ADATLAP
a doktori értekezés nyilvánosságra hozatalához

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3. A doktori értekezés szerzőjéként hozzájárulok a doktori értekezés és a tézisek szövegének Plágiumkereső adatbázisba helyezéséhez és plágiumellenőrző vizsgálatok lefuttatásához.


a doktori értekezés szerzőjénél aláírása
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## Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AHR</strong></td>
<td>American Historical Review.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BCH</strong></td>
<td><em>Bulletin de correspondance hellénique</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BF</strong></td>
<td>Byzantinische Forschungen.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BS</strong></td>
<td>Byzantinoslavica. Revue internationale des études byzantines.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bryennios</strong></td>
<td><em>Nicephori Bryenii Historiarum libri quattuor</em>, ed. by Paul Gautier (Brussels, 1975).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Byz. Sym.</strong></td>
<td><em>Βυζαντινά Σύμμεικτα</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BZ</strong></td>
<td>Byzantinische Zeitschrift.</td>
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<td><em>DOP</em></td>
<td><em>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>EHR</em></td>
<td><em>English Historical Review</em>.</td>
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| IRAIK                                                                 | Извѣстія Русскаго археологическаго института въ Константинополь (Izvestija Russkago Arheologičeskago Instituta v Konstan-
|                                                      | tинополе).                                                                                               |
Jordanov, *Corpus*  

Kazhdan and Wharton-Epstein, *Change*  

Kazhdan and Ronchey, *L’aristocrazia*  

Kinnamos, *History*  

*Latros*  

Laurent, *Bulles métriques*  

Laurent, *Corpus*, vol. 2  

Laurent, *Corpus*, vol. 5  

Laurent, *Orghidan*  

*Lavra*  

*The Life of Saint Meletios*  

*The Life of Saint Cyril*  

*The Life of Saint Nikon*  
Magdalino, Empire


Marcianus 524


Michael Choniates, Letters

Michael Choniatae Epistulae, ed. by Foteini Kolovou (Berlin and New York, 2001).

Michael Choniates, Ἑυφυές


MM


NE

*Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων*.

Neville, Authority


ODB


Oikonomides, Dated Seals


Patmos


PbmZ


Prodromos, Historische Gedichte


Psellus, Chronographia


Psellus, Scripta minora


RÉB

*Revue des études byzantines*.
Šandrovskaja, *Sfragistica*  

Šandrovskaja and Seibt, *Bleisiegel*  

Schlumberger, *Sigillographie*  

Scylitzes Continuatus  
Ἡ συνέχεια τῆς χρονογρφίας τοῦ Ἰωάννου Σκυλίτση, ed. by Eudoxos Th. Tsolakes (Thessalonike, 1968).

Seyrig  

Skylitzes  

*Social History*  
The social history of Byzantium, ed. by John Haldon (Oxford, 2009).

*SOsl*  
*Symbolae Osloenses*.

Stavrakos, *Bleisiegel*  
Christos Stavrakos, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel mit Familiennamen aus der Sammlung des Numismatischen Museums Athen* (Wiesbaden, 2000).

Theophanes  

Theophylact, *Letters*  
Theophylacti Achridensis Epistulae, ed. by Paul Gautier (Thessaloniki, 1986).
TM *Travaux et mémoires.*


ZRVI Зборник радова Византолошког института (Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog instituta).
1 Introduction

Second-tier élite means to be subordinate among the privileged. This is a curious situation, as the members of such social stratum experience their superiority to the lower echelons of the society, and their vulnerability to and dependence on the leading circle at the real top of the community. These are highly general ideas, but they characterise the specific group that is the focus of this thesis, the Byzantine second-tier élite. This is a curious phenomenon of the Byzantine society that frequently attracted the attention of modern scholars in the past. The reason for this scholarly interest is mainly related to the fact that this stratum played an important and active role in the literary production of the Komnenian period. Nevertheless, the Byzantinists’ concern for the stratum is less visible due to the inconsistencies in the terminology. Despite the considerable interest in second-tier élite, there is no extensive study, which focuses on this particular social group. This deficiency is the main reason for this dissertation.

The designation of the Byzantine second-tier élite implies little about the chronological confines of the study. The main interest of this dissertation is an era, which was called after the imperial house of the Komnenoi. The Komnenian dynasty ruled the Byzantine Empire from 1081 to 1185, but the end of the period bearing their name is usually placed to later events, the fourth crusade, the sack of Constantinople and the collapse of the empire in 1204.

It is not surprising that scholars occasionally refer to the era as the Byzantine ‘long’ twelfth century too. The thesis applies this extended periodisation, admitting that it simply relies on political dates. In fact, the development of the second-tier élite chronologically did not suit the confines of the period. This dissociation may cause a problem in regard to the terminology of the social group. Therefore, a short explanation is necessary here. In this dissertation, the Komnenian second-tier élite does not designate a group in a given period solely. Instead, the term denotes a distinct social phenomenon, which had specific characteristics developing in the era in question. The situation will be described in details in the following parts of the dissertation. It is also important to note that vertical classification was not the peculiarity of the Komnenian period. The term ‘second-tier élite’ can be used in connection to other eras too. Therefore, a precise terminology is necessary, and I apply the pure term ‘second-tier élite’.

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1 The problem of terminology and the secondary literature on the stratum is presented with more details in subchapter 1.1, pages 13–21.

2 It is worth noting here that Niels Gaul drew my attention to the second-tier élite in the beginning of my doctoral studies.
élite’ when the argument does not need distinction. The study deals with the chronological matters of the development of the stratum in details later.

The Byzantine second-tier élite as a whole is a very large topic. An extensive study that treats all the aspects of the stratum would be too long for the limits of a doctoral dissertation. Furthermore, the former observations have revealed numerous characteristics of this social group. However, some previously studied elements still need reconsideration due to the results of historical studies made in the recent years. Therefore, the thesis deals with the relations between the political system and the second-tier élite and the nature of the distinction between this stratum and the leading élite among the older topics. The dissertation intends to take a benefit of the prosopographical studies made in the last few decades about the Byzantine ruling stratum, including several representatives of the second-tier élite. The thesis makes an attempt to give a little contribution to this field too. The observation also treats other elements and characteristics of the stratum such as family policy, intermarriage and power techniques. One of the main questions of this investigation is how much authority the second-tier élite possessed and how its members were able to manipulate the course of events to protect their own interests. The dissertation also concerns the attitude of the stratum towards office- and titleholding that were essential elements of this social group in theory. The observation of these selected details may increase our knowledge about the second-tier élite.

To achieve its goals, the thesis performs the main observation in case studies. Nevertheless, the main body of the study is divided into five thematical units, chapters 2–6. The arrangement of these sections follows a principle that decreases the scope of observation with one exception. Chapter 2 deals with two main subjects: the nature of the Komnenian regime and the leading élite, and the position and opportunities of the second-tier élite in general. This part sets the political frames, in which the second-tier élite could function. Chapter 3 observes some selected families of the stratum in order to analyse the stability of the social group and the effects of several factors (e.g. family policy) on the level of families. Chapter 4 turns to the individuals of the élite. This part intends to reveal the techniques applied by individuals to progress in the bureaucracy. The chapter also treats several phenomena that have been examined in relation to the families, but the focus shifts onto their influence on the individuals. Chapter 5 deals with distinct affairs recorded in official documents. The main function of this part is that it focuses on the local élites of the provinces since the other chapters treat the circumstances of the Constantinopolitan elements of the stratum. Chapter 6 is the only one, which does not completely suit the aforementioned principle of the arrangement and structure. The position of this part is justified by the fact that it observes
phenomena, which are related to the bureaucratic nature of the élite and thus related to all the other chapters from a certain viewpoint. These phenomena are the offices and the court titles. The chapter examines selected letter collections for the attitude of the stratum towards the two essential features of Byzantine officialdom. The general approach of this thesis could cause problems in the cohesion of the narrative, but a considerable effort is made to avoid these issues and to provide a cohesive study on the second-tier élite.

1.1 Defining the élite: The historiography and the definition of Byzantine ruling stratum

Studying the historiography of second-tier élite, one cannot ignore the problems of the whole stratum appearing throughout decades of modern scholarly. There is a long history of research on the existence and nature of élite and aristocracy. Yet even after so many years and beside numerous attempts and theories about the ruling stratum of Byzantine society, there is no clear agreement among historians on this field. Therefore, this chapter deals with the past researches on the entire social group beside a focus on the second-tier élite and the problems of its definition.

Before we turn to the terminological issue of aristocracy and élite, we must treat a more fundamental problem, the Byzantine attitude towards social classification. The vocabulary applied by the Byzantine authors provides only a part of this problem. The cultural background of this terminology, the system of thoughts and the authors’ purposes of using the specific terms allow us to better understand the relations between opinions and social reality in the past. Michael Psellos’ contemplation on the political tradition and Niketas Choniates’ narrative about the triumphal march, not to mention other intellectuals from Byzantium, indicate the cultural need of the classification of the society or the élite at least. Kazhdan collected and analysed the Byzantine references to the elements of the Byzantine ‘aristocracy’ in details. Although Neville does not oppose the division of the Byzantine society in general, her argument on the importance of personal ties in the empire and their social

3 Psellos lists some strata, the best (aristoi), the nobles (eugenes), and ordinary people (agenes) in a short comparison of Greek and Roman political tradition in his historical work: Psellos, Chronographia, 6. 134; Describing a triumph of Manuel I, Choniates mentions several groups following the emperor in the march like ‘renowned blood relations’, ‘ministers of senatorial rank’, and ‘illustrious dignitaries who enjoyed the emperor’s favor’, Choniates, History, ed. van Dieten, vol. 1, p. 158, ll. 72–75, trans. Magoulias, p. 90.
4 Kazhdan and Ronchey, L’aristocrazia, pp. 67–92. This book is an Italian translation and a revised edition of Kazhdan’s classic work, which influenced the study of Byzantine aristocracy for decades: Alexander Kazhdan, Социальный состав господствующего класса Византии XI—XII вв. (Moscow, 1974).
aspects shows the complexity of interpretation. The aforementioned examples for Byzantine views indicate further problems. Psellos’ argument definitely fell under the influence of ancient tradition. Choniates’ visual description about the triumphal march of the imperial court raises the question on the correlation between the court hierarchy and the stratification of the élite. These problems of interpretation engendered by the characteristics of the Byzantine social structure and, particularly, those of the élite.

The Byzantine Empire had a relatively open society. Therefore, it is difficult to distinguish clear strata or to reveal the nature and essence of social groups. Furthermore, an open society easily suffered considerable changes throughout the centuries. The lack of any legal categorization of aristocracy is another key characteristic of Byzantine society that has prevented the contemporaries and the modern scholars from distinguishing separate strata clearly. Thus it is not surprising that the contemporary writers had different terminologies and definitions for the social élite of their times.

The uncertainty around the Byzantine ruling stratum has caused a long dispute among the historians. Most of the Byzantinists has agreed on the existence of aristocracy in Byzantium. Only a few scholar has expressed doubt about the aforementioned phenomena, and has used the terms élite or meritocracy, stressing the meritocratic nature of the ruling stratum throughout the entire history of Byzantium. There is no consequent use of the term ‘élite’ in the literature: beside those historians who deny the concept of aristocracy, several scholars apply it as a general term for the ruling stratum, recognizing the historical problem of the development and periodical existence of Byzantine aristocracy. Kazhdan represents

5 Neville, Authority, pp. 68–69. It is true, however, that Neville gave this argument, dealing with the tenth-century distinction of dynatoi and village communities, and she ends her study on the provincial society with the reign of Alexios I. Yet her final statement on the problem has no chronological determination that makes it necessary to treat her opinion in regard to the twelfth-century circumstances too.
9 Kazhdan and Ronchey, L’aristocrazia, pp. 51–52.
11 See Haldon’s and Krallis’s aforementioned studies.
another method by designating élite the leading faction of aristocracy and defining the three structural levels in the highest echelon of the Byzantine society: the ruling class, the aristocracy and the élite. Haldon underlines the problematic characteristic of the theory of élite that is the multitude of aspects, from which such a stratum can be defined. Social, intellectual, power or institutional élites not necessarily include the same segments of a society. In this dissertation, the entire élite, in its broader meaning, is identical with the ruling stratum due to the differences from Kazhdan’s concept in several terms. The main function of the term élite is to specify a part of the ruling stratum, the second-tier élite, without any reference to the aristocratic nature of the social group. However, it is worth noting that there is no attempt in this study to disclaim the phenomenon of aristocracy. This segment of the society is included by the élite as a whole. Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine the correlation between Byzantine aristocracy and élite in the long twelfth century due to the problems around the definition of the former category.

The definition of Byzantine aristocracy gives an ambiguous part of modern historiography. Scholars face difficulty, determining the factors, which defined the aristocracy. Despite the long history of modern research on this stratum, little attempt at a detailed explanation of the nature of aristocratic status was made until Kazhdan’s work. Kazhdan apparently affirms the Byzantines’ own idea of aristocracy, which stresses the primacy of reputation (whether it was defined by birth or morality in the sources). Nonetheless, the Russian Byzantinist also marks wealth and function as significant factors of this status. Cheynet considers only prominence as the essence of aristocratic rank, adding that the success of a lineage became apparent in long term. He also stresses the significance of military service in gaining appropriate prestige for the family in Byzantium. Cheynet’s remarks on the nature of Byzantine aristocracy still maintains their validity. Other elements, such as economic status, office, title, generally characterised the élite, and prominence was the factor

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12 Kazhdan and Ronchey, L’aristocrazia, pp. 61–62; Kazhdan and Cormick, ‘The Social World of the Byzantine Court’, p. 167. Nevertheless, this strictly-defined distinction between the three social categories has apparently not become a popular theory among the scholars.
14 Some scholars usually referred to ‘nobility’. Recently, Byzantinists intend to avoid this term in order to distinguish the Byzantine aristocratic stratum from the legally defined group of nobles in Western Europe: Jean-Claude Cheynet, ‘The Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th–12th Centuries: A Review of a Book by A. Kazhdan and S. Ronchey’, in Cheynet, Aristocrazia, no. 2, p. 2; Paul Magdalino, ‘Court Society and Aristocracy,’ in Social History, pp. 218–19.
15 Kazhdan and Ronchey, L’aristocrazia, pp. 61–141.
16 Cheynet, Pouvoir, pp. 253–57, 259.
17 Cheynet, Pouvoir, pp. 257–58.
that raised the aristocratic houses from the families around the administration. Nevertheless, the essential nature of aristocracy provides only a side of this manifold issue.

The problem of definition was accompanied by the question of the elements that the élite (or aristocracy) included. Dividing the stratum by function into two groups was, and still is, a popular concept among the historians of Byzantine society as the survey of Kazhdan clearly shows.\(^\text{18}\) One of these factions was the aristocracy by birth, which was usually considered as the provincial, landowning or military faction. The other group was defined by service, which was identified with the civil, bureaucratic or Constantinopolitan aristocracy. The different terms used by the scholars to denote the elements of élite or aristocracy shows the several aspects and moments that occurs when someone attempts to describe these groups.\(^\text{19}\) Nevertheless, not only terminology caused problem among the historians.

Byzantinists had a debate over relations between the two factions of Byzantine élite (or aristocracy). For a long time, scholars were led to the hypothesis that there was a serious rivalry between the civil and the military aristocracy for hegemony and influence over the imperial court. Among the supporters of this theory, Georg Ostrogorsky gave the most integrating analysis of the political conflict.\(^\text{20}\) In the last few decades, however, several studies contradicted the opposing nature of the relation, and they stressed the connections and correlations between the two factions.\(^\text{21}\) The significance of this issue in relation to our concern is given by the fact that scholars have tended to identify the distinction between the first-tier and second-tier élites of the Komnenian period with the division between the military and

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civil factions. Therefore, the nature of the relation between the groups of the ruling stratum is not an irrelevant question regarding the circumstances of the second-tier élite.

The second-tier élite itself has a curious position in the modern historiography. Several Byzantinists have studied this stratum, but the inconsistency of terminology and the different theories on the division of Byzantine society obscure our view on the study of this social group. The idea of second-tier élite originates from the oeuvre of Kazhdan who suggested the civil bureaucracy functioning as a second ranking aristocracy in the Komnenian period. Kazhdan clearly embedded the theory of a second-tier élite into the traditional bipartite division of Byzantine aristocracy into military and civil factions, not to mention the wider definition of aristocratic status. Magdalino consequently designates this stratum the ‘second-class aristocracy’ in his book about the government of Manuel I. Niels Gaul applies the definite term ‘second-tier élite’ to the social group behind the civil and church bureaucracy, doubting the aristocratic nature of this group. However, Gaul seemingly broadens the second rank of this stratum to the period preceding the Komnenian era too. These few references show the difficulties of the Byzantine social history. Gaul’s approach to a wider application of the term ‘second-tier élite’ draws attention to the validity of the vertical division of Byzantine élite throughout the history of the empire. However, in my opinion, it is important to stress the changing factors of distinction between several social levels through centuries. It is question whether the same elements of Byzantine society can be found in the second-tier élite of the eleventh century and that of the following period. Before we deal with the concerns of the dissertation about the definition of the second-tier élite, it is beneficial to describe the Byzantine ruling stratum in the eleventh century.

The Byzantine ruling stratum was a ‘pseudo-meritocratic’ élite in the eleventh century. The social rank completely relied on the official career in the bureaucracy and the army. This

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25 Magdalino, Empire, pp. 188–89, 320–23. Although he uses a less consistent vocabulary in regard to this social group, he definitely analyses the cultural and political attitude of second-tier élite.
27 Haldon, ‘Social élites’, p. 179.
situation was a heritage of the reorganisation of the empire after the Arab conquest. In the middle Byzantine political system, the imperial court had strong control over the administration, and the élite was highly dependent on imperial benevolence. The main income for the ruling stratum was based on service and the salaries given for the former. Despite the increasing wealth of the élite, especially regarding landed property, the rebellions against the government of Basil II clearly show the dependence of the élite on offices granted by central government in the last decades of the tenth century. Nevertheless, the provincial estates and towns were the areas of some autonomy of the Byzantine élite due to the relative passivity of the central government in these territories. These are mainly some characteristics of the Byzantine ruling stratum in the eleventh century, which developed in the former centuries. Therefore, they were essential attributes of the Byzantine élite. We should consider the idea that some of these elements probably characterised the second-tier élite in the Komnenian period too. However, it is not the place were these correlations are discussed in details. Furthermore, the ruling stratum was influenced by other progresses, which mainly characterised the eleventh century.

This period included several new phenomena or rather tendencies, which increased the complexity and vulnerability of the political system. The development of urban life in the provinces did not decrease the significance of Constantinople. In contrary, the cultural, political and social positions of the capital grew in this time. However, the changes that backed the elevating importance of Constantinople had ambivalent consequences for the imperial government. Earlier, scholars tended to see this century as the period of the rivalry between the landholding military élite of the provinces and the civil bureaucracy of the capital. In truth, the magnates of the provinces began to keep their households in Constantinople instead


33 See page 16 and also note 20.
of their old residences in the provincial towns or the countryside. This was the so-called Constantinopolisation of the ruling stratum.\textsuperscript{34} This trend gave the emperors an opportunity to gain a stronger control over the élite. In the same time, the cultural influence of transforming provincial élite on the imperial court and the government further increased.\textsuperscript{35} This supported the further expansion of the importance of ancestry and family names in the élite.\textsuperscript{36} By the end of the century at latest, the extended family rose again due to the aforementioned elements of the development of the élite.\textsuperscript{37} The slow transformation of the élite to the capital resulted in a more fractional ruling stratum. This caused a more intensive factional politics that gave higher pressure on the government together with other factors such as the increasing political power of the Constantinopolitan ‘people’ and the problem of imperial legitimacy after the extinction of the male lineage of the Macedonian dynasty.\textsuperscript{38} The imperial court was a territory of more temporary and unstable political formations in this period.\textsuperscript{39} Most of these changes were crucial for the second-tier élite in the following era too. The idea of the ancestry and the extended family greatly influenced the Komnenian court culture and the whole ruling stratum. Furthermore, this dissertation will repeatedly demonstrate the enduring significance of Constantinople in several parts.

After the ascendance of the Komnenian dynasty, major changes occurred in the political culture and system. One of the most important characteristics was the growing significance of the kinship with the emperor in the political authority and the government. Through years or decades of development, the latter feature resulted in the appearance of a highly privileged group of imperial relatives as a distinct stratum on the peak of the Byzantine élite and the society.\textsuperscript{40} Several terms, first-tier élite, imperial kin or Komnenian aristocracy, can be applied according to the context and the emphasis on the several aspects of this social formation. The widely accepted theory is that the development of the first-tier élite caused the crystallisation of the Komnenian second-tier élite, a lower stratum of families and individuals who were expelled from the highest echelon of the society due to the lack of


\textsuperscript{35} Yet this latter phenomenon is not connected directly with the Constantinopolisation of the élite by the scholars: Kazhdan and Wharton-Epstein, \textit{Change}, pp. 104–16; Haldon, ‘Social élites’, pp. 183–85. Haldon also stresses the vague distinction of élite and government, a problem mentioned above on page 14 note 6.


\textsuperscript{39} Haldon, ‘Social élites’, pp. 184–85.

\textsuperscript{40} Magdalino, \textit{Empire}, pp. 180–201; Kazhdan and Ronchey, \textit{L’aristocrazia}, pp. 117–120.
consanguinity or marital alliance with the imperial families.\textsuperscript{41} This process needs further investigation however, since the nature of the Komnenian politics and the role of kinship is recently open to debate again.\textsuperscript{42} Of course, the discussion on the Komnenian political system and the leading élite is only a part of the study on the second-tier élite, which rarely received a clear and detailed definition.

The second-tier élite itself and its distinction from the leading élite raise numerous questions. Firstly, the separation of the two strata concerns the vertical division of the élite and its chronological aspects. The most common idea of the second-tier élite considers this specific social group a twelfth-century phenomenon below a narrow circle of imperial kin. Was vertical stratification not a characteristic of the eleventh century too? From another viewpoint, can we approach the élite of the pre-Komnenian period with vertical categorisation too? These questions lead to the chronological correlation between the ‘long’ twelfth century and the transformation of the élite into the structure that is usually regarded as a characteristic of the period. The description of the second-tier élite cannot be accomplished without the definition of the leading élite. In truth, the changes in the first-tier élite must have determined the nature of the lower group primarily. Therefore, the characteristics of the leading élite and its development throughout the ‘long’ twelfth century are among the key subjects of the analysis. The character of the highest echelon of the Byzantine society finally leads to the problem of distinction. The chronological aspects and the constant development of the élite in the period increase the complexity of the issue. What factors determined the distinction between the leading élite and the second-tier élite? Was there any change in these components in the era? The observation of these questions must be the starting point of our investigation. Nevertheless, several details of the second-tier élite itself are a matter of discussion.

The bottom limit of the second-tier élite is even a more problematic issue. The question is whether this line is identical with the boundaries of the administration. Such correlation can be found in the civil administration, but not in the army and the church. The latter institutions evidently involved social elements out of the élite.\textsuperscript{43} The local élites of the provinces

\textsuperscript{41} Magdalino, \textit{Empire}, pp. 188–89.
\textsuperscript{42} For a more detailed analysis of the conditions, in which these strata developed and functioned, see Chapter 2.
\textsuperscript{43} One cannot argue that scholars have not paid attention to the social composition of the Komnenian army. On this topic, see John Haldon, \textit{Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565–1204} (London, 1999), pp. 268–70, 274; Mark C. Bartusis, \textit{Land and Privilege in Byzantium: The Institution of Pronoia} (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 160–62. Yet former analyses tended to take the strict distinction between civil and military elements of the concurrent Byzantine society as a fundamental idea of scholarly argument on this field. Kazhdan, an inventor of the idea of second-tier élite emphasises the civil nature of this stratum, and apparently excludes the military officers into the circles of the imperial kin and, probably, the provincial élite: Kazhdan and Ronchey, \textit{L’aristocrazia}, pp. 146–48.
appear to participate in the provincial government and in the administration of the dioceses and archdioceses as well as they competed for positions in the central bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{44} Thus, it is a question whether the (lesser) provincial bureaucrats and (partly) the officials at the courts of the bishops and metropolitans represented the lowest levels of the second-tier élite or they belonged to a separated stratum. The correlation and distinction between the second-tier élite and a middling stratum of urban society is another problem.\textsuperscript{45}

It is an interesting question how the model of Byzantine aristocracy conforms with the division of the élite. The main problem is what was the relation between the bottom limit of the aristocratic status and the border between the first-tier and the second-tier élite. The thesis acknowledges the definition of aristocracy given by Cheynet, which stresses the importance of the reputation and fame of the ancestry. Two aspects of the correlation between the aristocracy the division of the élite should be taken into account. Firstly, the aristocratic status had possibly crystallised before the imperial kin separated as a distinct social group.\textsuperscript{46} Secondly, the main factors of the first-tier élite were not completely similar to the elements of the definition of the aristocracy as we have already seen. Therefore, the borders of these categories were probably not identical. While the imperial kin completely belonged to the aristocracy, the second-tier élite was a mélange of aristocratic houses and families of humble origin.\textsuperscript{47}

These are the essential points, on which the analysis of the second-tier élite is established in this dissertation. Some elements indicate the uncertainties regarding the stratum due to the nature of our source material. Furthermore, the argument here may contain some strong statements and presumptions at several points. This study intends to give more detailed explanations to these problematic factors in the remaining parts.

