a single struggle in 1090.[25] *Archontopouloi* may have been sent into the wilderness after Alexios I's death, maybe because of their 'marginal usefulness' as it might have been regarded by John II Komnenos.[26] They were no longer attestable in the sources from that time onward.[27]

Similar formation of 'elite' soldiers had existed before Alexios I Komnenos. Georgios Maniakes had created well-trained and armed force comprised of fighters most probably enrolled by him. Reaching up three hundred men that group was fighting under Bryennios' command.[28] In sum, the *achontopouloi* might have been considered themselves as heirs of what their fathers had been defending their local interests. In other words, the provincial aristocrats felt the need for preserving their *status quo* and preferred to be in the front if an encounter with the infidels became unavoidable. Another burning issue is what they served for the emperor. Alexios I must have trusted them entirely, since they were right at the center of his military power. He preferred to organize such a group of special military men for the Komnenoi had obtained its power via their sway over a territorial base. In that respect, he would have thought people could achieve successful protection if they had territorial interests, such as the provincial aristocrats' dependency and dominion over a certain region.

In the provinces, there were possessions symbolizing certain means of authority. Castles and *kastra* occupied vital roles in provincial security. The provincial aristocrats were participating directly in the process by undertaking the management of these 'centers'. Local aristocracy was rather granted with those

[25] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, pp. 231-232; Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204. A Political History*, Second edition, pp. 149-150; Birkenmeier, *The Development of the Komnenian Army*…, pp. 75-76; Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*…, pp. 93-94.

[26] Birkenmeier, *The Development of the Komnenian Army*…, pp. 159-160.

[27] Ibid., p. 232; Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society*…, p. 118.

[28] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 40.

'symbols' of power and was given responsibility for the management of the *kastra* and castles, which will be analyzed here to make our point clear.

The donation of castles did not exceed more than a generation. An individual was able to possess the rights of the castle only for a life-long period, after whose death a state official (καστροφύλακες) was appointed for the administration of it. It has been argued that the person, who was given a castle, may have possibly a local aristocrat possessing lands around the castle. Of course, the castle has to be understood with the surrounding areas, including villages. Hence, his duty for the safeguarding and maintenance of the castle may have meant his properties' safety as well. In addition, the state put a special tax (καστροχτισία) for the assurance of security.[29] A renovation conducted for the Didyma castle presents an instance of sponsorship by the local aristocracy. The inscription of Didyma provides information on that act. It suggests that the castle was restored by a certain Michael Karantinos, the duke of Crete at that time bearing the title *vestarch*, around the turn of the eleventh century.[30] That point, as an illustrator for castle-building activities of the Komnenian emperors, exemplifies how this policy was widely carried out in Western Asia Minor.

[29] Oikonomides, "The Donations of Castles…," pp. 413-417.

[30] Ragia, "The Inscription of Didyma (Hieron)…," pp. 133-137. Some members of the family occupied prominent offices in Asia Minor. Constantine Karantinos, as the testimony of the seals has shown us, was the *doux* of Antioch in the eleventh century and the son-in-law of the emperor Romanos III Argyros. Ibid., p. 141. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, two wings of the family can be attested in Caria. The one in Mylasa was more influential than the other one in Miletos. Rafia notes: "The primicerios John Karantinos, inhabitant of that city [Mylasa], managed to appropriate for himself, already in the reign of Manuel I Komnenos, a big olive grove near Hyllarima –quite far away from Mylasa– which belonged to the monastery of Thetokos of Stylos of Mt. Latros." Ibid., p. 142. The latter, on the other hand, provided clerical personnel, other than that no one to be encountered as prominent individuals. Ibid., p. 145. Previously, Ahrweiler suggests different dating, 1089 or 1094, for the reconstruction of the *kastron*. Cf. Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, "Les forteresses construites en Asie Mineure…," p. 184. Also see, Clive Foss, "The Defenses of Asia Minor against the Turks," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 27 (1982), p. 157. [Reprinted in Clive Foss, *Cities, Fortresses and Villages of Byzantine Asia Minor* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996), no. V]

New provincial thematic organization became the new target put into practice by Manuel I Komnenos. He created two themes in Western Asia Minor apart from Thrakesion: Mylasa and Melanoudion, and Neokastra. Building fortresses and garrisons along the frontier regions became new trend in his reign. Since the Byzantine aristocracy did not derive its political power basically from its land possessions as opposed to Western European examples, the Komnenian *reconquista* of territories in Asia Minor, in which the role of the provincial aristocrats was undeniable, was "entirely dependent on imperial expeditions and imperial victories."[31] For that purpose, many castles were built in Western Asia Minor. However, "the plan seems to have been successful, but it was a very limited achievement."[32]