1. 2 Sources

The complexity of the topic is manifest in the foundation of the historical study, the sources, in several aspects. The source material of this dissertation represents a wide variety

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\textsuperscript{45} These questions are discussed in subchapter 2. 2, especially on pages 52–56.

\textsuperscript{46} Even if the governmental significance of imperial relatives had longer tradition in the Byzantine politics, they did not necessarily constitute a separate stratum inside the élite before the twelfth century. In the earlier centuries, the kin merely blended in the leading élite of high-ranking servants. Cf. Cheynet, \textit{Pouvoir}, p. 253; Cheynet, ‘Byzantine Aristocracy’, no. 1, pp. 4–18.

\textsuperscript{47} Some families, such as the Skleroi, the Tessarakontapecheis and the Tornikai, had aristocratic status despite their exclusion from the leading élite. The representatives of these houses shared official positions with individuals with ordinary background, Aristenoi, Belissariotai, Choniatai, Pantechnai etc.
\end{flushleft}
of types and genres on the one hand. The second-tier élite can be analysed in many ways, since its members appear in sources as agents presented by texts and also as the creators of texts on the other hand. This stratum created the majority of written sources in the long twelfth century. Partially forming the bureaucracy of the civil and church administration, numerous representatives of second-tier élite received fine education in rhetoric and other abilities for writing. However, this social group, mostly, did not write for itself, but at request or in duty. The professional intellectuals paid for literary production composed a separated social group, or belonged to the middle stratum. Still, this latter stratum did not exclude the second-tier élite from intellectual activity. At this point, it is worth noting that the whole study mainly deals with written sources, and pays considerably less attention to the material culture.

The first group of written sources includes the historical works written in or about the long twelfth century. Regarding both aforementioned aspects, this period is rich of historiography manifesting in several forms. Although the entire era is treated by the different historical narratives, the reign of John II Komnenos less attracted the attention of the Byzantine historians. Beside the notable exceptions of Nikephoros Bryennios’ Material for History and Anna Komnene’s Alexiad, historical works were written by the members of the second-tier élite: John Skylitzes, John Zonaras, Constantine Manasses, John Kinnamos, Michael Glykas and Niketas Choniates. Despite the slight homogeneity in the social background, these works were created for different reasons and aims, and, hence, represent several styles and tones.

According to the characteristics mentioned above, scholars can use historical works for different aspects in their studies on the second-tier élite. One can search for information on

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50 There are several volumes treating the Byzantine literature of the long twelfth century: Herbert Hunger, Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner, 2 vols. (Munich, 1978). With a special interest on the Komnenian period, further studies have been published: Herbert Hunger, Die byzantinische Literatur der Komnenenzeit: Versuch einer Neubewertung (Vienna, 1968); Alexander Kazhdan and Simon Franklin, Studies on Byzantine literature in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (London, 1984); Ingela Nilsson, Raconter Byzance: la littérature au XIIe siècle (Paris, 2014).
52 Byzantine historiography was traditionally divided into chronicles and histories for many decades. Hunger’s description is a good example for this concept: Hunger, Literatur der Byzantiner, pp. 243–504. Ljubarskij counters this approach, regarding chronography and historiography as stages in a general development of the Byzantine historical writing: Jakov Ljubarskij, ‘Quellenforschung and/or literary criticism: Narrative Structures in Byzantine Historical Writings’, SÖst, 73/1 (1998), pp. 5–22.
53 For new literature on John II Komnenos, see pages 32–37.
the social stratum in the historical narratives on the one hand. In the last few decades, scholars started to pay more attention to the literary values of Byzantine historiography on the other.\textsuperscript{54} In regard to the first aspect or use, histories can be applied with less result. They mainly focus on events and phenomena in an imperial scale, in which the lower members of élite played less important roles. Thus, the vast majority of the second-tier élite was out of the attention of contemporary historians. In connection with the literary values, an analysis of political and social views owned by representatives of this stratum can give greater achievements, due to the usual social background of the authors. This is the reason why some historians whose works did not deal with the twelfth century itself are included in the scholarly discussion on the latter subject too. Nevertheless, historical works are mainly applied for the first aspect in this dissertation. Since the political views of historians have been studied in several articles or volumes, and a detailed analysis of this topic would overpass the limits of this work, I do not include an investigation on this specific theme in the dissertation.\textsuperscript{55}

The period under discussion slightly lacks traditional hagiographical literature in comparison to other eras. This paucity is unfortunate for historical studies, since saints’ lives are valuable sources for the analysis of medieval societies, especially for investigation on local communities.\textsuperscript{56} Nevertheless, hagiographical orations or oratorical hagiography increased in the period. The Life of Niketas of Chonai written by Michael Choniates gives a fine example of this latter type.\textsuperscript{57} The creation of hagiography became a responsibility of the lay church officials instead of the monastic communities.\textsuperscript{58} Therefore, like in the case of historiography, hagiographical literature was dominated by the second-tier élite. However, due to the narrow amount of this material, it provides little evidence valuable for this study.

The official documents and charters are highly significant sources of information on the second-tier élite. Since the second-tier élite gave the main body of bureaucracy in the civil

\textsuperscript{54} A good example of this approach is a volume of studies edited by Macrides: Ruth Macrides (ed.), \textit{History as Literature in Byzantium: Papers from the Fortieth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, April 2007} (Farnham, 2010).


\textsuperscript{56} Such application of hagiography and the importance of this genre is clearly visible in the work of Leonora Neville on the provincial society: Neville, \textit{Authority}, especially pp. 119–164.


and ecclesiastical administration, the documents of the government and the church records the members of this stratum in a considerable number. Unfortunately, all the lay archives throughout the old empire, including the imperial one, got absolutely devastated. Furthermore, monastic material suffered great losses, but some collections remained in several monasteries. The greatest existing archives can be found in the Athonite monasteries. Further documents of the long twelfth century remained in collections connected to Chios, Patmos and Latros too. Due to the prevalence and the nature of the archiving institutes, Byzantine documents cover only a restricted area of the empire in regard to both geographic and administrative aspects. Moreover, there are significant changes in the number of monastic documents throughout the period. For example, the reign of John II appears poor in this sort of written sources. Still this material can give important information about the current political system, some local élites and the relation between the several social groups of the Komnenian Empire.

Byzantine letters have gained significant attention from the scholars in the last few decades. Epistolography provides new aspects in the historical studies on Byzantine society. For example, this material can give important and highly useful sources for network studies. The scholarly interest on epistolography was not always high. Jenkins had some doubts about the suitability of Byzantine letters for historical analysis due to their floridity and ambiguity. However, the early critical editions of Byzantine letter collections rather show historical interest. Numerous letters written by several members of the second-tier élite have remained from the period. The number or frequency of letters, however, considerably changes by each author. The epistolography of Theophylaktos of Ochrid and Michael Choniates, archbishop of Athens provides the two richest collections, each containing more than hundred specimens. In the same time, we can find only few remaining letters in the case of

59 Numerous studies have been published concerning the Byzantine epistolography. A volume is partly dedicated to this specific topic: Wolfram Hörandner and Michael Grünbart (ed.), L’épistolographie et la poésie épigrammatique : projets actuels et questions de méthodologie ; actes de la 16e Table ronde organisée par Wolfram Hörandner et Michael Grünbart dans le cadre du XXe Congrès international des Études byzantines, Collège de France - Sorbonne, Paris, 19-25 Août 2001 (Paris, 2003).
60 This potential has not been exploited completely yet. Nevertheless, Margaret Mullett’s chapters on the network of Theophylaktos of Ohrid in her volume about the archbishop’s letters are fine examples of this field: Margaret Mullett, Theophylact of Ochrid: Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop (Birmingham, 1997), pp. 163–222. It is also worth mentioning that Michael Grünbart analysed the network of several individuals in the twelfth century: Michael Grünbart, ‘‘Tis love warm’d us. Reconstructing networks in 12th century Byzantium’, Revue Belge de philology et d’histoire, 83/2 (2005), pp. 301–13. The methods of network analysis mainly work in the case of a relatively rich individual collection of correspondences: Mullett, Theophylact, pp. 166–67.
other individuals. The inconsistency of the material is strengthened by the fact that a vast majority of writers were clerics. Nevertheless, epistolography is given more significance by its characteristic that it provides evidence from the several subaltern periods of the epoch. Theophylaktos of Ohrid informs us on circumstances during the reign of Alexios I, while George Tornikes, metropolitan of Ephesus tells information on the middle of the twelfth century, and the Choniates brothers on the last decades before the fall of Constantinople (and the following years). In this dissertation, letters play an important role, since the last main chapter focuses on this source material, analysing the value of office and title holding in narratives.

One cannot underestimate the importance of orations in the analysis of the second-tier élite. Speeches, especially the encomia, composed a popular genre in the current imperial court. These works were very important to the members of the second-tier élite, since orations presented by them in literary gatherings (theatra) or official ceremonies could support their advancement. Encomia to emperors or any members of the imperial kin were typical, but other topics, such as the mourning of a deceased acquaintance, also appear in the oratorical works. Numerous speeches have remained from several authors such as Nikephoros Basilakes, George Tornikes, Demetrios Tornikes, Eustathios of Thessalonike or the Choniates brothers. Several orations were dedicated to different members of the second-tier élite too. These works give interesting and occasionally very important bibliographical information about the addressees that raises our main interest here.

The apogee of the educated urban élite in the eleventh and twelfth century was accompanied with the apex of Byzantine poetry in the same period. Poems might have made for several reasons, but a great number, if not the majority, of verses was written on commission. These works cover a wide range of genres from panegyric to epithet and numerous topics from celebration to natural disaster. The greatest anthology of twelfth-century poetry remained in the thirteenth-century Codex Marciana 524, a collection of works from known and unknown authors. The commission, the main motive behind Byzantine poetry in the

63 On the phenomenon of theatron, see Margaret Mullett, ‘Aristocracy and patronage in the literary circles of Comnenian Constantinople’, in Byzantine Aristocracy, pp. 173–87; Michael Grünbart (ed.), Theatron: Rhetorical Culture in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages (Berlin, 2007). A similar situation characterised the concurrent Byzantine poetry too (see below).

64 A considerable amount of literature has been published about the Byzantine poetry. The limits of this note allow only a mention of few examples: Marc D. Lauxtermann, Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres: Text and Context (Vienna, 2003); Floris Bernard and Kristoffel Demoen (eds.), Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-century Byzantium (Farnham, 2012); Floris Bernard, Writing and Reading Byzantine Secular Poetry, 1025–1081 (Oxford, 2014).

65 A forthcoming book provides us with a complete critical edition of the collections of unattributed poems from the Codex Marciana 524, the so-called Syllogae B and C, with translation and commentary: Foteini
period, attracts our particular interest regarding this intellectual and literary activity in this dissertation. Although the patronage was mainly, and not surprisingly, performed by the leading élite, the imperial kin, some representatives of the second-tier élite also had the means of financing intellectuals for their own purposes. Such background meant that both the first-tier and the second-tier élite are frequently represented in the concurrent poetry. Therefore, this source material provides us with prosopographical data and other information valuable for family histories.  

Due to the massive devastation of Byzantine documents, the importance of lead seals considerably increased as sources of society and administration. The number of known bullae exceedingly overpasses the remaining documents of monastic archives. Therefore, a vast majority of lead seals are discovered lonely without any attached document. Today, approximately 80,000 pieces of seals are known, and are preserved in several collections throughout the world. In general, the sigillary material is an important source of analysing Byzantine administration or the cults of saints, and prosopography. Lead seals are widely used in this dissertation on different purposes. However, a special group of Byzantine bullae plays deserves a special attention in a study about the twelfth-century Byzantium.

Lead seals have been discovered in significant numbers, which bear metrical verses. These bullae are called metrical seals in the modern historiography and sigillography. This kind of bullae gained high popularity in the eleventh and twelfth century. This phenomenon is connected to the rise of the educated urban élite in these centuries. Around 5000 metrical seals has been discovered, and a project has been started by Alexandra-Kyriaki Wassiliou-Seibt for collecting all known pieces of bullae with metrical verses into one catalogue. The vast majority of these seals follows conventional patterns and contains highly repetitive texts. The usual metrical verse scribed on seal can be considered a finest work of literature with great difficulty. Even these texts primarily served the identification of the sealer.

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It is worth noting that the project ‘Byzantine Poetry in the ‘Long’ Twelfth Century (1081–1204): Texts and Contexts’ led by Andreas Rhoby has recently been launched at the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

Laurent, Bulles métriques, pp. 3–5. In the time of his study on the metrical seals, Laurent could date the beginnings of the metrical seal to the middle eleventh century, yet later investigations and new evidence revealed a significantly earlier development: Wassiliou-Seibt, Corpus, vol. 1, pp. 33–35. Still the increasing popularity of the metrical bullae in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was related to the rise of an educated bureaucracy in the same period with great possibility.

Two of the three planned volumes have been published in 2011 and 2016 (for bibliographical data, see the list of abbreviations).
However, some metrical seal has highly personalised content on different ways that was capable to perform personal representation. The thesis includes a chapter particularly focusing on the representation appearing on the metrical bullae of the second-tier élite.

The source material of second-tier élite is rich in genres but slightly poor in numbers. The considerable damage of the original material, especially in the case of documents, cause significant differences in reachable data on the several areas of the whole topic. It becomes the most evident in regard to the local élites of different regions. Attica, Bulgaria, Thessalonike (and the neighbouring districts), and Constantinople are relatively well-documented in the remaining source material, but the other parts of the empire lack satisfying amount of information. Nonetheless, the abundance of the genres of written sources provides the possibility of analysing many aspects of the history of second-tier élite in the period. Still, the limits of this thesis do not allow us to deal with all the aspects, and, hence, several sources gain less attention in the study.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{69} Any translation of Greek text where I do not refer to any translator is my own work.
The Byzantine second-tier élite cannot be separated from the political and social circumstances of the ‘long’ twelfth century. This stratum was a result of considerable changes within the government and the society in the form, which we know from the sources of the second half of the period at the latest. Since new discussion has recently begun about the nature of the Komnenian political system, it is beneficial to analyse and reconsider the relation between the élite and the political conditions according to the new concepts. The composition of the second-tier élite is closely connected to the existence of the leading élite, consequently, the imperial politics on the extended family of the emperor is a crucial question. This chapter also deals with the possibilities of the second-tier élite at the higher levels of the administration.

2. 1 The political system and the imperial relatives

In order to have a clearer understanding of the conditions, in which the second-tier élite functioned in the ‘long’ twelfth century, it appears beneficial to analyse the concurrent political circumstances. The political system and culture of the imperial court and the administration definitely influenced the development and the life of this lower stratum. The Komnenoi, following the attempts of the Doukas emperors, built a new policy, the so-called ‘extended family government’. The functionality of this system is a complex issue, yet changes in the mechanism of the imperial court under the new dynasty definitely took considerable effects on the structure of the Byzantine social élite. The nature of the extended family government got considerable attention from the modern scholar. However, some aspects, which are crucial to understand the function of the second-tier élite too, need further investigation. Thus, in the few following pages, I intend to deal with Komnenian political system with a special focus on a crucial element of this structure that was the relation between the Doukai and the Komnenoi at least in the early period of the dynasty.

The Komnenian system is traditionally defined by two major characteristics. These features are the essential role of kinship in the imperial politics and the dominance of military nature concerning both the administration and the court culture. The former phenomenon is demonstrated by the predominance of imperial kin as candidates for the key positions of the government.\(^{72}\) This had strong connections with the other characteristic of the system, since the crucial offices were mainly military duties. The majority of the Komnenian leading élite also came from families primarily related to the army.\(^{73}\) It is not surprising therefore that the military nature highly influenced the concurrent court culture.\(^{74}\) However, the fact that some families of the first-tier élite, e.g. the Taronitai and later the Kamateroi, had strong connections to the civil administration too shows the ad-hoc nature of the correlation between the importance of family ties and military characteristic of the regime. Thus, the significance of kinship had several aspects, which were not related to the martial components.

The Komnenian political system and culture put the imperial relatives in a new and special position. The kin of the emperor gained the most important offices of government, especially those of the military administration. Magdalino states families related to the head of the empire gained an improved status as they got closer to the echelon of the ruler in regard to their rights.\(^{75}\) This process is manifested in the phenomenon that the new titles, which were granted to the imperial relatives, were derived from the old imperial title, sebastos, in several ways. The sebastos itself is considered the foundational part of the new system.\(^{76}\) However, the complex conditions of this dignity throughout the period need more consideration.

The essential characteristics of early Komnenian politics have been taken into discussion again. Until the late twentieth century, scholars came to an agreement on the role of kinship in the Byzantine government and the political culture after 1081. Alexios was considered the ‘inventor’ of the new system, although the nature of the transformation and development, a consideration of ‘revolution’, was debated.\(^{77}\) Cheynet has doubts about the importance of imperial kinship and its innovation in the Komnenian period or even the time of

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\(^{75}\) Magdalino, *Empire*, p. 189.

\(^{76}\) Magdalino, *Empire*, p. 181.

\(^{77}\) Magdalino, ‘Innovations’, pp. 146–47; cf. Peter Frankopan, ‘Re-interpreting the role of the family in Komnenian Byzantium: where blood is not thicker than water’, in Lauxtermann and Whittow (ed.), *Byzantium in the Eleventh Century*, pp. 181–82, where Frankopan’s criticism indicates that the general scholarly views on the Komnenian ascension assume revolutionary changes in the Byzantine political system and culture. Nevertheless, at least, Magdalino clearly denies the revolutionary nature of the development that he presumes.
the Doukas emperors. He argues that Byzantine rulers had attempted to position of their kin in the leading élite of the empire long before the ascension of the Doukai and the Komnenoi. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that the imperial family policy developed into a new level in the reign of the Komnenoi. In his recent study, Frankopan questions the existence of extended family government itself in the early Komnenian period, and regards Alexios’ reign as a continuation of the old practices. At first sight, Cheynet’s and Frankopan’s arguments contradicts to one another. However, despite Frankopan’s several exaggerated remarks, the two scholars essentially express similar opinions, if we admit that significant change occurred in the politics on imperial family only after the reign of Alexios I. Some evidence as well as several studies indicate that Frankopan’s theory should be taken into consideration, and he is probably right in regard to several aspects. Nonetheless, this idea leads to the reconsideration of the several elements of the Komnenian political structure.

Frankopan’s argument raises several questions on the beginnings of the extended family government. This policy apparently existed during the reign of John II Komnenos, and, following Frankopan’s theory, the systematic policy based on kinship probably appeared under the successor of Alexios I. Recently, the political background that characterised the beginnings of John’s rule is questioned. Neville opines that there were no major tensions and rivalries between the two oldest children of Alexios I, Anna Komnene and John II, on the succession of the imperial throne. Nevertheless, the typikon of the Monastery of Christ Pantokrator ignores Anna Komnene in the list of living and deceased kinsfolk and other important individuals in the passages about liturgical offerings. Although Neville’s idea on Anna’s dissociation from the issues of her brother’s succession has some strong arguments, the sources still imply the complexity of situation around the death of Alexios I. Nonetheless, it is difficult to find any connection between the invention of family government and the competition between the two siblings for the emperorship. The absence of such political crisis, however, raises even more questions about the reasons of changes in the political system, if there was really such a development. This also leads to the problem of relations between the imperial kin and the political system.

There was probably a mutual connection between the imperial family politics and the growing circle of the imperial relatives. Kinship with the emperor and the two ‘golden houses’, the Komnenoi and the Doukai, was the essence of the prestige that was owned by a privileged circle of individuals. The marriages of the Komnenian dynasty is well-studied, and one could have little doubt about the marital strategy during Alexios I’s reign.\textsuperscript{82} In truth, the majority of the kinships around Alexios I were established before his rule, and his efforts to expand the imperial extended family by marriages in his reign were inferior to those of John II and Manuel I. It is true however that the founder of the dynasty had fewer opportunities for his marriage policy due to the lesser extent of the imperial family. Still, Alexios I had a circle of relatives wider than the emperors of the preceding period and the Macedonian dynasty. Although the emperor was the head of the kin, the size of this circle increased its power despite an ignoring imperial policy at least in the later years of Alexios I. The integrity of this group due to the strength of kinship ties also played an important role. Nevertheless, kinship was accompanied by another element, which could improve cohesion of the imperial kin.

We should take the problem of the court titles in regard to Frankopan’s theory in account. The new honorary dignities invented by Alexios I have been considered an essential part of the Komnenian political system, the extended family government, by modern scholars for a long time. The modifications in the system of titles were definitely made by Alexios I, thus Frankopan’s argument and a consequently later development of family government lead to a reconsideration of relation between the newly designed ranks and the main political tendencies.

Dealing with this problem, one should consider two characteristics of the Komnenian title system. These features were the remaining importance of ranks in the court and the imperial origin of the highest dignities. The significance of titles is well attested by the sigillary evidence from the reign of Alexios I and the letters of Theophylact, archbishop of Ochrid, also give a little evidence for this sentiment.\textsuperscript{83} We have discussed about the imperial origin of the highest dignities in the Komnenian system, which is a well-known phenomenon

\textsuperscript{83} The seal of Michael Taronites, which proudly represents the sealer’s kinship with the emperor (Obs.: Γραφὰς σφραγίζω Μιχαήλ Τα<ρ>ωνίτου, rev.: γαμβροῦ μεγίστου ἀδεπτοῦ Ἀλεξίου, DO 58.106.5634; Zacos and Vegley, \textit{Lead Seals}, vol. 1.3, pp. 1500–1, no. 2710; Oikonomides, \textit{Dated Seals}, p. 98, no. 101; Wasiliou-Seibt, \textit{Corpus}, vol. 1, pp. 225–26, no. 453), only gives an example of few cases, when family ties are displayed. The vast majority of lead bullae issued by imperial relatives shows the court dignities instead. On the correspondences of Theophylact, see chapter 6. 1 ‘The letters of Theophylact of Ochrid’.
among the scholars. We have enough information on the existence of both features, and we can suppose their influence on the élite. The great value of court ranks was obviously a heritage of the former centuries, and their relevance was scarcely overcome by a radical change at the Komnenian ascension to the throne. Furthermore, since the new system of titles demonstrates the elevated social status through the extensive use of the old dignity sebastos, these honorary ranks alone took effect on the circle of favoured individuals. The importance of the titles and their imperial origin together increased the integrity of the circle of the imperial relatives and bolstered the development of the first-tier élite.

We have to return the narrative to the reign of John II for a more detailed analysis. It has been mentioned that the extended family government characterised his emperorship. It has been a common opinion for a long time that John II built his family politics more systematically than his father. Nonetheless, this reign is the least recorded period of the Komnenian era. A reason of this paucity was that John II lacked a historian of his own unlike Alexios I and Manuel I. John Kinnamos focuses on the military campaigns of John II, while Choniates describes the political circumstances, in which Alexios I’s successor gained the imperial throne. Although Zonaras compiled or, at least, completed his epitome after John II’s reign, his account ends at Alexios I’s death. Nevertheless, it is likely that Zonaras’ arguments were mainly influenced by the political situations and events during the rule of John II. Magdalino analyses the development of family government through the synodical lists of the period, yet all sources remained from the reigns of Alexios I and Manuel I. Protopographical investigations have provided us with some evidence that indicates the nature of the political system. It is clear that we had little information about the correlation between the emperor, his relatives and the administration. The evidence from all the aforementioned materials implies the existence of the extended family government. Still, some sources need more investigation in regard to the reconsideration of the former events.