Castle constructions were practiced in all over the Byzantine Empire during the Komnenian period. Manuel I Komnenos extensively constructed or reconstructed the castles in the Western Asia Minor countryside.[33] Manuel's initial refortification activities took place mainly in Bithynian frontiers. The erection of the fort in Melangeia can be dated before 1146.[34] His rebuilding-construction activities were apparent for the period between 1162 and 1173 for the region. The castle constructions reveal another aim: the security of agricultural population. These people needed fortified constructions in order to create spaces for shelter in times of danger, since their farms situated in open fields. In 1175, seeking an aim of providing security for villagers, Dorylaion and Soublaion castles were constructed in Phrygia.

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[31] Mark Whittow, "How the East Was Lost: The Background to the Komnenian *Reconquista*," in *Alexios I Komnenos*, Margaret Mullett and Dion Smythe (eds), (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations, 1996), p. 67.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 85, #150.

[34] John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, p. 37 and p. 37, fn. 12.

Yet, as Clive Foss argues, "the resources of the empire seem not to have sufficed to extend it generally to the exposed borderlands."[35]

Manuel I Komnenos also attempted to keep the themes populated. For that, the landless people were settled and given lands around the military garrisons or fortresses.[36] This population became a substantial human supply for military purposes. Lack of a buffer zone (i.e. the southeastern Tauros Mountains-Syrian borders) for the security of the provincial aristocrats caused disturbance for these aristocrats signifies the insecurity of the frontier regions was evidential in southern and eastern borders with the Turks. Turkish threat was evident along the borders during constant presence of the Seljuks. In the 1140s, monks of St. Paul Monastery on Mount Latros have already left the place because of those insecure conditions. Some of the monastery's source of revenue was situated in rural areas. The military unrest caused a withdrawal from these properties.[37] He created local forces in order to defend the garrisons/fortress-towns of the frontier regions. It was a policy aiming to maintain security for the integrity of the borderlands. Yet the issue of assessing the security for the coastlands and other parts of the Empire seemed debatable under the Komnenoi.[38]

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[35] Foss, "The Defenses of Asia Minor against the Turks," p. 152. See also, Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, "Les forteresses construites en Asie Mineure…," pp. 182-189.

[36] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, p. 256. Manuel's revision of provincial administration became to the advantage of Nicaean economy in the long-term. Laskarid renewal in food resources was a direct consequence/legacy of Komnenian land policy. Ibid., p. 257.

[37] Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, pp. 258-259.

[38] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 138. For the insecurity of the borderlands, see also ibid., p. 131. The re-conquest of some coasts under the Komnenoi becomes important at that point. Manuel's military-political achievements in Asia Minor are described by Magdalino: "The evidence for Manuel's achievements in Asia Minor thus suggests that he remedied all the deficiencies of imperial administration which Odo of Deuil had noticed in 1147. He ended the system of shared exploitation with the Turks; he made the Türkmen pay for winter pasture; he made the roads safer for travelers, and restored stability and prosperity to precisely that part of the interior – the area between Lopadion and Philadelphia– where the Second Crusade had diverted to the coast, and, even there, found the going hard. In addition, he improved the defenses of Attaleia and possibly other coastal places, and the walls of Nicaea were strengthened during his reign." Ibid., pp. 126-127 referring to Clive Foss and David Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications: An Introduction* (Pretoria:

Population transfers were implemented as an imperial policy in the Byzantine Empire throughout the Komnenian era. These transfer politics clearly were adopted for strategic reasons. For instance, the Armenians at the very height of capacity to rebel against the central Byzantine state were removed from Cilician Armenia into far lands from their homelands; yet, it wiped out the suspension against the Seljuks that the displaced Armenians would provide for the Byzantine Empire. For the Byzantine Empire, this risk was there in similar population transfers of previous centuries. Another factor behind these movements was providing demographic momentum which created a revival in economic and military fields.[39] In the 1120s, John II Komnenos placed some Serbian groups, either captives or just conquered mass, (and possibly Armenian groups) in Bithynia (particularly Nikomedia province). He provided fertile lands to some of these transferred people in their new country, and enrollment in the army for some others, or just restricted them to remain as tributaries.[40] The Nicaean emperors did not quit that practice. The Nicaean government also undertook the population transfers. For example, Cumans were installed by the Nicaean Empire in some regions of Western Asia Minor (i.e. the Maeander and Phrygia),[41] and also in Thracian and Macedonian territories by John

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University of South Africa, 1986), p. 148. The imperial navy was developed by Manuel I Komnenos in 1148, which helped him in his campaigns mainly directed to the coastal areas. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 138. On the other hand, Niketas Choniates and John Kinnamos differ from one another on the issue of how accomplished the emperor Manuel was. For Choniates, John II stands out as the best emperor of the Komnenian dynasty so that Manuel I had inherited military and economic accomplishments of John's time. Ibid., pp. 13-14.