According to our discussion above, the narrative of Choniates deserves more attention here. Choniates wrote his history decades after these events. Choniates provides curious references to John II’s dependence on his kinsmen. Although these remarks reach a little number compared to the length of the account about the reign of John II, which provides us with

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84 See above, page 29.
89 Magdalino, Empire, pp. 182–85.
the shortest book of Choniates’ work, they are highly sensitive. According to the narrative, the relatives of the new emperor played important roles in both the ascension to the throne and in the government later. When Choniates refers to individuals among the relatives, he gives few but important examples: John’s brother, Isaac Komnenos, together with other kin of different grade, John Komnenos and Gregory Taronites. The short narrative of Gregory Kamateros’ rise provides us with another element of John II’s policy. This is the connection of appointment to an important position with marriage and the extension of the imperial family. These cases indicate that Choniates described the most important characteristics of John II’s domestic politics in a compressing and effective way. The exact and individual references to the relatives show the heterogeneity of supportive agents from the extended family of the dynasty, when John II gained the throne. Despite the clear evidence, however, the long chronological distance between Choniates’ account and the narrated events leads us to investigate the extended family government from another aspect.

The prosopography of the imperial kin implies much about the political system too. The positions of the families belonging to the extended imperial family or emerging into this highly privileged circle can also show the nature of the government. This provides us with addition to the Byzantine narratives on the politics of the near past. This aspect also differs from the archontological point of view, which determines the shares of the imperial kin in the positions of the administration. A considerable number of studies has been performed by several scholars on the prosopography of the Komnenian extended family. Varzos’ extensive study on the house of Komnenoi shows that John II extensively relied upon his paternal kinsfolk in his marriage policy, in the administration and during military campaigns.

The Prosopographical analysis of the Doukai and the Palaiologoi, two powerful families in the reign of Alexios I, indicates despite the paucity of data that both kindreds were able to

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93 Recently, Lau and Stathakopoulos stresses that Choniates’ and Kinnamos’ accounts on John II’s reign are highly biased, applying them as preludes to the key parts of their works, Manuel I’s regime or the fall of Constantinople: Maximilian Lau, ‘Rewriting the 1120s: Chronology and Crisis under John II Komnenos’, Limes+, 13/2 (2016), pp. 89–91; Stathakopoulos, ‘John II Komnenos’, pp. 2–3.
94 Kazhdan made a considerable attempt to reveal the measure of the involvement of the imperial family in the Komnenian government, Kazhdan and Ronchey, *L’aristocrazia*, pp. 146–52.
maintain their high status in the imperial court under John II. The entrance of numerous families, such as the Arabantenois, the Kamateroi, the Katakloines and the Kontostephanoi, into the extended imperial family also indicates the nature of John II’s politics. All this evidence proves the significance of kinship under Alexios I’s successor. Only one question remained.

The circumstances raise the problem why John II increased the influence of the imperial kin in the government. Since Alexios I apparently decreased his dependence on his relatives at least in the second half of his reign, the significantly more systematic family policy performed by his son from the very beginning of his rule appears more curious. Scholars usually referred to John II as the follower of his father’s politics. Nevertheless, the continuity of the extended family government from the ascension of the dynasty until the reign of John and beyond is in question. John’s dependence on relatives in his government can be explained by the important support from those kin during John’s coup d’état. Then the question comes nonetheless why John relied on his relatives in such a scale, when he successfully attempted to gain the imperial power. There is no clear answer for this problem. The effect of the new titles has been discussed above. The high reputation provided by the Komnenian honorary dignities for the imperial relatives, and its influence on the crystallization of a group of prestige in the court could impress the young John, the future emperor. Furthermore, the political influence of the imperial kin elevated, when the question of succession became more and more relevant in the late years of Alexios I. Alexios himself was able to strengthen his position on the throne, but his oldest son did not have an absolute and unquestioned stature in the imperial family. John II had to build his own circle of notable individuals even during the reign of his father. Finally, the importance of the extended family seems to be a wider cultural and social phenomenon exceeding the confines of the imperial house. The public sentiments about the significance of kinship and the growing influence of the imperial kin in the background were probably the factors that affected John II in his new politics. In truth, the way of John’s ascension to the throne, a quasi coup d’état, did not support the continuity of Alexios’ policy. The dependence of the new regime was apparently

96 Cheynet and Vrannier, Études, pp. 149–58, nos. 14–15, 17–18. George Palaiologos (no. 18) began his career in the early years of the reign of Manuel I, yet his immediate success in the military administration implies the continuity of the Palaiologoi’s high reputation under the former emperor.

97 Ostrogorsky, Byzantine State, p. 377, yet Ostrogorsky rather concerned other tendencies but family government; Magdalino, Empire, p. 208; Magdalino, ‘Komnenoi’, pp. 630, 634. However, Magdalino suggests some divergence.
a consequence of John’s practical character and his acknowledgement of the political situation, the power of the imperial relatives, instead of a clear attempt to build this system.

The crystallisation of the Komnenian first-tier élite was probably related to the most evident characteristic of John II’s reign. It is well-known that John spent the majority of his rule in military campaigns. Magdalino argues that John’s main purpose for this policy was the control of the army.⁹⁸ In the same time, the emperor adopted a passive strategy in ecclesiastical matters.⁹⁹ Magdalino notices numerous characteristics of John II’s reign, but the two aforementioned elements are very important for our discussion about the Byzantine élite of that time. The control of the army meant that the emperor regulated the segment of the élite, which was involved in military affairs. The vast majority of the imperial family belonged to this group. In the same time, some members of the military élite including the imperial relatives could take advantage of the emperor’s special closeness due to his extraordinary interest in the army. However, by decreasing his own involvement in church affairs, John II mainly evaded a territory, which was the dominion of a substantial part of the élite. The weaker imperial control on the church could be of some benefit of the high clergy and the patriarchal bureaucracy, but, in fact, the connection between the families involved in ecclesiastical affairs and the ruler simultaneously became weaker. These mechanisms further increased the difference between the extended imperial family and the rest of the élite.

The extraordinary level, at which the emperor concerned military matters, is evident in the encomium of Nikephoros Basilakes to Alexios Aristenos. This evidence is interesting, since it reveals some characteristics out of the orations addressed to the ruler himself. Basilakes treats Aristenos’ collaboration with the emperor in a late passage of the speech:

‘[The emperor] appointed you to the management of the laws as a proper assistant according to the poem, an irresistible ally of justice and a curing remedy for the resisting fate. Therefore, you support and you never take a rest, when you give assistance during fight, and you do not deceive the emperor about his confidence. Now, he is appointing you to the general of another army, a holy one, when he prepares himself against barbarians and deals with a great war. Moreover, he is giving a hand arming itself. Thus, those fight beside you who are not soldiers, those

⁹⁸ Magdalino, ‘The empire of the Komnenoi’, p. 630.
⁹⁹ Magdalino, ‘The empire of the Komnenoi’, p. 634.
At first reading, the passage represents a close connection between Alexios Aristenos and John II, especially by describing the former’s administrative and judicial activity with martial vocabulary. It is only a sentiment implied by the argument however, and the narrative depicts a deceptive picture about the political situation. In fact, this passage reveals distance between the head of the empire and the civil administration. Aristenos’ duties almost balance the emperor’s martial deeds in Basilakes’ words. This is a rhetorical hyperbole, but it also stresses how much John II refrained from the civil and church affairs of the empire.

It is necessary to discuss the relations between John II’s marriage policy and the growing power of the imperial kin. It has been mentioned that John II arranged numerous marriages between his kin and individuals out of the extended imperial family. As a consequence, the imperial clan considerably expanded during his reign. Magdalino takes several possible purposes for John’s marriage policy into account. One of his presumptions is that the emperor probably counteracted an opposition inside the court by this politics. Furthermore, the new marriages and expansion of the extended imperial family by the entrance of new families weakened both the position of other notable families, which remained out of the imperial clan, and the authority of houses, which were related to the dynasty for a longer time. Magdalino is right about that this kind of marriages could provide multiple benefits for the reigning emperor. However, the primary goal was probably to increase John’s ability to regulate his extended family. His authority was more indirect over the ‘inherited’ kin, since he was not the sole source of their reputation even regarding the imperial kinship. He had to share this position with his deceased father and, in the case of the Doukai and their relatives, even older rulers. The new members of the dynasty, however, owed their elevated social position personally to the reigning emperor. These marriages in fact attenuated the extended imperial family concerning the relation between this group and the head of the empire. It was a pragmatic policy by John II due to the balancing attitude instead of a more provocative strategy against his powerful subjects. The military and marriage policy show how John

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100 ἐκεῖνος ἐφιστῇ σε τοὺς νόμους ἐσθλὸν ἐγηρόνα, κατὰ τὴν ποίησιν, καὶ δίκης ἀπρόσμαχον σύμμαχον καὶ τῆς ἀντιθέτου μοιρᾶς ἀλεξιφάρμακον φάρμακον. ταύτ’ ἄρα καὶ ἐναγηήριες καὶ διαλείπεις οὕσποτε ἐξαμαχίαν καὶ τὸν κρατοῦντα τῆς ἔπιδεις οὐκ ἐγενέσας, ἐκεῖνος, καὶ κατὰ βαρβάρων ὑπαλληλοῦν καὶ μέγαν ὁδήγων τὸν πόλεμον, ἐτέρῳ θειότερῳ στρατηγῷ στρατηγόν σε καθίστησι καὶ χείρα δίδωσιν ὑπαλληλοῦν καινότερα· οἱ δὲ σοὶ καὶ μὴ στρατεύοντες συστρατεύονται καὶ μὴ παραπασίζοντες παρασίζονται καὶ μὴ κυνομονοὶ φθάνουσι καὶ μὴ μαχόμενοι μάχονται, Basilakes, Orations, p. 24, ll. 11–19, no. 1, ch. 31.

101 Magdalino, Empire, pp. 207–9.
maintained his control over his kin by direct supervision and the reinforcement of loyalty. In the same time, the position of the growing circle of extended imperial family gradually became stronger to the rest of the élite.  

The later emperors of the period, Komnenoi and Angeloi, inherited the system, which developed under John II. The extended family government became the foundation of the political system despite some fruitless efforts. Much has been explored about the reigns following the death of John II. Nonetheless, the turbulent years in the late twelfth century, the failing attempts of Andronikos I and Isaac II to decrease the significance of kinship, indicate that the imperial politics did not have a complete control over the several cultural and social phenomena, which reinforced the family government. The extended imperial family prevented any efforts of decreasing its influence with several plots, yet such political movements provided a general problem for the Komnenian system.

The relations between the imperial kin and the conspiracies of the period give a crucial point of the analysis. The long twelfth century witnesses a great number of plots against the several ruling emperors of that time. These political crises imply the nature of the concurrent political culture and system. Magdalino argues that, due to the highly privileged status and the concentration of political power, the imperial kin were the gravest danger to the emperor. He also opines that Alexios I mostly avoided any threat from his own kin, and the rivalry between the emperor and his relatives appeared after Alexios’ death. Peter Frankopan claims however that the new political system of the extended family government did not gain the stability even under Alexios as Magdalino implies. The founder of the Komnenian dynasty faced at least one crisis due to the tensions between him and his kinsmen. Frankopan’s theory about the influence of inner rivalry among the Komnenoi on the Byzantine administration, especially the army, remains questionable, yet his argument on the problems of the imperial kin in the reign of Alexios I seems plausible. His theory is mainly based on the events of the Diogenes conspiracy, which was possibly the most serious crisis

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102 A reconsideration of John II’s reign is provided by Maximilian Lau in his doctoral dissertation: Maximilian Lau, ‘The reign of Emperor John II Komnenos: the transformation of the old order, 1118-43’, D.Phil. Thesis (University of Oxford, 2016). Furthermore, he is preparing his monograph based on the thesis recently. His results and argument may contradict my theory on John II’s role in the development of the élite. I thank him for our discussion about his research and his remarks on the political situation under John II.

103 Magdalino, Empire, pp. 192–93.


105 The idea that the fall of Adrian Komnenos megas domestikos, a brother of Alexios I and a supporter of Nikephoros Diogenes, considerably decreased the military ability of the empire seemingly overestimates the importance of that office and the consequence of the replacement in the imperial army.
of Alexios I’s reign caused by inner tensions. Nevertheless, there was another plot some years later, which may give additional aspects to the circumstances of the Komnenian system, the so-called Anemas conspiracy.

Here, the issue of the Doukai deserves a special attention in the analysis of the Komnenian system. The success of the coup d’état of the Komnenoi and the reign of Alexios I highly depended on the alliance between the new dynasty and a former imperial house, the Doukai. The marriage of Alexios I Komnenos and Irene Doukaina provided a privileged position to the latter’s family, especially in the reign of the first Komnenian emperor. Magdalino depicts the Doukai as loyal supporters of Alexios, while Frankopan has doubts about this loyalty. It is worth noting that the Doukai should be divided at least two branches, whose background, conditions and prospects differed. One branch included Constantine Doukas, the son of Michael VII, and Mary of Alania, Constantine’s mother, and its origins came from Constantine X. The other part of the family descended from John Doukas caesar, the brother of Constantine X, and some of his grandsons played important roles in the government after 1081. At the very beginning, the two branches had rivalling aims and purposes in regard to the upcoming marriage of Alexios I. This division of the Doukai made the situation more complex and essentially dangerous for Alexios, since every member of this family was a potential rival and capable candidate due to their former imperial status.

Constantine Doukas played a curious role in the early years of Alexios’ reign. He was designated as the successor of Alexios I, and thus he symbolised the political continuity. However, he definitely lost his highly privileged position years before his early death. It is widely accepted that Constantine lost his imperial rights due to a serious disease according to an ambiguous remark in the unattributed text that prefaces the work of Nikephoros Bryennios. Still, there is a possibility of a metaphorical interpretation of the statement made by Bryennios on Constantine’s sickness. Hence it could be Doukas’ involvement in the so-called Diogenes conspiracy in 1094. Anna Komnene, the fiancée of Constantine, does not

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107 Mary of Alania intended to secure the imperial rights of his son, Constantine, by marrying Alexios I, and she was supported by the new emperor’s mother, Anna Dalassene. Of course, John Doukas, the former caesar, and his circle effectively backed his granddaughter, Irene having been engaged with Alexios. Anna Komnene gives a thoughtful account on the affair, *Alexiad*, vol. 1, pp. 89–93, 3. 2. 1–7. Cf. P. Frankopan, ‘Role of the family’, p. 186.
ignore his connections to the plot, yet she tries to give a positive account on his role.\textsuperscript{110} If
the theory of Constantine’s (and his mother’s) engagement in the plot is right, one can argue
that Alexios failed to handle the ambition of a branch of the Doukai at least. Nevertheless,
the relation of the other members of the family to this affair is an interesting problem.

Although the other branch of the Doukai gained even more influence in the government
of Alexios I, its history also raises many questions.\textsuperscript{111} Michael and John, the sons of
Andronikos Doukas, held high court titles and were appointed to important offices. Michael,
the older one, gained the dignity of \textit{sebastos} (later the \textit{protosebastos}) and was designated to
\textit{protostrator}, a very high but humble rank of the army.\textsuperscript{112} John Doukas is mainly mentioned
as \textit{sebastos}, although two sources call him \textit{protosebastos} like his brother, probably by mis-
take.\textsuperscript{113} Nevertheless, John was also appointed to crucial positions such as the \textit{doux} of Dyrr-
achion and the \textit{megas doux} of the fleet.\textsuperscript{114} It is an interesting question how this branch related
itself to Constantine Doukas’ involvement in the Diogenes conspiracy and his failure. We
have a limited evidence about Michael, even Anna Komnene pays little attention to him in
her historical narrative. Nonetheless, John Doukas definitely remain loyal to the emperor,
and he probably played an active and important role in the fall of Diogenes’ conspiracy by
invading the hinterland of the plotters in Crete.\textsuperscript{115} This branch of Doukai appears to be the
loyal supporters of Alexios I for many years that was a very important advantage for the
emperor frequently facing conspiracies. Nevertheless, the sources imply a curious turning
point.

After many extremely successive years and a prospering career, John Doukas disappears
from the sources. Not only the main historical narratives, the Alexiad and the Epitome of
Histories, become silent about his deeds following the reoccupation of the Aegean coastline

\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Alexiad}, vol. 1, pp. 269–70, 9. 5. 4–6, pp. 275, 9. 8. 2
\textsuperscript{111} It is interesting for example that two brothers of Irene Doukaina, Constantine and Stephen, are completely
ignored by the written sources but the \textit{typikon} of the Monastery of Christ Philanthropos: Matoula Kouroupou
and Jean-François Vannier, ‘Commémoraisons des Comnènes dans le typikon liturgique du monastère du
Christ Philanthrope (ms. Panagia Kamariotissa 29)’, \textit{RÉB}, 63 (2005), p. 43, nos. 3, 7; prosopographical anal-
yses on pp. 48, 50.
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Blachernai}, p. 217; \textit{Alexiad}, vol. 1, pp. 159–60, 5. 7. 1–2, p. 214, 7. 3. 11, p. 244, 8. 4. 4; Kouroupou and
43 (1985), p. 125, ll. 1859–60
\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Iviron}, vol. 2, p. 162, no. 45, l. 24; W. Holtzmann, ‘Die Unionsverhandlungen zwischen Kaiser Alexios I.
und Papst Urban II. im Jahre 1089’, \textit{BZ}, 28 (1928), p. 66. The sources raise the problem of this particular
designation: Peter Frankopan, ‘The imperial governors of Dyrrakhion in the reign of Alexios I Komnenos’,
\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Blachernai}, p. 217; \textit{Alexiad}, p. 225, 7. 8. 8–9, p. 259, 9. 1. 3.
\textsuperscript{115} Peter Frankopan, ‘Challenges to imperial authority in Byzantium: Revolts on Crete and Cyprus at the end
73.
in Asia Minor. Other sources also ignore John after the late eleventh century except two monastic documents, both which refer to his administrative activity in 1101. Frankopan considers John’s disappearance as a sign and evidence of Alexios I’s general distrust of his own kin. Polemis suggested a possible and unsuccessful plot behind the vanishing of the talented general. He also notices Anna Komnene’s ambivalent attitude towards her uncle. John’s disappearance is more striking, since he played a relatively important role in the narrative of the Alexiad. In the same time, Anna Komnene pays less attention to the career of Michael Doukas, hence the latter individual’s departure from the account in an earlier section of the historical work does not necessarily imply a specific political reason. On the contrary, John’s case indicates a more serious cause than the emperor’s generic suspicion. John’s disappearance, however, coincided with a political crisis, which implies several connections to the Doukai too.

There was a curious connection between the imperial kin and the so-called Anemas conspiracy. None of the plotters named by the main sources of this event, the Alexiad and the Epitome of Histories, had kinship with the emperor according to our knowledge. The widely accepted theory on the reasons of the Anemas conspiracy, traditionally dated between 1095 and 1102, links this crisis to the Diogenes plot in 1094. Both events are considered as the clues of discontent on Alexios I’s politics towards Asia Minor. Magdalino does not ignore the idea nonetheless that the conspiracy was against the subordinate position of the Doukai. One cannot ignore the fact that the majority of the plotters who joined the Anemades had Anatolian origins. Therefore, the orientation of Alexios’ efforts towards the recovery of coastline in Asia Minor and the remarkable but still restricted achievements in the East probably raised dissatisfaction among the descendants of old local families who were interested more in the inner territories. Nevertheless, some evidence indicates interesting connections between the conspiracy and the Doukai. The involvement of Constantine

118 Polemis, Doukai, p. 69, n. 13.
119 Neither the Alexiad nor the Epitome ever show Alexios as a man of unreasonable mistrust. Narrating the conspiracies, Zonaras’ main intention was to represent the weakness and instability of Alexios’ reign instead of the mistrusting habit of the emperor. See Treadgold, Middle Byzantine historians, p. 397–98.
120 Alexiad, vol. 1, pp. 372–73, 12. 5. 4–5; Zonaras, p. 745, 18. 24. 3. In truth, Zonaras mentions only one conspirator, Michael Anemas, the suggested leader of the movement, by his name. For more information about the individuals and families involved, see Márton Rózsa, ‘Families behind a plot: The political and social background of the Anemas conspiracy’, in Kosana Jovanović and Suzana Miljan (ed.), Papers and proceedings from the Third medieval workshop in Rijeka (Rijeka, 2018), pp. 11–28.
122 Magdalino, Empire, p. 203.
Doukas Exazenos who had likely a maternal kinship to the imperial family is one of these clues. Nonetheless, there are other factors, which need a more detailed analysis here.

An interesting aspect is given by a moment in the life of Nikephoros Exazenos Hyaleas who accompanied his uncle, the aforementioned Constantine Exazenos, in the plot. After the second occupation of Smyrna by the Byzantine forces during the first crusade and the campaign of John Doukas, Hyaleas was designated as the new governor of the retaken town. Frankopan regarded this action as a sign of imperial favour on officials of less notable origins instead of his own relatives. However, Anna Komnene strictly states that Hyaleas was appointed by John Doukas himself, and the narrative does not refer to any order from the emperor concerning this assignment. Anna presumably used archival sources for creating her account on the appointment of Hyaleas. It would have been unlikely that there was no imperial order recorded accurately in the military documents in the case where the emperor indeed made the decision, staying far from Smyrna. Anna might have never ignored his father in the epic narrative of Alexiad, if she had known her father’s involvement in the designation. Hence it is more likely that selection of Hyaleas was an own idea of John Doukas. This effort implies closer ties between Hyaleas and Doukas, while it had little connections with the emperor.

Another intriguing aspect of the conspiracy is the role of Empress Irene after the discovery of the plot. Two moments of her deeds should be brought into focus, which give contrast to the imperial reactions in the narrative of the Alexiad. One of the actions of the empress, which was eventually taken later, was the return of the confiscated house of John Solomon, a main figure of the conspiracy, to his wife after the fall of the plot and the official retaliation. The other moment was Irene’s effective request to Alexios for repealing his own command on Michael Anemas’ blinding. Anna Komnene stresses that, affected by the miserable appearance of the aforementioned leader of the conspiracy, she was who

123 Frankopan, ‘Role of the family’, p. 192.
124 ἀπειρωτικία γενναίου ἑν ἀνδρός, τὸν Ὑαλέαν, φέρων τὸν ἄλλον εἰδός, δοῦκα τῆς Σμύρνης κατέστησεν, Alexiad, vol. 1, p. 337, 11. 5. 4. The context also indicates that John Doukas took responsibility for all decisions concerning the pacification of Smyrna. This general manner indicates that it was not Anna’s purpose to separate the later conspirator from Alexios I by demonstrating John Doukas’ authority.
125 An interesting parallel is given by the appointment of John Helladikos, the katepano of Crete in the later years of Alexios I’s reign. A document demonstrates that Helladikos was a ‘man’ (οἶκος ἄνθρωπος) of Eu-mathios Philokales, the megas doux in that time, MM, vol. 6, p. 96, no. 23. Crete, as any other maritime territories and islands of the empire, was under the authority of the megas doux after a reform of Alexios I. According to Herrin, the leader of the imperial fleet was allowed to assign his own men to crucial positions under his jurisdiction, Herrin, ‘Realities’, pp. 276–77. Regardless of the question, whether such practice genuinely became ordinary, the resemblance between the cases of Hyaleas and Helladikos is noteworthy.
126 Alexiad, vol. 1, p. 374, 12. 6. 4.
induced her mother, the empress, to intervene on the behalf of the conspirator. This latter situation has gotten less attention from the scholars, yet it is a very interesting point due to the emotional account by Anna Komnene. Anna’s role in the affair appears curious and unlikely. The emperor’s decision and order on the blinding of Michael Anemas was too serious in an extremely difficult situation to be revoked for a sensitive relative. Anna’s account probably aims to indicate the emotional and accidental reasons of the final judgement instead of political purposes. This narrative also gives the opportunity of representing the harmonic nature of the imperial couple, which is an important point of the whole work. It is more feasible that Irene herself was mainly involved by the fate of Michael Anemas for more profane motives. The behaviour of the empress and the involvement of the Exazeni imply that the Anemas conspiracy was backed by a network, which had close ties to the Doukai. Nevertheless, the possible role of this family in the plot is still mysterious.