[39] Peter Charanis, "The Transfer of Population as a Policy in the Byzantine Empire," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 3/2 (1961), pp. 151-153. 'Heretical' groups were also exposed to transfer policy especially in Thracian territories of Alexios I's Empire. They were settled in particular areas far from their cities where they had ground. Charanis, "The Transfer of Population…," pp. 151-152. This sometimes reached a point unexpected by the state, as Anna Komnene writes, "Practically all the inhabitants of Philippopolis were in fact Manichaeans, so that they lorded it over the Christians there and plundered their goods, paying little or no attention to the emperor's envoys." Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, p. 465. For Charanis, transfer of population was traditionalized first by the Byzantines. Charanis, "The Transfer of Population…," pp. 154.

[40] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 11.

[41] Charanis, "On the Ethnic Composition…," p. 145.

III Vatatzes, who employed them as soldiers in Nicaean army and gave them lands to live. For that reason, they were smallholding soldiers, not mercenaries. The relocation of different ethnic elements was held in Smyrna region as well. The Cumans were settled there as peasants worked out the lands.[42] John III Vatatzes policy of resettling the Cumans in some parts of Phrygia was also narrated by the historian Gregoras. The historian notes that the emperor "enlisted them in the Roman armed forces, distributing lands to them for habitation (χώρας ἄλλοις ἄλλας διανειμάμενος εἰς κατοίκησιν), some in Thrace and Macedonia, others in Asia through- out the Maiandros [valley] and Phrygia."[43] This resettlement of foreign elements, which were pushed by the Tartars in the north, was a part of Nicaean frontier policy and explains fruitful Nicaean strategy for the security of frontiers.[44]

The border areas constituted twofold problem. On the one hand, they had physical features open to marauders and raids of the Seljuks, and on the other hand and consequently, the conditions prepared a suitable ground for rising of local power-holders as contenders to central state. The unsafe conditions along the border areas become obvious when the people of Nicaea resisted against Andronikos after his accession to the throne in September, 1183. The revolt, then, extended especially to Nicaea, Prusa, Lopadion and Philadelphia.[45] Although Nicaea was retaken by the imperial forces on the next year after a long siege, this was an apparent sign for the power of local aristocracy.[46] They could show their reluctance to the usurper.[47]

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[42] See ibid.

[43] Bartusis, "On the Problem of Smallholding…", p. 12, quoting *Nicephori Gregorae byzantine historia*, L. Schopen, ed., (Bonn: n. p., 1829-1855), vol. 1, 37.6- 9.

[44] Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, p. 393. See also Charanis, "On the Ethnic Composition…," pp. 144-146.

[45] Local aristocracy had strong ground in Asia Minor. For the Asiatic roots of the twelfth-century aristocracy, see Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*…, pp. 207-248 and Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, p. 127.

[46] Ibid., p. 127.

The recapture of Kastamon from the Turks must have enabled the Byzantine local aristocracy to return their estates there. John II Komnenos' expansionary policy ended up with a relative achievement in regaining Anatolian territories lost to Turks. The Komnenoi became a challenging force thanks to developments in military tactics and equipments and engines that made Byzantine army the master of siege warfare.[48] He made a military expedition to Cilicia (ca. 1136-1139), where a threat to Empire's territories appeared with Leon's, the Armenian ruler, dedicated attempt to hold Seleucia, and other parts of the Eastern frontier. At the end, he pushed the danger back, and the Cilicia remained Byzantine once more.[49]

The provincial military aristocracy must have been housed within these fortified towns or castles throughout the Komnenian era. The extensive rebuilding activity may explain how the provincial aristocracy needed a shelter in rural areas. The extension of the military elite and the castles was, no doubt, in parallel with each other. Obviously, the need was also existed for providing appropriate and secure places for the rural public.

A survey was done in the twelfth-thirteenth century Mastaura, a settlement with fortification in the Meander region. It shed some light on the settlement's extensive building structures seem to illustrate considerable welfare. An argument has been positioned that the expansion and density of cisterns in the area may well have been explained by non-governmental patrons.[50] But a question about the

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[47] Ibid., pp. 126-127 referring to Foss and Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications*…, p. 148.

[48] Birkenmeier, *The Development of the Komnenian Army*…, pp. 204-205.