Despite the several connections, the relation between the Doukai, especially John Doukas, and the Anemas conspiracy is still dubious. In truth, there are some factors, which may contradict the theory on the involvement of any member of the family. Firstly, the disappearance of an individual from the narrative sources does not necessarily mean that he lost the favour of the emperor. Michael Doukas still held important an office many years after his last deeds recorded in the Alexiad. Anna Komnene mesmerised the epic narratives focusing one character, and her account on individuals other than Alexios I is highly selective according to her very own purposes. Secondly, the different typika of Komnenian monastic foundations after John’s death give memory of him and his rank. Even if the ignorance of the discovered and fallen conspirators, such as Nikephoros Diogenes, in the commemoration list of imperial kin in the Komnenian typika was not complete, such attempt occurred. Hence, John’s appearance in these documents may suggest too much reputation for an unsuccessful plotter. Consequently, the evidence suggests that John Doukas did not play an active role in the Anemas conspiracy, particularly not that of the leader. The plot

128 Alexiad, vol. 1, p. 375, 12, 6. 6
129 A letter of Theophylact of Ochrid indicates Michael’s considerable position around 1108, while the Alexiad mentions some moments of protostrator’s career until the early 1090’s: Theophylact, Letters, p. 555, no. 120, ll. 36–42; Alexiad, vol. 1, p. 244, 8. 4. 4. However, in the time of the letter, the Exazeni were also appointed to crucial charges according to Anna Komnene, Alexiad, vol. 1, p. 380, 12. 8. 6. This shows that several partakers received amnesty from the emperor until 1108. Hence Michael’s activity in that year is not a strong evidence of his standoff from the conspiracy.
130 Frankopan, ‘Role of the family’, 189–90.
131 The typikon of the Monastery of Christ Philanthropos definitely records Adrian Komnenos, and it probably refers to Michael Taronites: Kouroupou and Vannier, ‘Commémoraisons’, pp. 45, 56–57, 61–62, nos. 18, 24. Both individuals supported Diogenes during his plot, yet the missing rank in the chapter of Michael-Eumathios suggested Taronites is striking.
was an action of individuals who did not belong to the imperial kin, but probably were the members of John’s circle. Therefore, links to several fallen conspirators might have defiled the sebastos’ prestige in the court, and thus he was excluded from the highest levels of government.

It is not simple to describe the nature of the Komnenian political system and the position of the imperial kin in it. While there was an agreement on the essential characteristics of this period for many years, fundamental elements of our understanding on the politics of this dynasty have been criticised recently. It is possible that the extended family government was invented by John II instead of his father, Alexios I. However, numerous questions arise due to relatively limited amount of source material from the time of John II. The evidence suggests that John II followed a clear politics emphasising the importance of kinship in the government, yet it is curious why this rapid change happened. This raises the problem of relations between social changes and the directions of imperial policy. It is possible that despite the intentions of Alexios I, the circle of imperial kin managed to increase its influence throughout his reign that also affected John II, the future emperor. The influence of the imperial relatives and the complexity of the relations in the imperial court was probably manifested not only in the case of the Diogenes conspiracy, but during the plot connected to the Anemades.

2. 2 The positions of the second-tier élite

Before the detailed analysis of the second-tier élite, a glance at the conditions of this stratum within a broader range appears useful. The previous subchapter revealed that the political system of the empire experienced considerable changes throughout the period, and the turning point was probably not the ascension of Alexios I to the imperial throne. This raises the general question about the position of those who did not have any kinship with the emperors. Since the following parts of the dissertation focus on several and very specific aspects of the second-tier élite, it is necessary to analyse an essential feature, the political and administrative position of this social group in the era. Due to the limits of this study, this subchapter attempts to give some general remarks on tendencies from the viewpoint of the whole stratum. The following pages treat the confines of the second-tier both at the top and the bottom of the stratum, since all these levels raise questions as it has been mentioned in the introduction.
The development of the Komnenian political system and its relation to social changes in the period leads to the problem of terminology. The dissertation deals with the fundamental question of the vertical classification of Byzantine élite. It pays much attention to a moment, or rather a progress, the transformation of the extended imperial family into a separate stratum, the Komnenian leading élite. However, it would be an overinterpretation of social tendencies, if we only considered vertical stratification a unique characteristic of the twelfth century. Therefore, it is beneficial to apply the distinction between first-tier and second-tier élites to the era before the Komnenian regime too. It is also important to distinguish the older forms of these social groups from those developing in the twelfth century. Older, pre-Komnenian first-tier and second-tier élites are eligible terms for the strata inherited by the Komnenoi from the former period. The dissertation applies the designations ‘Komnenian first-tier élite’ and ‘Komnenian second-tier élite’ only for social groups that appeared as the results of the often-mentioned changes concerning the extended imperial family during the Komnenian period.

The distinction between the old leading and second-tier élites is complex and simple in the same time. It is simple, since the difference can be determined only by the political and administrative position of individuals in the government. The lack of large imperial families in the majority of the eleventh century definitely prevented the rulers from making kinship a primary factor in the personnel policy of the court. However, the division of the old élite is also a complex question due to the social mobility in the ruling stratum and the unstable nature of the political alliances in the administration. Then the question rises how many categories can be defined by administrative position without any clear breaks in the court and governmental hierarchy. Cheynet argues that only the leading group was usually distinguished by the Byzantines themselves from the rest of the élite. Therefore, it seems beneficial to apply this bipartite division concerning the old élite too. This means that the pre-Komnenian second-tier élite was as nearly wide and heterogeneous as the Komnenian second-tier élite.

For the definition of the Komnenian second-tier élite, it is important to determine the distinction between this social formation and the leading group of the ruling stratum. The main problem is the nature of this differentiation, the factor, which drew the border between

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132 Cheynet, *Pouvoir*, p. 253. It is worth noting that Anna Komnene also mentions the leading élite in several situations, which were sensitive in political terms: *Alexiad*, vol. 1, p. 281, 10. 1. 2; p. 489, 15. 9. 2.
133 The analysis will explain the reasons for this wide definition of the (Komnenian) second-tier élite in details within this subchapter below.
the two echelons. Among the alternative terms for the Komnenian leading élite, the name ‘imperial kin’ has been mentioned. The relatives of the emperor are often identified with the first-tier élite of the period in question by modern scholars. This argument based on the fact that the imperial kin monopolised the higher levels of the government, especially in the case of the military positions. According to this, the distinction between the first-tier and second-tier élites could be defined by offices as in the case of the old élite. However, the administrative monopoly by the imperial kin was not complete, and one finds numerous individuals who were appointed to important positions without kinship with the Komnenoi and the Doukai or the emperors themselves. Nonetheless, we will see in the analysis of the families that there was a difference between the imperial kin and the second-tier élite in the ability to hold key functions in the government for generations. This capability was certainly related to the reputation derived from their imperial kinship. Therefore, the main factors that defined the distinction between the two strata of Byzantine élite in the twelfth century was the consanguinity and marital alliance with the head of the empire and imperial families, the Komnenoi and the Doukai, or deficiency of these elements. A general difference between the two strata in terms of offices existed of course, but kinship was more essential. One cannot forget that the authority of an individual and his family from the Byzantine élite rested on informal power in many ways beside official jurisdiction. The connection between imperial kinship and authority definitely had such non-official aspect too.

It is evident that the development of the twelfth-century second-tier élite was closely related to the evolution of the imperial kin as a distinct stratum. One can argue that only the crystallization of the Komnenian first-tier élite supports the definition of a lower social group. In fact, the genesis of the Komnenian second-tier élite is a consequence, or rather a correlative, of the rise of the imperial kin. Thus, Alexios I’s late politics and the consequently postponed formation of the new leading stratum can induce a later development of the lesser group. Alexios’ policy of relying on a wider social support was known before Frankopan’s compelling theory, even if scholars did not connect this phenomenon to the

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134 Constantine Opos and Basil Batatzes are good examples for this group, but similar cases are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. 2. Basil Batatzes himself is treated on pages 153–54.
135 See Chapter 3.
137 It has been mentioned in the introduction that Niels Gaul reasonably describes the second-tier élite in a broader chronological frame. Therefore, it is rather identical with the civil aristocracy defined by Kazhdan, instead of a particular phenomenon of the Komnenian period, see chapter 1.1 ‘Defining the élite’. Still, it should be stressed that there were significant differences between the old and the Komnenian second-tier élite. Furthermore, Gaul apparently describes this stratum as primarily Constantinopolitan.
denial of the extended family government, particularly its existence in the early Komnenian period. As it is stated in the previous subchapter, the beginnings of the twelfth-century first-tier élite remain in obscurity, but its formation was definitely a long process. The reign of Alexios I had some characteristics, such as the emperor’s marriage policy and the deficiencies of the dynastic succession, that influenced the changes in the élite. Although Alexios I had a relatively wide network of kinship in comparison to the emperors of the preceding era, the imperial extended family did not expand sufficiently to become a separate social stratum before the reign of John II. Consequently, the Komnenian second-tier élite developed sometime after 1118. Nevertheless, not only its formation raises questions about the latter stratum.

Discussing the families and individuals having no kinship with the founder of the Komnenian dynasty causes difficulties. Since the transformation of the division inside the élite did not occur in the reign of Alexios I, it is beneficial to consider the old second-tier élite in his rule instead of the Komnenian one. The principals of vertical classification or division of the Byzantine ruling stratum before the Komnenian era and under Alexios I were similar. There were social and economic differences among the members of the élite in these periods, and some families were able to maintain their more or less remarkable status for a time. Still, this classification has little connection to the later division into imperial kin and Komnenian second-tier élite, which characterised the twelfth century, due to differences in nature and background. The case of George Pakourianos clearly shows the problem of social classification. Pakourianos was one of the most distinguished generals in the early years of Alexios I’s reign. He gained the title sebastos and was appointed as megas domestikos of the imperial armies. He never became a relative of the emperor however. According to the definition of the Komnenian first-tier élite, which was founded on the kinship with the Komnenoi and the Doukai, but principally with the head of the empire himself, Pakourianos would have belonged to the concurrent second-tier élite. Nevertheless, placing the megas domestikos in the same stratum together with the ordinary civil bureaucrats would be inappropriate. This case demonstrates the significance of distinction between the old and

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141 It is not surprising that Frankopan considered the case of Pakourianos as an evidence against the favour of imperial kin in the policy of Alexios I: P. Frankopan, ‘Role of the family’, pp. 185–86.
Komnenian second-tier élites and the difference between their nature. Therefore, one should be careful with the social classification during the ‘long’ twelfth century.

Our recent knowledge on the appointments to several offices indicates that Alexios I relied on individuals with different social background even at the higher levels of administration. The founder of the Komnenian dynasty frequently appointed figures who had no kinship with the imperial families to important or even crucial positions. The cases of Tattikios megal primiikierios, Manuel Boutoumites, the doux of Nicaea, Eumathios Philokales, the governor of Cyprus (later that of Attaleia and megal doux), or Michael Anemas, the doux of an unknown district, clearly show this characteristic of Alexios I’s reign.142 Some of such granted individuals descended from families, which belonged to the leading élite before the Komnenian period.143 Thus, their reputation in the new court is less surprising. However, the majority included figures who were favoured by the emperor despite their moderate ancestry. The restricted number of capable relatives in this early stage of the new dynasty might have prevented Alexios I to overcome the higher levels of administration, filling it with his kin, if he ever intended to do so.

The civil bureaucracy find itself in a manifold situation in the reign of Alexios I. The new government showed a growing supremacy of military administration, and the key figures of the court were responsible for military matters with few exceptions. However, some evidence also implies a relatively good reputation of civil officials in this time. The military nature of the Komnenian political system has been stressed by modern scholars for a long time.144 Some historians connected the religious disputes and trials, especially the case of John Italos, to the subversion of a political or social group, which had strong ties to the civil and church administration.145 The unfavourable attitude of the new government towards the civil bureaucracy is supported by some remarks by Zonaras on Alexios’ reign.146 One cannot


143 Only Michael Anemas belonged to this group among the aforementioned favourites of Alexios I. Nonetheless, Gregory Pakourianos gives the finest example of officials who personally played important role in the government before the Komnenian ascension or their family held considerable positions in the preceding period. See Werner Seibt, The Byzantine seals of the Pakourianos Clan (Tbilisi, 2014).

144 G. Ostrogrorsky, Byzantine State, p. 371; Magdalino, Empire, p. 185.


deny the position of military affairs superior to the status of the other segments. Still, the careers of some individuals, such as Constantine Choirosphaktes, Andronikos Skleros or John Solomon, indicate the possibility of gaining high reputation in the court of Alexios I without any evidence of significant service in the army.\textsuperscript{147} The monastic documents also show that Alexios I frequently relied on civil bureaucrats, yet this phenomenon should be treated with great care. The concerned issues naturally involved the bureaucracy, and these affairs suggest little about the high reputation of civil officials. Furthermore, this evidence is provided by a specific group of sources, which had a periodical increase during the reign of Alexios. Nevertheless, the functions and charges gave only an aspect of the government among others.

The system of court titles shows a slightly clearer imperial practice. The new honorary dignities invented by Alexios I and the ranks of caesar and sebastos were mainly given to the emperor’s relatives in the early Komnenian period. Consequently, dignitaries having no close kinship to the dynasty were promoted with the old titles up to protonobellisimos in the vast majority of cases. Nevertheless, the synodical list of the council of Blachernai in 1094 reveals that the imperial practice was not completely coherent concerning the ranks in the reign of Alexios I.\textsuperscript{148} Further exceptions appear in other sources that present individuals, such as Eumathios Philokales sebastos and Andronikos Skleros sebastos, who received one of the new titles beside little chance of marital connections or consanguinity with the Komnenoi and the Doukai.\textsuperscript{149} Honorary dignities could play an important role in the development of the first-tier élite, yet the above-mentioned cases underline the even higher significance of unofficial factors. The successes of Philokales and Skleros occurring in their ranks remained in individual scale, since their families were slightly affected by these careers. Neither the Skleroi nor the Philokalai were able to emerge to the imperial kin throughout the whole period. Their failure seems more interesting in regard to the ability of other families,

\textsuperscript{147} For detailed analysis on Choirosphaktes and Solomon, see the chapters 3. 5 ‘The Solomontes’ and 4. 2 ‘The man of Alexios I: Constantine Choirosphaktes’.

\textsuperscript{148} Blachernai, p. 217. Three of the listed sebastoi, Constantine Maniakes, Marinos Neapolites and Constantine Houmbertopoulos were not imperial relatives. However, the latter two were strangers who represented the ducal family of Napoli and the Hautevilles, and they were consequently raised to sebastos according to their origins. This was another pattern followed by Alexios I: Blachernai, p. 239, no. 8.

\textsuperscript{149} Obv.: Τὸν Φιλοκάλην, Μήτερ ὀργή, ἐστὶ γάρ, λάτρην, ἐκμακενίδες εὐμέτοιχον ἀναγνώριζε, Laurent, Bulles métriques, p. 184, no. 522; obv.: Ἀνδρόνικος σεβαστός, rev.: πραϊτωρ ὁ Σκληρός, Cheynet and Theodoridis, Sceaux, p. 197, no. 191; obv.: Ἀνδρόνικος σεβαστός, rev.: πραϊτωρ ὁ Σκληρός, Cheynet and Theodoridis, Sceaux, pp. 197–98, no. 192. A chrysobull of Alexios I also mentions Skleros in this rank, although the text of the original document is seriously damaged at that point, and only a copy of Theodoretos provides us with a complete (yet imperfect) version. Original text: Lavra, vol. 1, p. 292, no. 56, l. 6. A fragment from Theodoretos’ copy: Lavra, vol. 1, p. 296.
such as the Anemades, Arabantenoï, Kamateroi, Kontostephanoï etc., to rise into the first-tier élite after Alexios I. This indicates the complex conditions of rising to the highest level of society: consanguinity, personal favour of the emperor, maintaining key positions in the administration for a long time, family tradition and reputation and generally networking. Nevertheless, the decades following Alexios I’s death provided significant changes in the politics and the élite.

The former subchapter indicates that investigation on the élite under John II is not a simple task owing to the fragmental evidence of political and social conditions in his reign. Individuals out of the imperial kin seem to gain less reputation in the court, although the years of Alexios I’s successor suffer the lack of sources of some sorts. Our evidence about the bureaucracy in the first decades of the Komnenian period relies on the remaining monastic documents whose number considerably decreases, when we turn to the reign of John II. The accounts of historical sources provide little information about the administration and its social background between Alexios I’s death and Manuel I’s ascension to the throne. Hence our major sources are the seals and the letters, poems and orations of several intellectuals of the period. However, these alternative sources do not give evidence contradicting the general sentiment about the political system and the social conditions in these years.

Several authors celebrated civil and church officials when they paid attention to the second-tier élite in the reign of John II. The majority of orations and poems were dedicated to the emperor and his relatives, yet some works of these sorts praise the representatives of the lesser stratum. Alexios Aristenos was held in remarkable, if not exceptional, regard by the authors of that time, such as Nikephoros Basilakes and Theodore Prodromos, among the members of the second-tier élite. The production of orations and poems was related to the patronage given by the élite, particularly the imperial kin and the most notable bureaucrats. These factors imply the reputation and authority of Alexios Aristenos gained through service in the civil and church administration without kinship ties to the imperial dynasty. In a general sense, this literary production and its patronage indicate further

150 The few occasions, when John II issued documents are preserved in Patmos, vol. 1, pp. 78–88, no. 8. In an official document, there are remarks on the efforts of John II to re-establish the abandoned Monastery of Saint Paul at Latros, Latros, pp. 208–210, no. 12, II. 49–57. Regarding the monastic concerns of John II, one cannot ignore the typikon of John’s own foundation, the Monastery of Pantokrator: Gautier, ‘Pantocrator’, pp. 1–145.
152 For a short prosopographic analysis of Aristenos’ career, see chapter, 3. 2 ‘The Aristenoi’.
characteristics of the new second-tier élite. Firstly, the most successful representatives of the stratum served in civil and church positions. Secondly, the second-tier élite members who took military service seemingly showed greater passivity towards the intellectual patronage. The reason of the latter phenomenon could be the early and continuous ascendance of the most potential figures and families into the first-tier élite due to the extensive marriage policy of John II.

Due to John II’s politics, the situation of offices became clearer in comparison to the reign of Alexios I. The development of the imperial kin and its privileged position in the new imperial policy decreased the possibilities of officials who did not belong to the distinguished stratum. It does not mean however that certain representatives of the second-tier élite did not reach the positions, which mainly characterised the imperial kin. Nevertheless, such officers rather give exceptions, and the members of the second-tier élite could largely hope for a successful career by reaching the positions of the higher judges or metropolitans. The emphasis on military matters in the government during the long twelfth century did not mean that the civil and ecclesiastical administration lost their importance or their officials lacked considerable authority in the period. The significance of these territories of government is testified by the fact that the imperial kin also absorbed individuals and families, such as the Kamateroi and, later, the Styppeiotai, who held positions in the civil government and the church. And some Komnenoi also took charge in these segments of administration. Still the latter phenomenon did not cause an exclusion of the Komnenian second-tier élite from the highest echelons of the institutions concerned. John II’s reign established or strengthened the features nonetheless that characterised the following decades of the era.

The reign of Manuel I provided little change in the conditions of the second-tier élite in general terms. The stratum had the opportunities similar to the preceding decades under John II, and the administration showed new characteristics due to the continuing development of

154 The church administration, especially the metropolitans, played an important role in the provincial administration, J. Herrin, ‘Realities’, pp. 257–59. Such administrative functions of the metropolitans were not the inventions of John II, but they were the results of a long development of provincial life instead. Hence this phenomenon had little connection with the development of political system and the élite.
156 Beside the well-known early case of Isaac sebastokrator, the brother of Alexios I, one can think of John Komnenos, Choniates, History, vol. 1, p. 9, ll. 8–11, and Monk John (Adrian Komnenos), Ioannis Sakellion, Πατμιακή Βιβλιοθήκη ήτοι αναγραφή των εν τη Βιβλιοθήκη της κατά την νήσον Πάτμον Γεραράς και Βασιλικής Μονής του Αγίου Αποστόλου και Ευαγγελιστού Ιωάννου του Θεολόγου τεθησαυρισμένων χειρογράφων τευχών (Athens, 1890), p. 317.
extended family government. Magdalino stresses that the significance of honorary dignities decreased, while the focus was shifted onto the offices at the lesser levels of administration under Manuel I. These phenomena accompanied the growing importance of kinship in the official titles among the imperial relatives. The main sources for these changes are the lists of attendants on the ecclesiastic councils gathered by Manuel I throughout his reign. Alternative material for analysis could be given by the lead seals issued in this particular period, yet their dating allows only careful assumptions. In the case of the second-tier élite, however, the bullae often refer only to the sealers’ name, and the portion of this concept appears increasing throughout the twelfth century. Therefore, one should carefully turn to seals in exploring the importance of official positions and honorific titles in representation.

The turbulent years following the reign of Manuel I considerably affected the second-tier élite too. The last two decades before the disastrous fourth crusade witnessed the decline of the political system built by the Komnenoi and thus the serious crisis of the extended family government. The several emperors of this period, Andronikos I, Isaac II and Alexios III, applied different policies to treat the internal problems of the state. Modern scholars have been agreed on Andronikos’ and Isaac’s attempts to decrease the power of the imperial kin. The empire suffered financial problems in the reign of the Angeloi, yet the government was far from being ineffective in those years. The tax burden increased on the population of the empire in the same time. The contradiction is explained by the intensifying corruption of the administration, of which main beneficiary was the first-tier élite. Nonetheless, some letters of Michael Choniates imply that the provincial officials who were recruited from the second-tier élite also attempted to earn as much income as possible through corrupt practices. In general, the decrease of imperial control apparently could

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164 Michael Choniates, *Letters*, pp. 85–86, no. 63, pp. 87–89, no. 65. It should be also noted however that the fiscal system of the empire faced more essential problems due to corruption. The so-called Marcian treatise on taxation clearly demonstrates several characteristics of the structure mostly related to the significance of personal connections that chronologically exceeded the crisis of the late Komnenian period despite the
broaden the opportunities of the second-tier élite. However, the increasing fraud deepened the tension between the several elements of the stratum serving in positions of competing interests. Nevertheless, it is time to deal with the conditions of the more specific elements of the Komnenian second-tier élite.

One of the well-known segments of the Byzantine empire, where the second-tier élite flourished, was the church. The stratum was the social background of the high clergy and the bureaucracy of the Great Church of Hagia Sophia. The relation between the second-tier élite and the ecclesiastical affairs is well studied.\textsuperscript{165} Former observations revealed that church, especially the high clergy, provided the most stable space for this social group.\textsuperscript{166} Furthermore, the authority of the second-tier élite increased in religious matters during the ‘long’ twelfth century.\textsuperscript{167} The background of this change was partly the new collaboration between the imperial court and the bureaucracy of the Great Church.\textsuperscript{168} This dissertation gives little contribution to the scholarly discussion on the connection between the second-tier élite and the church. Nevertheless, it is worth stressing two details here. Firstly, the transformation of the élite in the reign of John II apparently did not affect the position of the second-tier élite in the church. This fact coincides with the aforementioned results of former studies on the stability. Secondly, the church and especially the prelates appointed to provincial sees belonged to those factors, which now raise the problem of connection between the second-tier élite and the provincial élites.

The local élites of the provinces raise numerous questions regarding their position in the twelfth-century ruling stratum. The main problem is whether we can describe the second-tier élite only as a Constantinopolitan stratum, or it was a wider social phenomenon. It has been mentioned that the majority of the scholars suggest a limitation to the capital.\textsuperscript{169} Angold and Kazhdan consider the élites of the provinces and the provincial towns composing a

\textsuperscript{165}One can hardly ignore the fundamental works on the Byzantine church in general or in the Komnenian period: Jean Darrouzès, \textit{Recherches sur les ὀφφίκια de l'église byzantine} (Paris, 1970), especially pp. 51–107; Angold, \textit{Church and society}, passim. Recently, two doctoral dissertations were written about the Byzantine prelates, dealing with the social aspects of the ecclesiastical affairs: Jack Roskilly, ‘Ἀθηναίοι πολίες. Les évêques et leur autorité dans la société byzantine des XI\textsuperscript{e}-XII\textsuperscript{e} siècles’, doctoral thesis (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2017), especially pp. 34–101; Péter Tamás Bara, ‘Prelates, Paideia, Politics. Observations on the Sources, Background, and Legacy of the Komnenian Iconoclasm’, doctoral thesis (University of Szeged, 2019). I would like to thank Péter Bara that he gave me the opportunity to read his thesis before the public defence.


\textsuperscript{168}Angold, \textit{Church and society}, pp. 54–60.

\textsuperscript{169}See the literature in subchapter 1. 1.
separate stratum. Niels Gaul implies a stronger correlation between provincial and capital élites nonetheless. Several cases demonstrate the strong connection between Constantinople and the provinces in the high echelons of the Byzantine society. Examples are found in different moments of the long twelfth century. The Bourtzai, the Hephaistoi (the family of Theophylact of Ochrid), the Tornikai, the Malakai, the Choniatai and the Sgouroi examples for those houses, which resided both in Constantinople and in any of the provinces. The early examples, the Bourtzai, the Hephaistoi and the Tornikai, also show that this phenomenon was not related to the social changes caused by the Komnenian politics (e. g. the rise of the Komnenian first-tier and second-tier élites), it was a consequence of the older and deeper processes, e. g. the Constantinopolisation of the higher élite, instead. One might regard it an emergence of a branch of a provincial family into a distinct and more prominent social stratum similarly to the rise of a branch from the Komnenian second-tier élite to the first-tier élite. However, the sources indicate the maintenance of strong connections between the provincial families and their kinsfolk in the capital. The situation of the provincial metropolitans and bishops, their relation to their environment at their sees and to the capital also supports the unity of the capital and provincial élites into one stratum after the formation of the Komnenian second-tier élite at latest. Moreover, there are other aspects that imply this unification.

It is a question whether there is a correlation between the limitation of the (Komnenian) second-tier élite and erudition. There was a significant difference between the capital and the provinces in terms of educational conditions without doubt. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, only Constantinople provided higher education for the élite. Literacy was considerably less sophisticated in the provinces except for those individuals who moved from the capital for different purposes. In the eleventh century, prominent intellectuals, the

172 It is interesting that the theme of Hellas and Peloponnese was the homeland of a considerable number of the families known for their joint interests in the capital and the provinces. The Hephaistoi, the Tornikai, the Malakai and the Sgouroi came from the Greek mainland in the twelfth century. It is worth stressing that one cannot consider this region the real place of origin in the case of the Tornikai who had a significantly longer and older history than the other aforementioned families. However, the Tornikai who flourished in the twelfth century emerged from the branch that had previously resided in Hellas and Peloponnese. On the families mentioned above, see subchapter 5. 3; Mullett, *Theophylact*, pp. 261–77 (providing an even more complex approach to the problem of correlation between capital and province); Tornikes, *Letters*, pp. 25–28, Georg Stadtmüller, *Michael Choniates Metropolit von Athen* (ca. 1138 – ca. 1222) (Roma, 1934), pp. 16–21, 184–190 (on Choniatai and Malakai); Simpson, *Niketas Choniates*, pp. 11–23; Fotini Vlachopoulou, *The life and times of Leon Sgouros: Byzantine lord of Northeastern Peloponnese in the early 13th century* (Athens, 2002).
173 However, one can argue the same in the case of the old second-tier élite too.
representatives of the élite, repeatedly discussed on their membership in ‘the list of the wise’ or ‘the list of the learned’. These phrases indicate the existence of a certain group identity within the Byzantine élite, and twelfth-century sources imply a similar sentiment. However, it is doubtful whether these ambiguous phrases were adequate to denote an explicit social stratum. Furthermore, higher education was not a privilege of the Constantinopolitan bureaucracy. At least a part of the leading élite was involved in learning at the same level, and professional intellectuals out of the ruling stratum attended similar training too. Therefore, erudition surpassed some evident limits, among which the boundary between the first-tier and second-tier élite more explains the problem. The distinction between the leading élite and the lower élite is essentially determined by the quantity of authority. Consequently, the definition of the confines of second-tier élite, its separation from other social groups, should completely rest on the aspect of power instead of access to higher education.

There was no clear distinction between the Constantinopolitan and the provincial élites in terms of authority. Those who held the higher positions in the civil administration or the patriarchate of Constantinople definitely gained more political power than the vast majority of the provincial élites. It is questionable nonetheless whether the lower bureaucracy of the central government and the church of Hagia Sophia, subordinate officials, secretaries, scribes and ordinary deacons, were superior to all the prominent figures of the provinces. The land disputes throughout the period reveals several individuals, such as Romanos Rentenos, Theotimos Loukites, Leo Loukites or John Karantenos, who seemingly had the potential to oppose the authority of great monasteries until the intervention of the central government, or even despite the latter. Furthermore, the passivity of the central government out of the capital gave the opportunity for the powerful and notable households to express their authority over their towns and neighbourhoods in the provinces. All these features meant that there was a slight difference between the Constantinopolitan and provincial élites regarding the source of authority. The bureaucracy in the capital obviously gained power from offices and proximity to the central government. The provincial élites were also bureaucratic, but another portion of their authority came from their informal influence on their vicinity due to the aforementioned semi-independence from the imperial regime. It is possible to consider

174 Bernard, Writing and Reading, pp. 175–81.
175 On the case of Rentenos and the Loukites brothers, see Lavra, vol. 1, pp. 326–34, no. 64; Bartusis, Land and privilege pp. 37–50. Bartusis has doubt about the social rank of Rentenos and his fellows. However, the sales contract of Eudokia, daughter of George Bourion, implies that the Rentenoi were a notable family in the early twelfth century: Docheiariou, p. 68, no. 3, ll. 13–14. On Karantenos, see subchapter 5. 4. For more details on the authority of the provincial élites, see chapter 5.
176 For literature on this topic, see page 18, note 32.
the provincial élites a part of the second-tier élite, especially the Komnenian second-tier élite. Nonetheless, this definition raises further problems.

By uniting the Constantinopolitan and the provincial élites into one stratum, we create a considerably wide and heterogeneous social category. When we diminish the boundaries between the capital and the provinces in regard to the second-tier élite, the bottom limits of the stratum raise questions. Angold distinguishes a couple of social groups in the provincial society, following the Byzantine terminology: magnates (archontes), soldiers (stratiotai), householders (oikodespotai) or middle stratum (mesoi) and finally the people (laos). However, the Byzantine vocabulary of categorisation was anything but obvious. It is debatable whether the terms archon, stratiotes or oikodespotes in a given record are applicable for exact determination of social position without doubt. The evidence is not sufficient for the clear division of the provincial society in the Komnenian period. Consequently, it is difficult to describe the correlations between the social elements of provinces and the local administration more precisely than the local élite was involved in both the lay administration and the court of the bishop or metropolitan. There is no evidence of a point inside the provincial élites where we can define a distinction between the second-tier élite and a lower level of the ruling stratum. The bottom limit of the second-tier élite is identified with the boundary between the provincial élites and the rest of the local societies therefore.

The distinction between the second-tier élite and the middle stratum is a key point of the definition of the former social group. In general, the separation of the élite from the lower levels of the Byzantine society raises less questions, if we approach the problem from the aspect of political power. The Byzantines apparently considered the whole bureaucracy as the élite. Evidence shows that political authority provided an incomparable advantage for its owners in the Byzantine society. Therefore, the middle stratum consisted of social elements, which were excluded from the administrative and political institutions of the empire, but still played important roles in other fields. These fields were the economy and intellectuality.

Merchants, artisans and professional intellectuals composed the Byzantine middle stratum in the twelfth century. All these elements emerged from the urban population due to the revival of the economy and culture of the Byzantine towns. The entity of the middle

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177 Angold, *Archons and Dynasts*, p. 239.
178 Kazhdan and Ronchey, *L’aristocrazia*, p. 129.
179 On this social stratum or strata, see Jean-Claude Cheynet, ‘Le rôle de la « bourgoisie » Constantinopolitaine (XIe –XIIe siècle)’, *ZRVI*, 47 (2009), pp. 89–104.
stratum is not completely obvious with these elements included however. Theodore Prodromos, a representative of professional intellectuals, attempted to distinguish himself from artisans. Kazhdan rightly separates professional intellectuals from the intelligentsia of the bureaucracy who mainly belonged to the second-tier élite. Professional intellectuals, unlike their parallels in the élite, only depended on incomes from scholarly activity. The situation of the merchants is interesting, since they had the possibility to build an economic background, which occasionally exceeded the possibilities of the less prominent figures of the second-tier élite. Nevertheless, the separation of the traders from the élite does not rely solely on the simplification of social division into a bureaucratic élite and a non-bureaucratic élite. Some evidence shows that merchants were vulnerable to the threat from the élite.

It is evident that the middle stratum was a heterogeneous social group, similarly to the second-tier élite. Its members relied on various supplies, either those were economic activity, literacy, a network of acquaintances or artistic skills. Theodore Prodromos’ own separation from the artisans can be interpreted as a strong denial of the fact that professional intellectuals were associated with the middle stratum.

Between its limits described above, the second-tier élite included a wide range of the Byzantine society. This stratum was definitely a heterogenous social formation in regard to function and geography. The second-tier élite included the vast majority of bureaucrats in civil administration, the functionaries of the provinces, the administrators of the patriarchates, the higher clergy down to the bishops, the ecclesiastical officials of the dioceses and archdioceses as well as soldiers. The position of the second-tier élite in the army is still in question, since the majority of the higher posts were secured by the imperial kin. However, some of the examples for the obscure distinction between the leading élite and the second-tier élite by official function, e. g. Constantine Opos and Basil Batatzes, flourished in the military administration in fact. Although the evidence is fragmentary concerning this specific problem, the appearance of such individuals throughout the period indicates the

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181 Kazhdan and Wharton-Epstein, *Change*, pp. 130–32. For example, Theodore Prodromos, John Tzetzes, Constantine Manasses and Constantine Stilbes represented this group. Cf.: Magdalino, *Empire*, p. 321; Magdalino considers John Tzetzes and Nikephoros Basilakes the members of the same stratum, the second-tier élite. 
182 The well-known case of Kalomodios shows the vulnerability of the merchants: Choniates, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 523–24, ll. 50–81. 
183 Prodromos was probably influenced by the elitism that characterised the intellectual networks of his time. In fact, these (in social terms) vertical networks could connect individuals of different origin. On the elitism of Byzantine intellectuals, see Magdalino, ‘Snobbery’, pp. 58–78, passim; Bernard, Writing and Reading. 
184 For literature on the Opoi, see page 99, note 375.
perpetual presence of the second-tier élite in the army at least in a moderate amount. The heterogeneous nature of the stratum raises several problems.

The position of the second-tier élite suffered some changes throughout the period. Yet the nearly first half of the era raises questions. Due to the politics of Alexios I and the delayed monopolisation of the leading élite by the extended imperial family, it is difficult to speak about a Komnenian second-tier élite until the reign of John II. While the superiority of the imperial kin is beyond doubt, several members of the lower élite had the opportunity to gain considerable authority too. In the following two chapters, we will observe in details how the inferiority of the second-tier élite occurred both in the scale of families or branches and on the private level.

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The second-tier élite developed in interesting circumstances. The marking point for the political and social tendencies leading to the formulation of the Komnenian first-tier and the second-tier élite was not the ascension of Alexios I to the imperial throne. Alexios’ politics delayed transformation of his extended family into a highly privileged and distinguishable stratum of the Byzantine élite. The Komnenian second-tier élite, the stratum of officials (and their families) excluded from the imperial kindred, appeared in the reign of John II. As the political system experienced changes and different directions, the conditions of the lower élite evolved throughout the period. Obviously, membership in the second-tier élite did not necessarily mean the complete lack of imperial favour. Nevertheless, this situation and other phenomena occurred in complicated mechanisms, which can get attention in the following parts of the dissertation.

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185 It is important to stress the distinction between the old or pre-Komnenian and the Komnenian second-tier élite again. See pages 44–46.
3 Families from the second-tier élite

The analysis of families is an important part of the investigation on the Byzantine second-tier élite. The previous chapter deals with the political aspects of the question what opportunities the lower group of the ruling stratum had to reach the higher echelons of the government. This chapter attempts to reveal the social elements of the problem however. The prosopographical analysis of families, which belonged to the second-tier élite, is a good method to achieve the aforementioned purpose. The chapter focuses on five houses from the stratum: the Akropolitai, the Aristenoi, the Pantechnai, the Pepagomenoi and the Tessarakontapecheis. The main interest of this observation is the stability of the position on a given rank, especially on a higher one. There is also an attempt to examine the families for other phenomena such as the influence and strategies of intermarriage and in general the methods of family policy in the stratum.

3. 1 The Akropolitai

The analysis of the history of the Akropolitai in the long twelfth century gives an interesting case in regard to chronological aspects. This family belonged to those houses, whose reputation and influence reached their apogee after the forth crusade and the sack of Constantinople in 1204. Their most famous and successful representative was George Akropolites, the historian and politician under the Nicaean regime and in the restored empire, without doubt. Akropolites himself praised his noble ancestry in his historical work, which can be interpreted as a posterior ‘nobilisation’ of the family, one of which members emerged to the highest echelons of the government and the society.\textsuperscript{186} Despite the doubts about the old reputation of the Akropolitai, it is still an interesting question, how a family managed to maintain or increase its positions in the administration in the preceding periods. This chapter aims to analyse the careers of the Akropolitai and the conditions of the family in general throughout the long twelfth century with a brief survey on their circumstances before the Komnenian era.

The Akropolitai flourished in the civil administration even before the ascendance of the Komnenian dynasty. Their surname derived from the Acropolis of Constantinople, and taking name from a quarter of the capital was a popular method among the Constantinopolitan élite.\textsuperscript{187} Our knowledge of this family is mainly based on a little sigillary evidence. However, the earliest evidence of the family is given by a narrative source, the Patria, written in the tenth century. This work states that a certain Akropolites possessed the house of Toubakes and Iberitzes.\textsuperscript{188} Several seals show that the Akropolitai reached moderate positions in the civil government, and indicate an interesting connection with the \textit{stratiotikon logothesion} in the eleventh century.\textsuperscript{189} Also, there is no information about positions higher than the \textit{epi tou Chrysotriklinou}. All the evidence is dated to the second quarter and the middle of the eleventh century that raises questions about the complete course of the career of the Akropolitai in the period. Their moderate rank underlines the curiosity of their family name that appeared relatively early in comparison with the majority of the civil bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{190} Even if the name in the Patria was only a cognomen, it had to transform into a family name soon in the following generation. Although the connection between the owner of the aforementioned house and the later Akropolitai is hypothetical, it is highly feasible. Nevertheless, the sources, even if only for some decades, give a certain picture about the conditions of the family before the Komnenian regime.

We have more information about the Akropolitai after the ascension of Alexios I to the imperial throne. The sources allow us to reconstruct the progress of the family in regard to its position in the administration and the élite. The evidence mainly relies on sigillary material, yet monastic documents and epistolography also provide great addition to the history of the Akropolitai. Our fragmental knowledge about the positions of the Akropolitai indicates typical representatives of the civil bureaucracy. The main goal of the following pages is to reveal how the Komnenian government affected the conditions of this family.

A certain Nicholas definitely held the inferior position among the Akropolitai of his time. We know very little about his career, since only a \textit{pittakion} of Alexios I issued in 1088 mentions him. This document was addressed to the department of military budget (\textit{στρατιωτικὸν λογοθεσίον}) to record the imperial chrysobull, which granted the whole island

\textsuperscript{187} Kazhdan and Wharton-Epstein, \textit{Change}, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{188} Theodor Preger (ed.), \textit{Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum} (Leipzig, 1907), p. 150, ll. 1–2, 1. 71.
\textsuperscript{189} Laurent, \textit{Corpus}, vol. 2, no. 345, no. 353, no. 577; Sandrovskaja and Seibt, \textit{Bleisiegel}, vol. 1, p. 33, n. 57. A later representative of the family, Nicholas (see below) also took charge in the \textit{stratiotikon logothesion} decades later.
\textsuperscript{190} On the development of the Byzantine family name, see Cheynet, ‘Aristocratic Anthroponymy’, no. 3, especially pp. 10–11.
of Patmos to Monk Christodoulos, in the registers of the office. Nicholas signed the document as bestarches and the chartoularios of the department. Giving his signature to the pittakion, he was involved in a regular administrative activity. He did not play a key role in the affair that laid behind the series of several imperial charters. What is more interesting here is Nicholas’ absolute and relative position. As chartoularios of the sekreton, he was subordinated to a certain Niketas magistros and logothetes of the stratiotikon, the head of the aforementioned department, yet belonged to the senior officials of the department. It is also worth noting that holding the honorary title of bestarches, Akropolites gained the highest rank together with John Chrysoberges among the chartoularioi of the office. Nonetheless, Nicholas reached a moderate position either in general or in comparison with his contemporary kin.

A considerably higher rank was held by Michael Akropolites, probably, some years later, in the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. He was designated kensor and parathalassites at the same time, yet his superior position did not rely on the fact of multiple functions relatively frequent in the period. Our evidence is taken from a lonely lead seal dated to the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The inscription of the bulla misses the sealer’s honorary title, another, still, important factor showing the holder’s situation in the government. Of course, one could decide, which personal information was to be represented on his seal used for particular purposes. Showing only the combined offices on the seal was an effective concept for authorization and identification in official administrative affairs, and it also reduced the size and the costs of the bulla. Furthermore, the fact that both Nicholas’ and Michael’s functions remained in the sources gives the analysis of the Akropolites family a great contribution, a greater one than titles alone could.

The most distinguished member of the family in the period flourished around the second third of the twelfth century. Several sources mention a certain Michael Akropolites with different functions, and it is probable that one individual stood behind these cases. An imperial chrysobull issued in 1148 refers to Michael when held the office of megas

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191 Patmos, vol. 1, p. 339, no. 48, γ (the main body of text, ll. 227–233, is identical to the edited one of the pittakion for the seketon ton oikeiakon, idem, pp. 337–38, no. 48, α, ll. 185–196).
193 Rev.: Κύριε ὁ Θεός, Μιχαήλ κύριε καὶ παραθαλασσίτης τοῦ Ἀκροπόλιτη, Laurent, Corpus, vol. 2, pp. 629–30, no. 1133. The obverse depicts the busts of Saint George and Saint Demetrios. Laurent dated the seal to the first half of the twelfth century.
194 As it has been discussed, honorary title, especially the old ones, lost their importance in the second-tier élite, yet this development probably occurred only after the reign of Alexios I.
Another charter of Manuel I was signed by Michael Akropolites without any reference to his office. His preserved seal, a very simple one, dated to the middle of the twelfth century calls him dikaiophylax. We can connect these to one individual, Michael Akropolites who served Manuel I with certainty. Although Laurent also connected a homonymous figure who was designated a megas chartoularios of the sekreton tou genikou to the dikaiophylax, his dating of the chartoularios’ bulla, the main source, appears incorrect. The remaining strict information about Michael’s career implies a typical civil course, in which separation between financial and judicial duties dissolved. Still the sources do not allow a clear arrangement of his offices. It is only hypothetical, presuming a perpetually ascending position and successful activity, that Michael had been dikaiophylax, a minor judge responsible for ecclesiastic cases, before he reached the office of megas logariastes supervising the fiscal matters of the central government. One can consider this Michael the most successful member of his family in the period despite the bare evidence about his career. Yet the paucity of data on the further representatives of the Akropolitai until 1204 urges us to treat this with caution.

In the same part of the twelfth century, a contemporary relative of Michael Akropolites provides a curious case. A metrical seal dated to the middle third of the century, the only known source about this member, bears a simple inscription, which gives opportunity for several interpretations in the same time. Σφραγ(ίς) γραφῶν Μύρωνος Ακροπολίτου as the verse tells on the reverse of the bulla. Wassiliou-Seibt treats the problem of the inscription, which is related to the identification of the sealer, in details. According to her, the main issue of the source is that the word Μύρωνος, a singular genitive form of Myron, could be the given name of Akropolites or the location of bishopric see. Wassiliou-Seibt stresses the difficulty of the case, arguing that neither this given name was popular among the known members of the family, nor we have evidence about a bishop of Myron belonging to the

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197 Louis Petit, ‘Le Monastère de Notre-Dame de Pitié en Macedoine’, IRAIK, 6 (1900), p. 33, ll. 16–17, no. 7. The document was dated to July in the 7th indiction, yet it is still in question, whether that referred to 1144 or 1159.
199 Laurent, Corpus, vol. 2, pp. 170–71, no. 353, p. 477, no. 903; Šandrovskaja and Seibt, Bleisiegel, vol. 1, p. 33, n. 59. Laurent also mistook the megas logariastes for the megas chartoularios in the aforementioned chrysobull of Manuel I. The identification of Michael dikaiophylax and megas logariastes with the kensor and parathalassites appears inaccurate due to chronological issues.
Akropolitai. Furthermore, it might have been unconventional in Byzantium, if a cleric had represented his family name without the first name. It is difficult to find a solution for this issue due to the lack of information. However, a possible explanation can be that there were several contemporary relatives as Wassiliou-Seibt implies. One can hypothesise that these members belonged to the same generation as brothers. In this case, a name unfamiliar to the family may have been inherited from the maternal ancestors. Nevertheless, it is clearly hypothetical, and the case of this Akropolites remains a mystery.

A member of the family devoted himself to the mystery of God around the same years. Gregory Akropolites was a monk in the middle of the twelfth century, and he was an acquaintance of Michael Glykas. The famous writer and astrologist wrote him at least one letter. Our evidence does not allow to presume the connection between Gregory and the other known representatives of the family. The monastic name often began with the same letter as the old given name, yet there are numerous examples contradicting this custom. Furthermore, Gregory could be related to George Akropolites, yet this idea may raise chronological questions as it is discussed below.

Little evidence is given about a later representative of the family. The only known source on Constantine Akropolites is a seal dated to the third quarter of the twelfth century. The bulla only represents the sealer’s name without any implication of his office or honorary title. The inscription on this item is very simple, including the conventional invocation and pray to the Virgin beside. The simplicity of content and concept presents the practical attitude towards the bulla. Such material does not imply what Constantine owned and achieved or he did not, but it shows what the sealer thought about his identification and representation. One item keeps this figure from absolute obscurity, and it gives very little evidence about his life in the same time. However, one may assume that Constantine used more seals throughout his career, and several, recently unknown, types possibly presented his titles or offices. Therefore, it is rather the question whether Constantine’s testament indicates anything about the position of his family.

We know another curious figure who lived around the second half of the twelfth century. George Akropolites, like Constantine, is recorded on a lonely lead seal dated to the

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203 Rev.: Ακροπολίτην σκέπασεις με Κωνσταντίνον, Šandrovskaja and Seibt, Bleisiegel, no. 13. The obverse depicts the bust of the Virgin with medallion.
aforementioned period.\textsuperscript{204} The bulla, which was found on an archaeological site at Argos, bears a metrical inscription, which emphasises the sealer’s ancestry.\textsuperscript{205} Although the sigillographical characteristics of this item suggests a long period for dating, Oikonomou-Laniado dated it to the late twelfth and the early thirteenth centuries according to its archaeological context.\textsuperscript{206} This is an important statement, since it indicates that George was in the active part of his career after Glykas possibly wrote his letter to Monk Gregory. Therefore, Gregory cannot be identified with George, while the similarity of the leading letters could imply such connection. Another interesting feature of this seal is the emphasis on the sealer’s descent-ance that had never occurred on the bullae of the Akropolitai before according to our evidence. It was, however, a popular topic on the seals in the second half of the twelfth century. Given the possibility that George used more than one bulla simultaneously, the location of the seal at Argos raises the question about the circumstances, in which it was used. One can opine that such item might not have been a seal of a local administrator giving orders to his subaltern official. A reference to his position would have suited this situation more. Nevertheless, such lonely sigillary material raises more problems than answers. The fate of the family in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century is vague, and one can find only indirect evidence about their circumstances.

The testimony of George Akropolites, the historian, indicates the conditions of his family around the fourth crusade. Although he flourished in a period out of this study, his biographical references include little but valuable information about the former generations of his house. He clearly states in his historical work that he was raised in Constantinople, since his parents remained in the capital under the Latin government.\textsuperscript{207} These are very interesting and significant points. This family seemingly had no close ties to any of the powerful individuals, either the Laskarides or the Angeloi, who transformed and established their own political centres after the sack of the capital. Therefore, it is likely that they were relatively far from the power centre of the imperial court in the eve of the fourth crusade. In other words, they did not gain significant positions in the administration around the turn of the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries. Still it is impossible to determine the exact beginning of the decline.

\textsuperscript{204} Of course, this George was definitely not identical with the famous and homonymous official and intellectual flourishing almost a century later.
\textsuperscript{206} Oikonomou-Laniado, ‘Un sceau’, p. 292.
\textsuperscript{207} Georgii Acropolitae \textit{Opera}, vol. 1, p. 46, Historia, ch. 29.
The evidence implies that the Akropolitai belonged to those families, whose positions increased in the long twelfth century. Before the Komnenian regime, the known members were mainly subaltern officials in the central government. It is striking that, in the early years of Alexios I, the family still had connections to the *stratiotikon logothesion* like decades earlier. Nevertheless, a remarkable development appears in the early Komnenian period too. This progress probably reached its peak with the office of the *megas logariastes* around the middle of the twelfth century. However, the sources from the following decades until the collapse of the empire do not show any significant position, concerning the Akropolitai. Nonetheless, they do not prove the opposite too. Only George Akropolites’ considerably later biographical remarks, i.e. the maintained residence of the family in Constantinople under the Latin rule, suggest a decline in the late twelfth century. Hence, the history of the Akropolitai throughout the long twelfth century shows their inability to preserve their relatively high position for a considerable time.