[49] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, pp. 12-14; see also p. 17.

[50] Barnes and Whittow, "The Survey of Medieval Castles…," pp. 351-353.

sponsors of fortification walls of the settlement remained unanswered as Neville noticed.[51]

The Role of the Provincial Aristocracy in Warlike Matters

The provincial aristocracy sometimes occupied military ranks depending probably on the region of the city that they resided. The military organization provided them a considerable basis for power. An example from the European lands would suffice to indicate our concern: the *archontes*, as in the case of Thebes, had court titles, which simply means that they held prominent roles in the local government, militarily and administratively.[52] It can be pointed out that Byzantine administrative and military offices were shared by the local aristocratic families. Falkenhausen names the high aristocratic families of Byzantine southern Italy, who served as *stratêgos* or *katepano*.[53] The term *katepano*, meaning governor-*doux*, was not put out of use until the end of the eleventh century. The evidences testify its usage in a different meaning, as a local official, in Smyrna region in the following century.[54]

On the eve of the Komnenian era, on the other hand, the Byzantine Empire was frequently losing its territories in Asia Minor. The reason behind these territorial losses in inner Asia Minor and the other parts of the Empire was not only economic but more military.[55] It interrupted the military aristocracy of the pre-Komnenian

[51] Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950-1100*, p. 123.

[52] Angold, "Archons and Dynasts…," pp. 237-238.

[53] Falkenhausen, "A Provincial Aristocracy…," p. 212.

[54] Kazhdan, "Katepano," p. 1115; Hélène Ahrweiler, "Recherches sur l'administration de l'empire byzantine aux IX-XI siècles," *Bulletin de correspondence hellénique* 84 (1960), pp. 64-67, [Repr. in idem, *Etudes sur les structures administrative et socials de Byzance*, London: Variorum, 1971, art. VIII].

[55] Stephenson, "The Rise…," p. 26.

period, and provided a suitable ground upon which the Komnenoi created their dynastic and household government. Komnenian aristocratization of Byzantine state emerged out of that picture as a reaction. As Haldon puts it, Komnenian attitude was a way of keeping its borders among powerful political entities of the area.[56] This period made the Empire survive through the twelfth century.[57] In that context, the role of the *archontes* was undeniably important especially along the frontier areas. Their loyalty enabled Byzantium to protect, at least for some more years not to draw back from, its territories in Asia Minor.[58]

The Nicaean Empire was centered in northern part of Asia Minor partly due to the existence of the powerful aristocratic families in southern and western parts. The aristocrats in the Eastern and Western parts of Byzantium are divided according to their primary aim, which is briefly summarized as one side fought for the defense of the East and the other for the West.[59] John III Vatatzes established or preserved social and political contacts with Asia Minor, which, according to Kyritses, indicates that there was not a total abandonment of local Greek aristocracy from/in Asia Minor.[60] There, the provincial aristocrats survived even though the Byzantine provincial authority was seriously shaken by 1204.

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[56] Haldon, "Social Élites…," p. 189. See for the statement by Angold, *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204*…, pp. 133-134.

[57] Paul Magdalino has suggested a reason behind Byzantine survival through the post-1204 period: "Under the successors of Manuel I the Komnenian system, centered on Constantinople, was programmed for self-destruction. Relocated to the provinces after 1204 through the leading families of the last twelfth–century regimes, it ensured the survival of the Byzantine empire for another two and a half centuries, while losing none of its divisive potential." Magdalino, "The Empire of the Komnenoi (1118-1204)," p. 663.

[58] Ibid., p. 653. Also see, Stephenson, "The Rise…," p. 27.

[59] Puech, "The Aristocracy and the Empire of Nicaea," p. 78.

[60] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 83.

A Case for Military Power of a Provincial Aristocratic Family: The Vatatzai in the Service of the Empire

John III Vatatzes' ancestors were the members of provincial aristocracy from Thrakesion under the Angeloi. A member of the Vatatzes family in Manuel I Komnenos' era served as *megas domestikos* and *doux* of Thrakesion, which illustrates pre-existence of the family in that province. John Komnenos-Vatatzes, a *sebastos*, grand domestic and *doux* of Thrakesion, contradicted with the emperor Andronikos Komnenos, attempting for tyranny. He placed himself at Philadelphia and possibly took control of the surrounding regions. John Komnenos-Vatatzes was Empire's servant fought against the Turks many times.[61] For reassuring the order, Andronikos Lappardas was dispatched in 1182. That *sebastos* also possessed power as a military aristocrat. It must have reached considerable limits, and this explains his rebellion initiated a year later (1183).[62]

Another Vatatzes, Andronikos by name, must have served as a general that he led an army to Amaseia and was a nephew of the Emperor Manuel I Komnenos.[63] Furthermore, one of John III Vatatzes's ancestors, possibly his father, was Basil Vatatzes who accomplished to push Mangaphas away from Philadelphia. That member of the family appears as the grand domestic of the East, then of the West in the 1190s in Niketas Choniates' account.[64] Being a military aristocrat makes him the possible supporter of the central authority as opposed to the provincial aristocracy

[61] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 146; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*…, p. 113.