3. 2 The Aristenoi

The Aristenoi were an important family of the second-tier élite. This house is known mainly for the canonical work of Alexios Aristenos, yet other representatives held remarkable positions in the administration too. The family apparently did not belong to the old ones of the élite, which began to turn into an aristocracy in the eleventh century at the latest. Their name was derived from the city Ariste or Eriste in Bithynia. The Aristenoi mostly considered as civil functionaries, yet their position in the eleventh century and under the Komnenoi raise several questions. Much prosopographical work has been done by several scholars, such as Jordanov, Kazhdan, Laurent and Seibt, on the members of the family. This subchapter intends to analyse the history of the whole family in the long twelfth century with a short description of their conditions in the eleventh century.

Several members of the family are known from the sources in the eleventh century. The origin and the background of the Aristenoi is ambiguous due to the nature of the evidence nonetheless. Michael Psellos was in correspondence with two representatives of the Aristenoi whose first names remain unknown. According to the letters, one was the father of the other. The son apparently had closer connection to Psellos, and he seems an important

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The younger Aristenos held the office of protasekretis and the title of bestarches. While the first names of Psellos’ correspondents are unrevealed, two names appears in the sources from the eleventh century. One of them is Michael who is recorded by two known seals. A bulla dated to the eleventh gives an uncertain case, since the inscription is considerably damaged, and the family name is barely visible. Another seal belonged to Michael Aristenos protospatharios and it is dated to first half of the eleventh century. Seibt considers this individual the earliest representative of the family with certainty. The name John is also represented on several bullae of the Aristenoi in the period. One held the office of katepano according to a seal from the Zacos collection. Another bulla represents a John Aristenos bestarches as the strategos of Chios. Werner Seibt presumes an identification of the two sealers with one another, since both items are dated to the third quarter of the eleventh century. These few cases indicates some characteristics of the family before the Komnenian period. The surname of the Aristenoi appears in the sigillary material of the eleventh century, when the majority of the civil bureaucracy began to use family names. We cannot follow the history of the family before the appearance of the surname. However, the origin of their name mentioned above implies that they moved from the Bithynian local élite to the Constantinopolitan one around the early eleventh century. It had to happen shortly before such surname became firm. They apparently did not belong to the leading group of the bureaucracy in this period, while their position gradually increased. It is also worth noting that the family primarily flourished in the civil administration, yet at least one member succeeded in the army. Since the Aristenoi stayed out of the

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213 There is a seal dated from the second half of tenth to early eleventh centuries, which was possibly owned by a certain John Aristenos according to Seibt and Wassiliou, yet it is still hypothetical: BBÖ, vol. 2, p. 85; Koltsida-Makri, Μολυβδόβουλλα, p. 132, no. 379.
214 Rev.: Θεολ(ό)γ(ε)ι βοήθητι Ιωάννη και τ(ού) Ἀριστην(ῶ)ν, BBÖ, vol. 2, p. 85, n. 400. The obverse bears the iconography of John the Apostle.
215 Rev.: Ἰωάννης μεστάρχης καὶ στρατηγὸς Χίου ὁ Ἀριστηνός, Šandrovskaja, Sfragistika, no. 704. The obverse bears the iconography of John the Apostle.
power centre of the court, the Komnenian ascension is expected to affect their conditions indirectly.

After the overview of eleventh-century history of the Aristenoi, we have to deal with the twelfth-century history of the family in a more detailed analysis. The Aristenoi, presumably a house of provincial origin, performed a noticeable social rising during the former period, representing the potential of civil career in that time. It is an interesting question how this family flourished after the ascension of the Komnenoi to the imperial throne and in the whole twelfth century. However, starting this narrative is not a simple task.

The case of Anastasios Aristenos shows that the source material sometimes does not allow us to connect our evidence to a certain period. The dating of the seals rarely fits the distinction of periods based on political changes, and this issue is extremely true in regard to the ascension of the Komnenoi. Anastasios Aristenos is only known from a seal, which is dated to the second half of the eleventh century. According to the inscription, Anastasios held the court rank of proedros. The seal displays a certain moment of Anastasios’ career, yet it is difficult to place this moment to a strict chronological point. Therefore, it is impossible to estimate the significance of Anastasios’ designation to proedros. Nevertheless, he was not the only member of the family, whose evidence cause chronological problems.

There is another member of the family whose connection with the Komnenian period is obscure. The uncertainty rises due to the nature of our source since this individual is only known from sigillary material. A metrical seal dated to the last third of the eleventh century displays his owner, an epi ton krisión, without any given name. The problem of dating the seal is that it prevents us from connecting the sealer’s office to a ruler. Aristenos held on of the most important civil position, the epi ton krisión, one of the four high judges in Constantinople. Due to his function, he definitely played a significant role in maintaining the influence of his family. Therefore, it would be crucial to know which emperor appointed Aristenos to the aforementioned position. Without the answer, the development of the position of the Aristenoi remains ambiguous. There is a theory however that identifies this Aristenos with a member of the kindred who clearly flourished under Alexios I.

218 Rev.: Θ(εότοκε) β(οή)θ(ει) Α(ναστασίῳ προεδρῷ τῷ Αριστον), Birch, Seals, vol. 5, p. 58, no. 17760. The obverse depicts the bust of the Virgin. The reading of the family name by Birch is probably incorrect. The dating of the seal is corrected by Jordanov: Jordanov, Corpus, vol. 2, p. 64.

219 Οβ.: Τὸν κρίσεων λαχανὰ τὰς ψήφους φέρειν, γεν.: τὸν Αριστηνὸν πράζις ἢ νῦν δεικνύει, Laurent, Corpus, vol. 2, p. 475, no. 901; Seyrig, pp. 81–82, no. 103.

220 For references, see below, the case of Aristenos, the eparch.
Michael should be mentioned first among the Aristenoi who flourished in the reign of Alexios I Komnenos. However, the only definite source of his career allows a dating, which makes Michael’s connection to the early Komnenian period uncertain. Furthermore, the sigillary material related to the Aristenoi includes several cases of homonymous kinsmen. Michael’s parallel metrical seals dated to the last third of the eleventh century call him as logothetes of the dromos.\textsuperscript{221} Nonetheless, scholars have made attempts to link this logothetes to other seals, which partly imply that Michael held positions around 1100 too.\textsuperscript{222} There is an interesting contradiction between Seibt and Jordanov on a seal of a certain Michael Aristenos found among the unpublished items of the Zacros collection. Beside the contrast in dating, the transliterations show a little but very important difference at the last word of the inscription: Seibt reads θύτον, while Jordanov suggests δῦτον.\textsuperscript{223} Hence, although the aforementioned word (a dual aorist form of δύω?) does not make any sense in the context, Jordanov argues that the sealer is represented as a private individual. Furthermore, he suggests a possible identification of this Michael and the logothetes of the dromos. Due to the higher plausibility of meaning, the transliteration and dating of Seibt is preferred in this study. Therefore, the sealer of the later seal is distinguished from the logothetes.\textsuperscript{224} Focusing exclusively on the seals, which are related to the logothetes without any doubt, Michael was definitely one of the most notable members of the family in the eleventh century. The lack of reference to him in the literary works and the administrative documents implies little about his reputation and authority, since the appearance of the Aristenoi in such sources seems quite accidental.

Gregory Aristenos is recorded in the legal document on the trial of John Italos, the consul of philosophers.\textsuperscript{225} According to this source, Gregory, along with some metropolitans and other officials of the church and civil administrations, was a member of a temporary court responsible for investigating on Italos’ theories in 1082.\textsuperscript{226} At least in the time of the trial, Gregory definitely held a position in the civil government, since he was listed among the representatives of the senate.\textsuperscript{227} The term ‘senator’ was usually applied to distinguish lay

\textsuperscript{222} The cases of bullae presenting only the family name will be discussed in details later throughout this subchapter.
\textsuperscript{224} For a more detailed analysis of the other Michael, see below.
officials and the officers of the army from the clerics and the bureaucrats of the church. The legal document on Italos clearly indicates this terminology, mentioning the _megas oikonomos_ of the Hagia Sophia, the _grammatikos_ of the patriarch and the master of rhetoricians (the leader of a patriarchal school) in a separate section of the text. The document does not give any information about Gregory’s office, and it provides a vague implication to his title. The document seemingly (but not surprisingly) mentions the officials according to their prominence from the highest to the lowest. Gregory is recorded as the last among the bureaucrats, thus he was probably the least prominent member of the judiciary court. Nevertheless, the text indicates that he held the dignity of _protobestes_ like Nicholas Xiphilinos and, possibly, Nicholas Adrianoupolites. This title implies a moderate position in the government.

Gregory is also recorded by the list of attendants on the council of Blachernai in 1094. The council dealt with Leo of Chalcedon, who was also a member of the aforementioned court in 1082, and his opinions on the veneration of icons. Gregory appears among the members of the senate again as _proedros_. Unfortunately, the document is incoherent in regard to presenting the offices of the participants, and it ignores the function of Aristenos. Nonetheless, Gregory’s dignity shows two interesting aspects. Firstly, he achieved a slight rise in rank from _protobestes_ to _proedros_ in nearly twelve years. Secondly, in theory, he shared the same position with Michael Autoreianos, the judge of the hippodrome, and Michael Antiochos, the leader, or, naming his real office, the _primikerios_ of the external bodyguard (τῶν ἔξω βεστιαρίτων). However, these correlations give little evidence on the positions of Gregory. Autoreianos who overpasses Aristenos on the list held a moderate judicial office as a judge of the hippodrome on the one hand. On the other hand, Antiochos who follows Gregory in the document led the less prominent bodyguard of the palace, yet his involvement in the Anemas conspiracy some years later and Anna Komnene’s account on that affair implies Antiochos’ considerable prestige. Another interesting aspect should be considered. Gregory was involved in both the trials of Italos and Leo of Chalcedon, which were important political actions of Alexios I beside their religious nature. The importance of these affairs suggests a careful selection of participants in investigation or counsel by the

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229 Of course, here, I refer not to the imperial court, but to the judicial one responsible for the trial of Italos.
232 _Alexiad_, vol. 1, p. 372–73, 12. 5. 4, 12. 6. 1.
government. Another individual who was a member of both the judicial court in 1082 and the council in 1094 was Constantine Choirosphaktes. Choirosphaktes was definitely favoured by Alexios I, and was appointed to some high offices throughout his career. Gregory Aristenos reached considerably less prestigious positions according to the aforementioned sources, yet he was correspondingly trusted by the imperial court, even if he had indirect connections to the emperor. Nevertheless, these are only theories about Gregory’s circumstances, while we have little information about his career.

Two seals record the name of Basil Aristenos in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. Hence Basil was a nearly contemporary kinsman of Gregory, although their relations remain in obscurity due to the nature of the sources and the restricted, fragmental information revealed in this material about the two Aristenoi. One of the seals dated to the late eleventh century, most likely the older one, represents Basil with the title of proto-proedros. The other bulla dated to the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries records his name with the dignity of kouropalates and the office of parathalassites. The titles on the seals indicates ascension in political status, however the two dignities stood very close to each other in the court hierarchy. As parathalassites, a supervisor of maritime transportation and customs, Basil gained a considerable position in the civil administration, since the significance of this office rose in the eleventh century. Since the functions of Gregory Aristenos remained in obscurity and there is no evidence about Basil’s political influence and his involvement in any major political event in the reign of Alexios I, it is difficult to compare their situations. Although the titles alone imply that Basil held higher positions, one cannot expect significant difference between the conditions of the two kinsmen.

We have very little information about Nicholas Aristenos despite the several seals, which records his name. Nicholas was probably contemporary with Gregory and Basil, yet other aspects of his life are unknown. Three parallel seals and a similar type dated to the end of the eleventh and beginning of the twelfth century bear a metrical verse stating Nicholas’

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233 For a more detailed analysis on the career of Choirosphaktes, see the subchapter 4.2, ‘The man of Alexios I: The career of Constantine Choirosphaktes’.

234 Due to the sigillary evidence and its restriction, the identification of the sealers as one individual is hypothetical in truth. However, the dates and the similar features of the bullae (especially the iconography) provides a strong implication. The identification is also suggested by BBÖ, vol. 2, p. 85.


ownership. Jordanov connects another bulla to this individual, which has a different inscription. The latter one considerably differs from the other two types, and thus the identification of the sealer is still in question. Since these seals are the only known sources about Nicholas, it is impossible to determine his positions in the administration and the course of his life. However, his bullae increase the number of the known active members of the Aristenoi around the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries that is an important aspect in the history of the family.

Some parallel metrical seals record an Aristenos from the turn of the eleventh and twelfth century, whose given name is ignored by these items. However, the bullae show his office, which is the eparch of Constantinople. Seibt suggests the possible identity of this individual with the aforementioned Michael, the logothetes tou dromou, and the epi tou kris-eon, whose first name also remained in obscurity, according to stylistic similarities of the seals. Connecting these sealers to each other seems very hypothetical, since numerous representatives of the family flourished in the same period. Nevertheless, the eparch of the City was one of the most important functions in the civil administration. Despite the problem of identification, this sigillary evidence is still crucial, since it widens our knowledge about the influence and prestige of the family in the early Komnenian period.

The seal of the eparch was not the only item in the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries that raises questions about the identification of the sealers. Two different metrical bullae dated to the aforementioned period represent only their owners’ family name, thus these cases are more problematic than that of the eparch. The inscriptions of both types deal with the authorization of documents issued by the sealers with different phrasing and vocabulary. Nevertheless, some scholars argue about the possibilities of identification.

238 Obv.: Ἀριστηνοῦ σφράγις; rev.: μα τοῦ Νικολάου, Gustav Schlumberger, Mélanges d’archéologie byzantine (Paris, 1895), no. 26; Laurent, Bulles métriques, no. 30; Konstantopoulos, Μολυβδόβουλλα, no. 606; Stavrakos, Bleisiegel, pp. 83–84, no. 27. There is no iconography on these types, since both sides are filled with inscription.

239 Rev.: Θεοτόκε βοήθει τῷ σῷ δούλῳ Νικολάῳ τῷ Αριστηνῷ. Jordanov, Corpus, vol. 2, p. 64; cf. Stavrakos, Bleisiegel, p. 84. The obverse bears the iconography of Theotokos Nikopoios. Jordanov does not give any date to this seal.


242 Andreas Gkoutzioukostas, Η απονομή δικαίωσης στο Βυζάντιο (9ος-12ος αι.) (Thessaloniki, 2004), pp. 103–7, 184–86.

Stavrakos does not reject the idea of connections between these seals and a judge called Michael Aristenos. A more ambitious hypothesis is supported by Seibt, which implies a common identity of the sealers of these two bullae, the eparch, the *epi ton krisen* and Michael the *logothetes*. Of course, out of the regular changes of offices and dignities, different situations, affairs or types of documents might have needed differing seals. Still, as in the case of the eparch, such identifications are based on dubious evidence, and they should be handled with much care. In all, these seals here provide little addition to the history of the family except the theory on a diversified collection of bullae from one individual.

We have very little evidence about the female members of the family, and the majority of our information concerns Mary Aristene. Mary’s testimony does not give too much to the history of her house, since she is recorded by an only seal dated to the late eleventh century. The inscription on the seal itself does not reveal more than her ownership. Jordanov opines that Mary was probably a daughter or a wife of an Aristenos. However, recent studies show that family names were transferred from the parents, never from the spouses, until the fourteenth century. Therefore, Mary was definitely an off-spring of the Aristenei, yet it is impossible to determine her parents. Furthermore, it is very unfortunate that the seal does not refer to her husband’s title (in the female form), although there is even no evidence about the existence of her marriage. Nonetheless, the seal itself indicates that Mary possibly played an important role either in general or in a specific case, authorizing a document herself.

Although the Aristenei usually flourished in the civil administration, some members also held church offices. There were not any strict borders between the different segments of government, the army, the civil bureaucracy and the church. The difference between the civil and ecclesiastic service was even less determined. Nevertheless, one may consider the distinction between the lay officials of the church, especially those of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the clerics in regard to the possibilities of mobility among the several segments of administration. Michael Aristenos represented the latter group according to his only known seal dated to the first half the twelfth century. Unfortunately, the inscription of

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244 Stavrakos, *Bleisiegel*, p. 85.
245 BBÖ, vol. 2, p. 41; also see above.
246 Rev.: Σφραγὶς Μαρίας Αριστενᾶς, Jordanov, *Corpus*, vol. 2, p. 62, no. 55. The obverse bears the iconography of the bust of the Virgin orans with the medallion.
248 There was a debate concerning the separation of the different administrative segments and its social aspects. While Kazhdan supported the old distinction between and the military and civil aristocracy, completing this idea with the church aristocracy as a separate stratum, Cheynet stressed the movement between the divisions: Cheynet, ‘Byzantine Aristocracy in the 10th–12th Centuries’, no. 2, pp. 19–20.
the bulla introduces the sealer with the very general term of θύτης (cleric). This word was widely used on seals, and it could refer to higher charges, such as the bishop or the metropolitan, with a geographical reference. Since Michael’s seal lacks any implication of a see, it is impossible to determine his exact office in the clergy. Without any further sources and information on his life and career, Michael’s influence on his family remains in obscurity.

John Aristenos was a possible contemporary of Michael, the ‘priest’, in the first half of the twelfth century. This possibility is built on a loose basis due to nature of the sigillary evidence however. John, like Michael, is only recorded on a metrical seal dated to the aforementioned period. The inscription on the bulla shows that the sealer was designated kouropalates at that time, and the verse puts an emphasis on the grant of title. The dating of the seal causes problems in several aspects, since it includes a quite long period, whose any point the presented bulla, in truth, could be issued at. The same trouble occurs in the case of Michael, the cleric too. Thus, it is not more plausible that the two Aristenoi were contemporaries than they belonged to completely different generations of the family. What is more important is that the importance and rank of the kouropalates suffered considerable decrease throughout the period, to which the only source is entirely dated. Hence, John’s real position in the hierarchy is in question.

The most famous and notable member of the family was Alexios Aristenos. Aristenos flourished during the reigns of John II and Manuel I, and he belonged to the few known representatives of the kindred who held lay offices in the church. We have relatively numerous sources about his career, which has the most complete evidence among those of the Aristenoi. Alexios is celebrated in an oration of Nikephoros Basilakes written around 1137/38 and calling the addressee protekdikos, nomophylax and orphanotrophos in the title. Theodore Prodromos also praises Aristenos in several poems, referring to the same dignities as Basilakes. George Tornikes wrote him a letter, concerning an ecclesiastical debate of their time. In the title of this letter Alexios is addressed as megas oikonomos and dikaiodotes. Aristenos attended the Blachernai synod in 1166, which dealt with the same

249 Obv.: Ἀριστηνοῦ σφράγισμα; rev.: Μηχαὴλ θύτου, BBÖ, vol. 2, p. 85, n. 398. There is no iconography since both sides are filled with inscription.
250 Obv.: Σφραγίς (εἰς)μ(ι)Ἀριστηνοῦ Ἰω(άννου); rev.: κουροπαλατῶν ἀξίας τιμωμένου, Wassiliou-Seibt, Corpus, vol. 2, p. 485, no. 2419; G. R. Davidson, Corinth. Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (Princeton, N. J., 1952), vol. 13, no. 2812. There is no iconography since both sides are filled with inscription.
252 Prodromos, Historische Gedichte, pp. 461–66, no. 56a, title, ll. 1–2, 36, 60, no. 56b, ll. 6–7, no. 56c, i. 24, no. 56d, ll. 8, 15, 28.
253 Tornikes, Letters, p. 175, no. 28, title.
issue as the letter of Tornikes, and he was recorded on the list of the council. 254 Alexios himself wrote a commentary on the Synopsis canonum that gave and still gives the most considerable portion of his fame. 255 Several seals remained which bears his name and dignities. One of them dated to the first half of the twelfth century refers to Alexios as deacon, *nomophylax* and *protekdikos*. 256 Another bulla suggested to the middle of the century only records the office of *nomophylax* beside the name of Aristenos. 257 Laurent also identifies the owner of a third seal with Aristenos, although it represents only Alexios *nomophylax* without family name. The latter bulla has a design and inscription considerably differing from those of the other two types. 258 Darrouzès argues that Alexios also held the position of *skeuophylax* sometime before 1157 according to a petition issued by Gregory Antiochos. 259 The development of his career has been more or less revealed by other analyses. 260 These records demonstrate that Aristenos held significant positions both in the civil and ecclesiastical administrations.

The development of Alexios’ career needs more attention, however. He belongs to those few individuals who are presented together with a relatively great number of different offices in the sources. It is very likely that Alexios began his career as a deacon of the Hagia Sophia. Nonetheless, he was promoted to high positions quite early in his course. We have at least two more or less strict dates, 1137/38 and 1166, which represent the early and the very late stages of his career. If the dating of Basilakes’ oration is right, we see nearly three decades, when Alexios Aristenos was repeatedly appointed to high judicial positions. His career was apparently little affected by John II’s death and Manuel I’ rise to the throne. Under the former emperor, Alexios was *nomophylax* and *orphanotrophos*. The successor, Manuel I, designated Aristenos to dikaiodotes, which was an even more prestigious function. Alexios

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255 Georgios A. Revelles and Michael Potles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων τῶν τῶν ἱερῶν καὶ πανευφημίων Ἀποστόλων καὶ τῶν ἱερῶν οἰκουμενικῶν καὶ τοπικῶν συνόδων*, 6 vols. (Athens, 1852–59), vols. 2–4. In these volumes, the comments of Alexios Aristenos are edited together with the notes of John Zonaras and Theodore Balsamon.
256 Obv.: Μ(ήτης)Ρ Ἱωάννης Νικολάου; rev.: Θεοτόκε βοήθει Αλέξιῳ διακόνῳ νομοφύλακα καὶ πρωτεκδικώ τῷ Ἀριστηνῷ. Laurent, *Corpus*, vol. 5, pp. 26–27, no. 1650. The obverse bears the iconography of the bust of the Virgin orans with the medallion.
257 Obv.: Μ(ήτης)Ρ Ἱωάννης Νικολάου; rev.: Θ(εο)τόκε β(οήθει) Αλέξίῳ νομοφύλαξ ὁ Ἀριστηνός. Laurent, *Corpus*, vol. 2, p. 484, no. 912. The obverse bears the iconography of the bust of the Virgin orans with the medallion.
258 Obv.: Ὅ τι(το)ι Νικόλαος; rev.: Σφραγ(ίς) νομοφύλακας Αλέξιονίμου τι(νὰ) μέγιστον ἐν τοῖς ποιήσαι, Laurent, *Corpus*, vol. 2, p. 485, no. 913. The obverse bears the iconography of the bust of the Saint Nicholas. Two misspelled words are corrected by Laurent to Αλέξιονίμου and μέγιστον.
simultaneously held lay and ecclesiastical offices. This was a situation, to which the contemporaries had ambivalent attitude. It is not surprising that Basilakes stresses the benefits of unity between lay and church functions in his oration to Aristenos. It is clear that Alexios was one of the most successful representatives of his family.

An uncertain case appears in the second half of the twelfth century. A metrical seal dated to the aforementioned period has been found with a damaged inscription. The seal belonged to an individual who held the title of sebastos and is identified with the bulla itself in the text. Unfortunately, the reading of the family name as Aristenos is uncertain, while the sealer’s given name is completely lost. The contents of this seal make an interesting situation. The problem of the surname questions the connection between the bulla and the Aristenoi on the one hand. Sebastos might have been the highest honorary dignity born by a member of the family according to our knowledge on the other. Even if we accept the identification of the sealer with an Aristenos, the missing first name and the wide dating of the item allows a lot of room for interpretation. The seal can imply that the family maintained a high position in the court around the late career of Alexios Aristenos or even after it. The sealer was probably an otherwise unknown representative of the kindred. Still, one should carefully place this case into the history of the Aristenoi.

The career of the Aristenoi indicates a complex situation. There is no clear evidence of correlation between the position of the family and the most apparent political changes of the government. The Aristenoi were mainly civil functionaries and there was only a seemingly little attempt to enter the military élite before the Komnenian period. According to the sources, the ascension of Alexios I did not have a negative effect on this family. On the contrary, the rank of the Aristenoi apparently rose under the Komnenoi, especially in the early decades of the regime. Michael and Alexios Aristenos were probably the most successful and influential members of their house. Two tendencies from the period should be stressed here in regard to the family. Firstly, in the late eleventh and the early twelfth century, several Aristenoi simultaneously flourished in the administration, and some of them held important positions. Secondly, Alexios Aristenos appears to represent his generation, a later one, alone in the sources. After him there is only an uncertain evidence of the family. Yet this latter clue would also show that the prestige of the Aristenoi further increased in the second half of the twelfth century. This reduction is an interesting phenomenon, yet a further

investigation may be more beneficial together with other families in the comparative analysis.

3. 3 The Pantechnai

The Pantechnai belonged to the important families of the second-tier élite. They reached a relatively high position despite the fact that they were not an old house of the Byzantine ruling stratum. It is true that the appearance of a surname depends on the source material and can lead to false conclusions. Still, the name Pantechnes comes to sight so late in the eleventh century that it implies two characteristics of the house. They had their roots in the civil bureaucracy or at least, they did not come from the Anatolian élite. Furthermore, they did not belong to the leading group of the ruling stratum before the Komnenian period. This subchapter demonstrates thus how a family flourished in the twelfth century, which did not have a noticeable tradition and ancestry before the epoch.

Historical records about the Pantechnai appear no earlier than the late eleventh century. One of the first known members of the family is an anonymous representative. The evidence of this Pantechnes is only given by parallel seals dated to the aforementioned period. The inscription indicates neither the first name nor any office. Therefore, it is impossible to identify this individual with other known members of the family. The position of the kindred is indicated by the cases of his contemporary relatives.

John Pantechnes was one of the representatives of his family who flourished in the early Komnenian period. However, we have evidence only about his late career, and thus one can barely estimate his influence and reputation in the government. Our only known source on him is a letter by Theophylact of Ochrid, probably written around 1108. The metropolitan calls the addressee magistros without any reference to an office in the title. There is an additional letter sent to another member of the family, Michael. In this correspondence, Theophylact gives his condolences to the addressee for the death of a close relative, probably his father. There is a common hypothesis that the deceased was John Pantechnes. Gautier dates this letter shortly after the former one. If Gautier’s dating is correct, the title was

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263 Rev.: Ὅρον τῶν ἐκφορέσματος Παντεχνοῦς νόει, Wassiliou-Seibt, Corpus, vol. 2, pp. 132–33, no. 1693. The obverse bears the portrait of Saint Demetrios holding a spear and a shield (partly visible).
264 Theophylact, Letters, pp. 552–57, no. 120.
265 Theophylact, Letters, p. 553, no. 120, title.
267 Theophylact, Letters, p. 263, no. 39, ll. 1–12.
268 Theophylact, Letters, p. 104.
probably the highest rank John reached through his life. Therefore, one cannot expect a considerable position in the government. Pantechnes’ location is also an interesting question, yet nearly impossible to answer. Theophylact sent his letter to John from Thessalonike after the metropolitan had arrived there by ship from Constantinople. He focused mainly on his troubles during the travel and events close to Ochrid and Thessalonike, but far from the capital. In the same time, he ignores his matters in Constantinople except for a little reference to his sickness there. This indicates that the two individuals met in the capital, and John was interested in pieces of information available after Theophylact’s journey. However, it is still in question whether Pantechnes stayed permanently in the queen of the cities for his duties.

Michael Pantechnes was the most successful member of his family in the early Komnenian period. He was probably the son of the aforementioned John Pantechnes, yet reached considerably superior positions in the administration, compared to his father. There are different kind of sources showing several stages and moments of his career. Theophylact of Ochrid wrote letters to Michael too, since he was much likely the teacher of the latter. A seal dated to the last quarter of the eleventh century calls Michael magistros. Another type dated to the same period represents his title proedros, indicating his promotion. One of Theophylact’s letter proves in its title that Pantechnes was a financial official (proximos) for a time when he held the title proedros. Several narrative sources, such as the Alexiad as well as Theophylact’s and Michael Italikos correspondence, testify that Michael was designated an imperial physician. This evidence is strengthened by a bulla dated to the third or fourth decade of the twelfth century, which calls Pantechnes protoproedros and aktouarios. Although, as imperial physician, he did not hold an extremely high position in regard to its rank in the administrative hierarchy, he had the opportunity to build good

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271 Rev.: Κ(ύρι)ε βο(ήθει) [should be β(οή)θ(ει), M. R.] Μιχ(α)λ προεδρῷ τῷ Παντεχνῆς, Schlumberger, *Sigillographie*, p. 687.
274 Laurent, *Corpus*, vol. 2, no. 1147. The obverse bears the iconography of Saint George holding a spear. Having been related to fiscal duties previously, the dignity aktouarios was given to physicians in the period.
relations to the emperor and his intimate milieu. When Theophylact of Ochrid praises Michael for his abilities in rhetoric, the metropolitan provides an intellectual interpretation and narrative of networking instead of a description of talent in eloquence.\footnote{Still, Mullett considers their relation less instrumental than many other connections of Theophylact: Mullett, \textit{Theophylact}, p. 182–83.} It is not surprising that good relations and ties could have positive effects on a career in the Byzantine administration. Still Michael Pantechnes’ success implies the impact of a well-built network without considerable administrative position and authority. Nevertheless, there is another aspect which is manifest through the evidence of Michael.

One of Anna Komnene’s remarks indicates the high reputation of the Pantechnai. Mentioning Michael only in the account of Alexios I’s late illness, the Alexiad deals with the physician in few words. However, Anna’s short description about Pantechnes gives a very interesting implication about the family. This occurs when Anna Komnene enumerates and introduce the three leading physicians of her father: ‘There were three principal doctors, the admirable Nicolas Kallicles [sic!], Michael Pantechnes (who got his surname from his family) and… Michael the eunuch.’\footnote{\textit{Alexiad}, ed. Reinsch and Kambylis, vol. 1, p. 499, 15. 11. 13, trans. Sewter, p. 510.} While Anna praises Kalikles for his individual abilities, she chooses the ancestry and kinship in Michael’s case. The transformation or succession of name from the kin as a personal attribute and a virtue shows that Michael’s family owned a high reputation and probably an aristocratic status. However, the creation of the Alexiad several decades after the narrated affair raises the question of the retrospective evaluation of the honour that the Pantechnai possessed when Anna wrote her historical work. There is no clear clue for solving this problem without doubt. On the one hand, Anna’s phrasing that represents reputation as heritage suggests that the family had considerable fame before Michael’s activity. On the other, the name of the Pantechnai only appears in the sources shortly before the career of Michael. At this moment however, we have to return to personal issues.

The identity of Michael Pantechnes is a matter of dispute. As it has been demonstrated, several bullae (of Michael) bear the iconography of Saint Demetrios, while another one (calling Pantechnes \textit{aktouarios}) invokes Saint George. Wassiliou-Seibt has doubts about the identification of one sealer behind the different seals. She argues that the sealer of the former type was definitely the imperial physician, while his connection to the other seal is questionable.\footnote{Wassiliou-Seibt, \textit{Corpus}, vol. 2, p. 577, no. 2604.} The identification of homonymous owners of different bullae frequently raises problems.\footnote{Similar problem occurs in the case of the Pepagomenoi; see subchapter 3. 4, ‘The Pepagomenoi’.} Several cases demonstrate that Byzantines sometimes changed the iconography of...
their seals. Nikephoros Botaneiates invoked Saint Theodore and Michael the Archangel on different bullae. It is possible (yet highly hypothetical) that Michael Pantechnes built a strong connection with the Monastery of Saint George of Mangana, which had a hospital, throughout his long years as physician. The representation of this relation by the iconography of the military saint could serve well Michael’s purposes in certain situations. Consequently, the seals in question could belong to the same individual.

A curious seal of a Pantechnes remained from the end of the eleventh century. The curiosity of this bulla is given by the fact that the first name of the sealer is unknown. When the seal was issued, both John and his son, Michael, had active careers, thus the identification of the owner is uncertain. Originally, the seal might have included the first name too, but the inscription is highly damaged now, and the transcription is dubious. It is not surprising that Jordanov did not attempted to choose between John and Michael Pantechnes for identification. However, the court title that is the kouropalates can be reconstructed, and we have enough prosopographical information for making a choice between the candidates. The letter of Theophylact of Ochrid calls John magistros in the title shortly before the addressee’s death. This title was considerably inferior to the kouropalates, and it appears unlikely that John managed to emerge to that rank in a short period. In the same time, we know that Michael reached higher dignities, particularly the protoproedros, which could lead him to the kouropalates. Hence Michael was able to gain the latter rank too.

The only problem with this theory is that it is difficult to paste the date of the seal into Michael’s uncertain course of life. We know his numerous titles and offices from narrative sources and sigillary material too. However, some of this evidence cannot be dated, or the given dating is debatable. Laurent dated the seal calling Michael protoproedros and aktouarios between 1120 and 1130, while Jordanov determined it to the last quarter of the eleventh century. Nevertheless, the omicron-ypsilon ligature (Ѳ instead of Ω) on this bulla indicates a later date closer to the one given by Laurent. The identification of this sealer is

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279 For example, Alexios I, a patient of Pantechnes, was cured and died in the monastery: Alexiad, p. 497, 15. 11. 9; Choniates, History, vol. 1, p. 6, ll. 29–31.
281 Obv.: [Θ(εοτόκε) Β]ο[θ]εί[τω σῷ δούλῳ], rev.: … [κουρο][πα]λάτ[ῃ τῷ]. The obverse bears the iconography of the Virgin orans, while the reverse depicts Saint Demetrios.
282 See above.
still open to doubt, and the problem becomes more complex due to the fact that there was a third representative of the Pantechnai in the late eleventh century.

We have very little information about Philetos Pantechnes, a contemporary relative of John and Michael. Only one known seal maintains his memory from the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Furthermore, the bulla represents its owner as a private man without any reference to his titles or offices.\textsuperscript{283} Thus we have no evidence about his career and influence. One may argue about the anonymous sealer’s identification with Philetos. Still, it is very unlikely that we have the least information about the member of the family with the highest court title and, consequently, the most successful career in comparison to his concurrent kin. Due to the momentary nature of our evidence about Philetos, it is impossible to determine, which generation of the family he belonged to. Such paucity of information does not characterise the other representatives of the Pantechnai.

A less curious member of the family is Constantine, yet our knowledge about him is considerably restricted. Only sigillary material provides a few records of him, and there are uncertainties concerning the identification. A seal dated to the late eleventh century and the first third of the twelfth was issued by a Constantine Pantechnes protoproedros.\textsuperscript{284} A metrical bulla from the first half of the twelfth century belonged to a homonymous individual who probably shared the same identity with the former sealer. This type does not mention any title or office, and the given name of this Pantechnes is uncertain.\textsuperscript{285} The dating of the bullae and the fragmental evidence given by them prevent any certain statement about Constantine’s career. However, his only known title suggests that he gain an administrative position close to the rank of Michael Pantechnes. Nevertheless, the following generation of the family is better recorded.

Theodore Pantechnes was one of the Pantechnai, who held considerable positions in the administration. He appears in the sources during the reign of Manuel I, and evidence suggest a very long career. The earliest mention of him was made by George Tornikes, the metropolitan of Ephesos, in his letters around 1155.\textsuperscript{286} One can obtain little but important information, especially about his offices, \textit{epi ton oikeiacon} and \textit{nomophylax}, from this correspondence. The letter suggests an old contact between Pantechnes and Tornikes, yet their

\textsuperscript{283} Rev.: Κ(ύρι)ε β(οή)θ(ει) Φιλιτων Παντεχν[,] Stavrakos, \textit{Bleisiegel}, pp. 304–05, no. 202. The obverse bears the iconography of the bust of Saint Demetrios holding a spear and a shield.


\textsuperscript{286} Tornikes, \textit{Letters}, pp. 159–61, no. 23.
relation appears less intimate. Another correspondence tells Theodore had close connections with George Bourtzes, the metropolite of Athens. He is also recorded by the synodical documents of the Blachernai council in 1157, holding the titles megalepifhanestatos and protokouropalates together with his aforementioned offices. The typikon of the Monastery of Saint Mamas demonstrates in several passages that Theodore was quaestor and nomophylax in the beginning of 1164. Theodore attended further two synods in 1166 and 1170 as megalepifhanestatos, dikaiodotes and epi ton oikeiakon. He was designated protonobellisimosybertatos sometime between the two councils, since this dignity is also noted during the later event. In 1176, he was still dikaiodotes according to his signature in an imperial order. Eustathios of Thessalonike briefly describes the trial led by Pantechnes against the rivals of Alexios Komnenos protosebastos, the lover of Empress Mary, the regent. The archbishop calls Pantechnes dikaiodotes and epi ton oikeiakon. According to a seal, Theodore held the office of eparch with the title protonobellisimos around 1182. Niketas Choniates mentions Pantechnes too, narrating the sacking of his famous house during a riot in 1182. This latter evidence is very interesting, since it shows that Theodore was able to gather a remarkable wealth during his long and successful career in the civil bureaucracy. Our evidence about his course is impressive. There is a continuity in the line of the known stages of his career for several decades. Tornikes’ letter indicates that Pantechnes began his work in the administration many years before the correspondence. Still this early period remains in obscurity. The end of his career is not more obvious, yet his support to Alexios Komnenos protosebastos probably caused serious problems for him after the rise of Andronikos II.

Theodore had a contemporary and successful kinsman called John. John Pantechnes appears less frequently in the sources, and, seemingly, he never reached as high positions as his aforementioned relative did. It is also worth noting that there is no evidence about the

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287 Tornikes, Letters, p. 125, no. 9, ll. 4–6.
288 Sakkellion, Πατμιακή Βιβλιοθήκη, p. 317.
291 MM, vol. 6, p. 119. Miklosich and Müller dates the document to 1161, but Darrouzès corrects it to 1176: Tornikes, Letters, p. 51.
292 Eustathios of Thessalonike, Capture, p. 20, l. 24–p. 21, l. 9.
295 A very useful survey on Theodore’s career is given by Darrouzès: Tornikes, Letters, pp. 50–51.
exact grade of kinship between the two Pantechnai. These questions occur due to the fact that both of them belonged to the network of George Tornikes. The metropolitan wrote a letter to John Pantechnes too, in which the addressee is called the *megas skeuophylax* of the Great Church, the Hagia Sophia.\(^{296}\) One of his seals dated between 1150 and 1170 designate him as *skeuophylax*, which definitely refers to *megas skeuophylax*.\(^{297}\) Another seal dated to the second half of the twelfth century addresses him as *megas oikonomos* and the phrasing of the inscription reminds the concept of the former type.\(^{298}\) John attended the Council of Blachernai in 1166 according to the synodical documents that give strict and late date to his title *skeuophylax*.\(^{299}\) Not surprisingly, the letter of Tornikes to John indicates more about the writer than the addressee. Nevertheless, some lines of the correspondence, especially at the beginning, imply they had relatively close ties.\(^{300}\) A moment mentioned by Tornikes also shows that John Pantechnes gained considerable reputation, since his document conveyed by the metropolitan inclined the local *doux*, Alexios Kontostephanos, to an immediate action.\(^{301}\) However, Tornikes does not explain the relevant affair, the reasons and consequences of John’s document. Furthermore, he gives vague implications on its effects on his own diocese, the benefices. Hence, it is possible that Pantechnes relied more on the metropolitan’s mediation, and the case rather represents the mutually beneficial relation of the two individuals.

Nicholas Pantechnes is the most curious representative of the family. In fact, we have no information about his career for the lack of any reference to his titles and offices. A lead seal dated to the twelfth century gives the only evidence of his life, yet it does not show anything but his name among personal data.\(^{302}\) Without further sources, it is impossible to determine his reputation and achievements. Furthermore, the unspecific date of the seal means too that one cannot place Nicholas into any generation of the Pantechnai. The number of known members in a certain generation could imply a little about the conditions of family. The case of Nicholas, however, does not give such an opportunity.

The history of the family becomes even more complicated when one draws attention to the evidence about Alexios Pantechnes. Alexios was probably a contemporary of George


\(^{298}\) Rev.: Ὅ μέγας οἰκονόμος Ἰωάννης ὁ Παντεχνῆς, Laurent, *Corpus*, vol. 5.3, no. 59.

\(^{299}\) S. N. Sakkos, Ὅ πατήρ μου, p. 149, l. 33, p. 155, ll. 28–29.


\(^{301}\) Tornikes, *Letters*, p. 171, ll. 1–3.

Tornikes’ friends from the family, John and Theodore, yet the paucity of information allows only suggestions about chronology. The only known source about Alexios’ life is a letter sent by John Tzetzes to him.\textsuperscript{303} Not surprisingly, it is difficult to obtain any exact information about the addressee from the dubious narrative of the text. John Tzetzes mentions Alexios’ brother educated by one of John’s brothers, probably Isaac.\textsuperscript{304} Nevertheless, after beginning the letter with a pun on the recipient’s surname and with praises for the friend’s multiple traits, the writer gives a very interesting remark on Alexios: ‘even if you exalt in the warlike garment, you follow the true philosophy…’\textsuperscript{305} These curious words indicate that Alexios Pantechnes was an educated man who served in the army. This interpretation provides an interesting hypothesis, since the Pantechnai were characterised by their positions in the civil and church administration. There is no evidence about other representatives of the family who took service in the imperial army. Although the compliments in the beginning of the correspondence can be exaggerated glorification of the addressee’s abilities, Alexios’ manifold talent may be related to the combination of education and military service. If the theory is true, Alexios gives an exceptional case in his family, which otherwise did not draw more attention to the army in the period even after his activity.

Another dubious member of the family appears later, in the last decade of Manuel I’s reign. The typikon of the monastery of Saint Mamas, or rather its supplement in 1171, mentions a certain George Pantechnes. He was a witness of the kathegoumenos’ announcement on the privilege of the monastery.\textsuperscript{306} Darrouzès assumes that George held judicial and fiscal offices in the time of the aforementioned document.\textsuperscript{307} The supplement provides us with few suggestions of George’s position. However, his role in the official event as witness implies his judicial charges as Darrouzès supposes. It is also interesting nonetheless that the Pantechnai were involved in the establishment of the monastery mentioned above through the contribution of two members in the different stages of the progress. This indicates a close relation between the monastic community and the family. The Monastery of Saint Mamas was situated in Constantinople, thus, the Pantechnai improved their network inside the capital with their connections to that local institution.

\textsuperscript{303} Tzetzes, \textit{Letters}, pp. 134–36, no. 93.
\textsuperscript{304} Tzetzes, \textit{Letters}, p. 135, ll. 6–7, no. 93.
\textsuperscript{305} κἂν ἐπιγανύσκῃ τοῖς Ἠνουλίοις ἑσθήμασι, φιλοσοφίαν μετέρχῃ τὴν ὁντος, Tzetzes, \textit{Letters}, p. 134, ll. 16–18, no. 93. The preceding lines of the letter deals with Alexios Pantechnes’ abilities: idem, p. 134, ll. 11–16, no. 93.
\textsuperscript{306} Eustratiades, ‘Τυπικὸν’, p. 310, ll. 1–2.
\textsuperscript{307} Tornikes, \textit{Letters}, p. 50.
Like John Pantechnes around the middle of the twelfth century, a certain Constantine joined the ecclesiastical hierarchy some decades later. Constantine also represented the last generation of the family in the twelfth century according to our knowledge. A synodical document mentions Constantine as *hypertimos* and metropolitan of Philippopolis among numerous other clerics attending a council on the rights of the episcopates on 27 November in 1191.\(^{308}\) It is worth noting however that this source does not record his family name. It is noteworthy that another individual, a certain John, held the same position some months later, in January 1192.\(^{309}\) Evidence is given by Constantine himself as he wrote a treatise about the hunting of partridges and rabbits, of which copy remained in a codex of the Escurial.\(^{310}\) Scholars suggest according to chronological aspects that an oration of Niketas Choniates was dedicated to Constantine Pantechnes.\(^{311}\) Although the identification of the individuals recorded in the several sources cannot be performed without a shadow of a doubt, the elements and their correlations imply one figure behind these cases. The evidence indicate that we have a view on the final stage of Constantine’s career. Although there were different possible reasons for a metropolitan’s replacement in theory, death seems the most probable cause of Pantechnes’ department from the church of Philippopolis between November 1191 and January 1192. The vast majority of Constantine’s career is unknown, and there is no information about the way, which led him to the metropolitan seat. Nevertheless, one can imagine the potential benefits, which were provided alone by Constantine’s appointment to this ecclesiastical position to the family.\(^{312}\)

The Pantechnai were a family of the Komnenian period. Their name appears in the sources of the early decades of the era and their fortune was at its peak under Manuel I and the few years after his death. We can reconstruct the development of the family throughout the whole period in general. The closeness of Michael, the imperial physician, to the imperial house was probably the factor that settled their considerable but not extremely high position.

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\(^{309}\) Sakellion, ‘Συνοδικαί διαγνώσεις’, p. 423.

\(^{310}\) M. E. Miller, ‘Description d’une chasse a l’once par écrivain byzantin du XII siècle de notre ére’, *Annaire de l’association pour l’encouragement des études Grecques*, 6 (1872), pp. 28–52. The title of the treatise, unlike the synodical records, reveals the full name of the metropolitan: Τοῦ μητροπολίτου Φιλιππούπολεως καὶ ἑπετήριομου κυρ. [sic!] Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου και έκφρασις κυνηγεσίου περδίκων καὶ λαγών, idem, p. 47.


\(^{312}\) The cases of Theophylact of Ochrid and Michael Choniates clearly shows the gains of the kin from their ecclesiastical duties: Theophylact, *Letters*, p. 529, no. 109, ll. 11–13; Michael Choniates, *Letters*, p. 127, no. 95, ch. 10.
in the government in the twelfth century. It is interesting that we have evidence of more than one member from the most generations. Our knowledge about these individuals indicates that the family was able to gain considerable positions for more representatives simultaneously. However, issues also arise when we reach the personal level. Despite these uncertainties, the Pantechnai belongs to those houses, whose history contributes to our understanding of the longer development of the second-tier élite.

3. 4 The Pepagomenoi

The Pepagomenoi belonged to those families, which did not receive the attention of Byzantine authors in the eleventh and twelfth century. We have evidence on this family only on seals and in documents from the period. This material, as it is indicated in the following pages, gives narrow and fragmental information on the family. Numerous members are recorded by seals or documents, yet the course of the private careers remains in obscurity. The identification of the individuals is also problematic due to the characteristics of the source material. Nevertheless, the narrow evidence still indicates the tendencies that characterise the history of this family. The Pepagomenoi, as the majority of the families presented in this chapter, represented the civil bureaucracy throughout their history. The family came to renown at least decades before the Komnenian regime according to the known sources. Nonetheless, the beginnings raise several questions due to the uncertain nature of evidence.

One of the earliest known members of the family was John Pepagomenos spatharokandidatos. He was asekretis, judge and antigrapheus at the same time according to his seal, which is probably our only source about this individual. The bulla is dated to the eleventh century, which is an extremely wide range, and gives uncertainty about sealer’s career and his position in the history of his family. However, his title and offices can lead to some presumptions. All the three offices are connected to the central government and the capital, yet none of them belonged to the higher positions. The pure notion of judge is a vague indication of his duties, yet it probably means a judge of the hippodrome or the velum. John’s honorary title also shows his low position in the court hierarchy. Since one of the lowest dignities was held by an official at the imperial court in this case, it is likely that we see a moment of Pepagomenos’ career before the inflation of the titles. This suggest that John was designated to these offices sometime in the first half of the eleventh century.

313 Οβν.: Κύριε βοήθει 'Ιωάννη σπαθαροκανδίδατο ύσηκρήτης, τον κρίτη καί άντιγραφέ τον Πεπαχωμένο, Stavrakos, Bleisiegel, pp. 310–311.: no. 205. The seal does not bear any iconography, because it is filled with an inscription on both sides.
It is possible therefore that this John is identical to another sealer. A seal dated to the second and third quarter of the eleventh century represents an official in the court too. According to the bulla, this John Pepagomenos was the *protospatharios* at the Chrysotriklinos, a *mystolektes* and an imperial notary of the *sakelle*.\footnote{Rev.: Ἰωάννης (πρωτο)σπαθ(α)ρ(ίων) ἐπὶ τοῦ Χρ(υσοτρικλίνου) μ(υ)στολέκτ(ης) (καὶ) β(ασιλικῶν) νοταρ(ίων) τ(ῆς) σακ(ε)λλ(ῆς) τ(ῶς) Παγ(ωμένων), Stavrakos, *Bleisiegel*, pp. 292–93, no. 193. The obverse depicts the standing figure of the Virgin (Theotokos Dexiokratea in this case).} These charges imply a mixed position. On the one hand the *protospatharios* at the Chrysotriklinos and the *mystolektes* meant that John spent a considerable time close to the emperor. The former office was connected to important ceremonial duties in the Great Palace. The latter official was responsible for secret imperial messages and his judicial authority was superior to that of the judges of the hippodrome.\footnote{Rev.: Θεοτόκε βοήθεια Κωνσταντίνῳ σπαθαροκουβικουλαρίῳ τῷ Πεπαγωμένῳ, Stavrakos, *Bleisiegel*, pp. 311–12, no. 206. The obverse bears the iconography of the Annunciation.} On the other, the notaries of the *sakelle* took an inferior place in the hierarchy. Thus, Pepagomenos did not belong to the most powerful members of the court and the intimate circle of the emperor. Still, he was in a good position and was definitely favoured by the head of the empire. The identity of this John with the *spatharokandidatos* would mean that this individual achieved a moderate ascension.