[62] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 146; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*…, p. 113 and p. 116.

[63] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 103.

[64] Ibid., p. 220 and p. 239. Furthermore, a certain Vatatzes was living in Bithynia entrusted with blocking Alexios the Cilician. He was put to target by two malicious relatives of emperor, Andronikos Kontostephanos and Basil Kamateros. Soon afterwards, he was 'wildly' killed by emperor's close man Bastralites. See ibid., pp. 266-267.

competing for gaining control in the provinces. This particular point illuminates the 'dependant' provincial aristocracy in Angelid period.

Military Titles of the Provincial Aristocrats

There were new officers created on account of military importance of the cities: the *kastrophylax* (tekfur?), who was in charge of the garrison; the *prokathemenos*, who was the governor; both were appointed by the emperor mostly from the *archontes* of the city. The cases of promotion of offices as a result of successes at wars remained as common practices throughout the thirteenth century. To give an example, Michael Tarchaneiotes, gaining fame at his success at Berat in 1281, gained the office *protovestiarios* along with his older one: *megas domestikos*.[65]

To receive or to hold a court office for which a stark competition existed among the members of the aristocracy was an important step for aristocrats. Despite the fact that there were some exceptions (e.g. in 1255, George Mouzalon, who was a friend of Theodore II, was given the title *megas domestikos*, which encompassed three offices: *protosebastos*, *protovestiarios* and *megas stratopedarches*), the individuals normally occupy one place/office at the same time.[66]

On the other hand, some military offices were combined. The combination of titles such as *protosebastos* and offices such as *protovestiarios* may have resulted in two things: either their responsibility –therefore, their power– was extended or the offices became no more than mere 'titles.' Those kinds of combination are attestable

[65] Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*…, p. 37.

[66] Ibid., p. 37.

for the twelfth century. Kyritses found no definite reason behind that combination, yet, it would have been a result of a practical need.[67]

The provincial aristocratic families were critically important during imperial campaigns. While one group accompanying the emperor in wars & campaigns, another one remained at the capital in wealthy life.[68] If the emperor decided to organize military expedition to certain routes, then, aristocrats holding key positions in the province would be the primary actors in order to secure the imperial interests, and eventually achieved a rewarding result. This point was evidently the case in John III's European campaigns in 1235-1236 (capture of Tzouroulos) and in 1241 and 1246 after which the city of Thessalonike was taken over. In these instances, the Nicaean army had the Thracian families' reinforcements.[69]

The provincial aristocrats' inclinations were so prominent that Empire's destiny was depended extensively on their attitudes on the peripheral territories. While their defensive capacity made possible imperial military accomplishments in cities like Philadelphia or Trebizond, their inclinations to the 'other' side may have resulted in a complete defeat in territories that constantly changed hands between the Byzantines and the Turks.[70]

The Byzantine Empire was a centralized state throughout the eleventh and the twelfth centuries, "despite an inchoate urban autonomy, the extension of basic seigneurial jurisdiction, and the embryonic development of private military retinues."[71] Towards the end of the twelfth century, however, these developments in

[67] Ibid., p. 37.

[68] Haldon, "Social Élites, …," pp. 186-187.

[69] Nicephoros Tarchaneiotes and John Petraliphas were among the aristocrats of Thrace, whose ancestors can be attested in the region since the eleventh century.

[70] Magdalino, "The Empire of the Komnenoi (1118-1204)," p. 654.

[71] Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*…, p. 69. According to Kazhdan and Epstein, there was *seigneurie* in Byzantium. Ibidem., pp. 61-62.

urban economy have contributed to decentralization of the state. The military aristocracy surpassed even the emperor's role that prevailed in the provincial society.[72]

If one considers the land estates, it must be stated that the Komnenian household and military aristocracy dominated the scene. Well, for the civilian aristocracy, on the other hand, one should appoint to Kazhdan's claim, which has been pointed out by Cheynet that as civilian families did not occupy many places in the land-holding mechanisms, they were not dependant on land as much as military aristocrats.[73]

[72] Ibid., p. 119.

[73] Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th-12th Centuries…," p. 25.

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