Leo is accompanied by Constantine Pepagomenos among the individuals with uncertain dating. It is a question again, whether our information about a member of the family comes from the Komnenian period or the former era. Constantine is only recorded by a seal dated to the last third of the eleventh century. According to the bulla, he held the title *spatharokoubikoularios*.\footnote{Rev.: Θεοτόκε βοήθεια Κωνσταντίνῳ σπαθαροκουβικουλαρίῳ τῷ Πεπαγωμένῳ, Stavrakos, *Bleisiegel*, pp. 311–12, no. 206. The obverse bears the iconography of the Annunciation.} This title raises questions about Constantine’s career. *Spatharokoubikoularios* was originally granted to eunuchs, yet this dignitary was also affected by the inflation of the ranks in the eleventh century. Thus, lay individuals, especially the members of the imperial retinue, received this title too. There is no clue about whether Constantine Pepagomenos was a eunuch or ‘bearded’ official. Nonetheless, the latter option appears more feasible.

A homonymous Pepagomenos flourished in nearly the same period. This Constantine is considered as unidentical with his contemporary. His only known (und unedited) seal dated to the last quarter of the eleventh century calls him *protocestes*.\footnote{Rev.: Κύριε βοήθεια Κωνσταντίνῳ πρωτοβεστείᾳ τῷ Πεπαγωμένῳ, Stavrakos, *Bleisiegel*, p. 312.} Stavrakos stresses the distinction between the two Constantines.\footnote{Stavrakos, *Bleisiegel*, p. 312. The obverse depicts the bust of Saint Nicholas.}
identification in this chapter several times.\textsuperscript{319} In the case of Constantine or Constantines, the difference of the invoked patrons on the seals is the only factor that implies the distinction of the individuals. However, this is also not a perfect indicator of differentiation as it has been demonstrated. Nevertheless, the honorary dignities do not suggest anything about the identity of the sealers in question. The protobestes was an inferior rank, while the spatharokoubikoularios was granted to those in the imperial entourage. Still, the lay bearers of the latter title held modest positions in the government.\textsuperscript{320} Therefore, the donation of the spatharokoubikoularios relied on the closeness to the emperor rather than on the significance of the office. The titles of Constantine spatharokoubikoularios and Constantine protobestes does not contradict their common identity. Nevertheless, it is more suitable to maintain the distinction here due to the lack of information.

From this point, we can analyse the history of the family under the Komnenoi and the Angeloi. All the known members presented in the following part of the subchapter flourished after Alexios I’s ascension to the throne according to the evidence. Although the chronological aspect of this segment is almost certain, there are still numerous questions about the condition of the Pepagomenoi after 1081.

The earliest Pepagomenos with definite date in the Komnenian period was John sebastophoros. We have only one evidence of his existence with certainty from an early year of Alexios I’s reign, 1082.\textsuperscript{321} He attended the trial of John Italos, which was one of the most important internal political events in the beginning of Alexios’ regime. According to the document of the lawsuit, he held not only the title of sebastophoros, but was also ‘the man of the emperor.’\textsuperscript{322} The source does not tell much about Pepagomenos, yet his titles should attract the scholarly interest. The sebastophoros was primarily a dignity for eunuchs, originally denoting a specific duty in the court ceremonial. Still, ‘bearded officials’ could be designated to this title.\textsuperscript{323} In the case of John Pepagomenos, we can assume the second option

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{319} See the case of Michael Pantechnes on pages 77–79.
\textsuperscript{321} However, there is a tessara of a certain John Pepagomenos sebastophoros, whose owner was possibly identical with John recorded in 1088: Schlumberger, Mélanges, p. 167–68, no. 4.
\textsuperscript{322} Jean Gouillard, ‘Procès officiel’, pp. 94–95., 105.
\end{footnotesize}
that he was assigned to such a dignity as layman like Constantine *spatharokoubikoularios. The other designation, the ‘men of the emperor,’ shows special personal ties to Alexios I. John was probably not an important member of the court, but he definitely belonged to the retinue of the emperor.

The frequent appearance of the name John in the sources causes difficulties. The identification of the individuals is a real issue for the scholars here. Three types of seals from the second half of the eleventh century and the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Stavrakos argues that the three sealers were probably identical, yet he denies a connection between these seals and John Pepagomenos *sebastophoros.* The differences between the seal of the *sebastophoros* and the bullae of the other John implies distinction. Nevertheless, there are characteristics that appear on all these items: the lack of iconography and the invocation of Christ. The latter would have been a strange choice for both of homonymous and contemporary representatives of a family.

The case of Leo Pepagomenos shows how important the reconsideration of dating seals is important for the prosopography of the Byzantine families. Leo’s seal, the only known source on his existence, was previously dated to the second half of the eleventh century. Wassiliou-Seibt dates this bulla to the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. According to the seal, Leo was a *protosynkellos.* He probably held this office in the patriarchate of Constantinople, and thus belonged to the church bureaucracy. This was a very important position and it is the earliest evidence of the family’s involvement in the church administration. Leo’s office strengthens the conventional image of Constantinopolitan families, which divided their interest in both the civil and church administration. His testament also demonstrates that one of the Pepagomanoi gained significant positions in the reign of Alexios I.

Theodore Pepagomenos is another representative of his family who flourished in the early Komnenian period. As in the cases of many Pepagomenoi, we have little evidence of

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324 For a more detailed discussion on the personal ties, see subchapters 4. 1 and 4. 4.
325 Obv.: Σφραγὶς Ἰωάννου δούλου Χριστοῦ, rev.: τοῦ Πεπαγωμένου, Birch, *Seals*, vol. 5, p. 79, no. 17883. There is no iconography, since both sides are filled with inscription. Stavrakos corrects the date of the seal to the second half of the eleventh century. Stavrakos, *Bleisiegel*, p. 291. Obv.: Σφραγὶς δούλου Χριστοῦ, rev.: Ἰωάννου τῶν Πατημένων, Stavrakos, *Bleisiegel*, pp. 290–92, no. 192. There is no iconography, since both sides are filled with inscription. Obv.: Κ(ύρι)ε β(οή)θ(ει) τῷ σῷ δούλῳ, rev.: Ἰωάννῃ τῷ Πεπαγωμένῳ, Schlumberger, *Sigillographie*, p. 689, no. 2. There is no iconography, since both sides are filled with inscription. Schlumberger dates it to the 12th–13th centuries, while Stavrakos regards it as contemporary with the other two bullae.
327 Obv.: Λέων πρ(ω)τοσύγκελ(λ)ο(ς), rev.: ὁ Πεπαγ(ω)μένος, Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus*, vol. 1, p. 555, no. 1283; Laurent, *Corpus*, vol. 5.3, p. 43, no. 1675. The seal does not bear any iconography, since it is filled with inscription.
Theodore’s career. He attended the council at Blachernai in 1094, which restored the position of Leo of Chalcedon on his metropolitan seat after several years of exile. The list of this synod names Theodore among the *raiktores*, whose dignity was probably an honorary title at that time.\(^{328}\) It appears plausible that a metrical seal dated to the late eleventh and the beginning of the twelfth centuries belonged to this individual.\(^{329}\) It is worth noting that the *raiktores* were placed on the second lowest position in the hierarchy of the lay participants in the list, followed by only the *bestarchai*. This indicates that Theodore was not designated to an important position in the time of the council.

We find a great hiatus then in the evidence of the Pepagomenoi. From the last years of Alexios I to the reign of Manuel I, there is no information about any representatives of the family. The history of the family in the administration continued after this period. A decline of the Pepagomenoi into the middle stratum and their return to the élite afterwards seem to be possible but highly improbable option. It appears more likely that the source material became fragmental about their constant involvement in the bureaucracy. Nevertheless, we can expect the decrease of the reputation of the family in these decades. The following evidence does not provide us with a clearer picture on these obscure years.

Our bare information on the family is manifested in an official record about John Pepagomenos. He certainly flourished at least in the early years of the reign of Manuel I. There are several sources about John however. An imperial decree (lysis) issued after a petition of Patmos Monastery in March 1145 records John without any dignity.\(^{330}\) He is also mentioned as the man of the emperor in a Latin translation of an imperial chrysobull in April 1145.\(^{331}\) Both records raise interesting questions about this individual. The imperial decree does not suggest John’s official position. Nonetheless, Pepagomenos played an important role in the creation and authorisation of the document according to the account.\(^{332}\) Shortly


\(^{329}\) Obv.: Σφραγις Θεοδώρου, rev.: [τοῦ] Πεπαγομένου, Wassiliou-Seibt, *Corpus*, vol. 2, p. 497, no. 2448. There is no iconography on the seal, since both sides are filled with inscription. There is another type, which was owned by a (probably identical) Theodore Pepagomenos: obv.: Κ(υρι)ε β(οή)θ(ει) Θεοδώρω, rev.: τοῦ Πεπαγομένου, Schlumberger, *Sigillographie*, p. 689 (Wassiliou-Seibt considers it as contemporary to the other seal).

\(^{330}\) *Patmos*, vol. 1, p. 192, no. 19, l. 24.


\(^{332}\) He was definitely not an official at the office of the *megas logariastes* as the Prosopography of the Byzantine World alleges: *PBW* (2016), Ioannes 352, http://pbw2016.kdl.kcl.ac.uk/person/ioannes/352/. The subordinated official of the *megas logariastes* was Theodore Spondyles in truth: *Patmos*, vol. 1, p. 192, no. 19, ll. 24–25. However, Spondyles is mistakenly connected with the office of the *epi ton oikeiakon* by the PBW: *PBW* (2016), Theodoros 196, http://pbw2016.kdl.kcl.ac.uk/person/Theodoros/196/.
after this decree, John Pepagomenos received the semi-official title of ‘man of the emperor’ as it is implied by the imperial chrysobull. This specific dignity was donated to officials of various ranks, despite its sensitiveness as an indicator of personal closeness to the emperor. John was a member of the retinue of Manuel I, but he could still hold a relatively low office in the court.

Another obscure period of the family appears in the second half of twelfth century. At least, one representative of the Pepagomenoi, George, appears in a source from last third of the century. A metrical seal dated to the aforementioned period gives little information about George. The inscription on this bulla does not mention any title or office held by the sealer. Since there is no evidence George’s position in the government, the situation of the Pepagomenoi between the middle and the late twelfth century remains in obscurity. Thus, it is also difficult to judge the background of the family later, at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The most characteristic name of the family, John, appeared in the late twelfth century again. John Pepagomenos seemingly flourished in the reign of the Angeloi. He was involved in a dispute between the Lavra Monastery and the office of the sea and that of megas sakellarios on tax exemption in 1196. He was one of the judges of the velum and held the titles megalodoxotatos and protonobellisimoypertatos according to the document of the case. The lawsuit included more sessions and hearings from 5th May to 25th June and it was led by John Belissariotes megas logariastes and logothetes of the sekreta. John Pepagomenos was one of the numerous judges participating in the trial. The members of this tribunal changed by occasions, Pepagomenos himself attended only the session and the hearing in June. The document indicates that Pepagomenos did not play a significant role in the case. As a judge of the velum, he was a minor judge in the Byzantine judicial system of that period. However, his honorary titles suggest a considerable rank in the bureaucracy, which was excluded from the imperial family. It is also important that he is not the only Pepagomenos known from the turn of the two centuries.

333 Chapter 4 on the individuals of the second-tier élite treats the subject of the anthropoi in more details.
335 Lavra, vol. 1, pp. 355, 357, no. 68, ll. 3, 35. There is an earlier document related to the affair, which does not refer to Pepagomenos: idem, pp. 345–54, no. 67.
337 For more detail, see chapter 4. 1, ‘John Melidones and Thessalonike’.
338 It is worth noting that the use of court titles mostly dissolved in the twelfth century among the lower officials: Magdalino, Empire, p. 183.
Two years later, a Leo Pepagomenos was involved in an administrative affair concerning monastic possession. He witnessed and authorised a *praktikon* issued by the bishop of Hierissos shortly before June in 1198. This document is now lost, yet a chrysobull of Alexios III refers to it. The head of the empire identifies Leo as ‘the *bestiarites* of my imperial majesty.’ Leo apparently belonged to an imperial bodyguard, but an obscurity occurs here. There were two bands of *bestiaritai* divided between the personal imperial and the state treasury. The chrysobull does not specifies the contingent and the *vestiarium* Leo affiliated himself to. He probably had a relatively close connection with the emperor nonetheless. In political terms, Leo reached the highest position among the Pepagomenoi before the fourth crusade. Concerning only the end of the twelfth century, he was definitely the leading figure of his family.

A third representative appears in the sources at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Nikephoros Pepagomenos was concerned in two affairs related to the Monastery of Saint John the Theologian on Patmos. In the first case, the office of the sea confirmed the tax exemption of the monastic community regarding the sea freight of certain measure in 1199. The latter affair dealt with the retrieval of the monk’s lost shipment in 1203. Nikephoros’ only role in these events was his subscriptions in the related documents. According to his signs, he was an imperial notary of the office in both occasions. It is worth stressing that we see the position of Nikephoros for a short period instead of a moment as in the case of many other Pepagomenoi in the era. It is also noteworthy that Nikephoros’ office seemingly did not change during these years. This evidence shows that he held a moderate position in the central administration.

There are several problems with the history of the Pepagomenoi. The paucity of evidence in the reigns of John II and Manuel I prevents us to have a clear picture about the progression of the family. The fact that a Pepagomenos was a man of Manuel I and a late

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339 *Chilandar*, p. 109, no. 4, II. 38–39.
341 The military duties of the *bestiaritai* developed by the late eleventh century: Nicolas Oikonomidès, ‘L’évolution de l’organisation administrative de l’Empire byzantine au XIe siècle (1025–1118)’, *TM*, 6 (1976), pp. 129–30. Note that there is bare evidence of the *bestiaritai*, especially in regard to their organisation, in the late twelfth century.
342 Anna Komnene ambiguously mentions the *bestiaritai* as the household (οἰκειοτέρων) soldiers of Alexios I during the battle of Dyrrachium: *Alexiad*, vol. 1, p. 127, 4. 4. 3. The comparative form stresses the personal closeness of these individuals to the emperor, while the term humbles the significance of kinship in these ties. Nevertheless, none of the two leaders of the *bestiaritai* were apparently relatives of Alexios I in 1094 according to the list of Blachernai: *Blachernai*, p. 218.
343 *Patmos*, vol. 2, pp. 120–27, no. 59.
344 *Patmos*, vol. 2, pp. 128–34, no. 60.
kinsman was a bestiarites of Alexios III raises questions. The latter individual’s position suggests that the ascension of the Angeloi to the throne had positive effects on the situation of the Pepagomenoi. However, the evidence of this increased reputation comes from the time of Alexios III, whose reign was rather a Komnenian restoration than a preservation of a distinct policy of the Angeloi. Therefore, the Pepagomenoi were probably connected to a faction, which approved the traditional Komnenian politics. This may explain why a Pepagomenos was a member of Manuel’s retinue and another one became a bodyguard of Alexios III decades later. The success of the family can be traced by the number of contemporary members, who were simultaneously able to maintain positions in the administration. Evidence supports the existence of this kind of achievement in the early Komnenian period and at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Given the appearance of the most frequent names among the Pepagomenoi, the Johns and Leos apparently represented one line or branch of the family. This line maintained its positions in the government throughout the whole period. However, it is difficult to assume which name covered the father or the son at a given moment. In conclusion, the Pepagomenoi seem to keep a moderate but stable position in the administration due to their good connections in the court.

3. 5 The Sarantapecheis and Tessarakontapecheis

The Tessarakontapecheis were the ‘oldest’ among the families of the second-tier élite, which are the main concern of the chapter. In truth, the length of their history depended on the early development of their family name, while numerous houses of the bureaucracy remained unrevealed until the tenth or rather the eleventh century. Concerning the surname, it is important to note that different forms were applied simultaneously as the title of this subchapter indicates too: Sarantapechos, Sarantapeches, Sarakontapechys and Tessarakontapechys. In the period of main interest, the ‘long’ twelfth century, the last variation was used by the sources, and probably by the family members themselves in the most cases. The main question of this subchapter is that how a notable family, whose age is apparent, managed its position and prestige in a period, when ancestry became a crucial factor without doubt.

347 This problem occurs in the case of John, the judge of the velum, and Leo bestiarites in the late twelfth century. While Leo held the higher position, John had seemingly passed the early stage of his career beforehand according to the combination of his office and titles. In the same time, Leo had to be young enough to perform his duties in the bodyguard.
348 Wassiliou-Seibt, Corpus, vol. 1, p. 394.
The family had a long history, which went back to the period of iconoclasm. The trace of their old ancestry is provided by the fact that the Tessarakontapecheis belonged to the earliest houses, which applied surnames. One of the sources of this family was the chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor. The chronicler gives a curious account of a father and his son, Constantine and Theophylact Sarantopechos patrikios who were close relatives of Empress Irene and probably took charges in the military administration. Theophanes also mentions Leo Sarantopechos patrikios among the conspirators who supported Nikephoros I during his usurpation against Irene. These cases are considered evidence by Cheynet that the appointment of imperial relatives to the key positions had an older tradition in the Byzantine politics than it was expected by several scholars, such as Kazhdan and Magdalino. From the beginnings, our attention is turning to a significantly later period now. A seal was issued by a monk, Leontios Tessarakontapechys sometime in the eleventh century. An unidentified member of the family is mentioned in the Scylitzes Continuatus as a supporter of Nikephoros Basilakes who attempted a usurpation against Nikephoros III. Although there are some questions about the history of the family throughout the centuries, modern scholars agree on the fact that the family had Athenian origins. The evidence is definitely clearer about the circumstances of their emergence than about the following periods until the end of the eleventh century. Their rise was relied on their kinship with Empress Irene, yet their loyalty appears swerving according to the sources. Several Sarantopechoi bearing the title of patrikios, one of the highest dignities, in a short period clearly show the influence of the family in the reign of Irene. The family’s position is less obvious in the eleventh century. However, the reference to a member by his family name among the supporters of the Basilakes in the Scylitzes Continuatus implies that Tessarakontapechys had the means of a significant contribution to the rebellion. Nevertheless, they did not belong to the leading circles of the government throughout the period. The following pages may reveal that the Tessarakonapecheis was able to transmit their authority and prestige to the Komnenian era.

349 Theophanes, ed. Boor, vol. 1, p. 474, ed. Mango and Scott, p. 651, A. M. 6291. About the interpretation of the passage, see idem, ed. Mango, p. 652, n. 6. It is worth noting that the name Tessarakontapechys is recorded in the sources as that of a Jewish magician who exhorted Yazid II, the Umayyad caliph (720–724) to perform iconoclastic policy, PbmZ, no. 7251.
Under the surname of Sarantapechys, one representative of the family, possibly Nikephoros, held an important military position in the early twelfth century. He was appointed to doux according to a lead seal dated to the aforementioned period. The bulla bears a very simple metrical verse, which does not refer to any geographical determination of Nikephoros’ office. Furthermore, the interpretation of the last letters of the inscription is open to debate. The lonely seal, the only known source about this individual, gives little information, still these data are valuable for the analysis of the family. The bulla shows the sealer followed the military tradition of the family, which had been testified by the earliest known representatives of the Tessarakontapecheis centuries before and by the subordinate of Nikephoros Basilakes some decades earlier. It is a question however, whether the surname represented on the seal indicates a distinct branch of the family in that time or the tradition of these different variations was still alive in that time, and the members frequently changed their names. Nevertheless, the other known relatives used the form of Tessarakontapechys.

An evidence of continuity of the family is given by the testimony of John Tessarakontapechys. However, beside his existence, we know very little about this member of the family, and the chronological determination of his career is also uncertain. Only a metrical seal dated to the second and third quarters of the twelfth century gives information about John in a very simple inscription. Despite the iconography on the obverse, the metrical verse on the reverse provides a secular text, referring only to the ownership of the seal. Although the use of a lead seal may imply that John took a charge in the administration, it is impossible to determine his position in the government. The later representatives of the family give more evidence about the situation of the family.

In the case of Theognostos Tessarakontapechys, the court title raises as much problem as information it gives about the position of the family. Theognostos held the honorific dignity of sebastos sometime in the middle and the last third of the twelfth century, when the reputation of that title significantly changed. Our only source about this specific fact and Theognostos in general is a metrical seal dated to the aforementioned period. Although the inscription on the bulla is clear, the dating of this item includes a relatively long period. The later the seal was precisely issued the less reputation lies behind holding the title of

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354 Rev.: Σαρανταπήχου δουκ(ὸ)ς τοῦ Νικ(η)φόρ[ου], Wassiliou-Seibt, Corpus, vol. 2, p. 248, no. 1894. The obverse depicts the standing figure of Saint Nicholas.
sebastos. During the reign of Manuel I, this honorific dignity was primarily maintained for the imperial kin. Of course, this custom was never complete, yet an official out of the leading élite was exceptional before the late twelfth century, bearing this court title. Nevertheless, when a member of the second-tier élite held the dignity of sebastos at any moment in the century, the rank showed a very high position in the stratum.

The testimony of George Tessarakontapechys gives a picture about a typical civil functionary. The evidence of his career implies the importance of intellectual activity, both the correlation and the rivalry between it and the official duties, and the instability of official’s situation. George was an acquaintance of Michael Choniates who wrote several letters, of which four correspondences remained until today.357 This number of letters written to one individual is relatively high in regard to the overall collection of Byzantine epistolography. Obviously, Choniates did not need to fill his correspondences with information useful for prosopographical analysis about Tessarakontapechys. There is no reference to George’s exact office in the letters, yet the author’s implications show a juridical function that was the main responsibility of any civil bureaucrat beside fiscal matters.358 However, Choniates once indicates a crisis in Tessarakontapechys’ career.359 Without any explicit note on George’s office, it is difficult to determine the geographical aspects of his administrative activity. When Micheal refers to Tessarakontapechys’ official duties however, he often mentions the imperial palaces.360 Michael’s mention of the ‘acropolis of philosophy’, Tessarakontapechys’ place of residence, compared to the contemporary and ‘barbaric’ Athens, indicates Constantinople.361 Choniates also pays considerable attention to the addressee’s intellectual exercises.362 It is important to note that three of these letters are dated to a short period from 1183 to 1185, in the early years of Choniates’ metropolitan duty in Athens.363 This means that the correspondences refer to a short part of George’s career, and, moreover, the only undated work does not contain any information about his official activity. Conclusively, the letters present Tessarakontapechys as a bureaucrat in the central government who possibly paid much attention to intellectual matters. The latter’s appearance, particularly by

357 Michael Choniates, Letters, no. 11, 12, 17, 28.
358 Michael Choniates, Letters, p. 38, no. 28, ch. 2. Another reference: idem, p. 16, no. 11, ch. 2. Furthermore, a remark of Choniates implies a high rank that Tessarakontapechys reached: idem, p. 16, no. 11, ch. 1.
359 Michael Choniates, Letters, p. 17, no. 12, ch. 2.
360 Michael Choniates, Letters, p. 16, no. 11, ch. 2; p. 39, no. 28, ch. 4.
361 Michael Choniates, Letters, no. 28, ch. 5. Further references: idem, no. 17, ch. 3 (less explicitly); no. 28, ch. 1, 3–4.
362 Michael Choniates, Letters, p. 16, no. 11, ch. 2; p. 21, no. 17, ch. 2; p. 39, no. 28, ch. 2.
reference to philosophy, in correspondence between such individuals may be easily interpreted as a cliché. Nonetheless, the amount of interest shown by Choniates in this topic in these letters suggests that Tessarakontapechys was highly involved in such issues. There is no clue about Choniates’ ties to the Tessarakontapecheis except George, yet the letters include some notes on the family too.

Michael Choniates also refers to George Tessarakontapechys’ family and ancestry in his letters. The several correspondences between the two individuals includes remarks on these issues, which were important factors in the élite. Thinking about Tessarakontapechys’ activities, Choniates connects his acquaintance’s official duties with the family’s tradition: ‘Whenever we consider the family as great in mind and body as well-grown too, and we think that it is not short of the men of politics and gentleness, we suppose that you spend your time in the imperial palaces.’ The metropolitan also mentions the son-in-law, whose name, not surprisingly, remains unrevealed in the narrative, yet this individual was definitely a governor somewhere out of Hellas and Peloponnesos. These references show George’s reputation in many aspects without doubt. It is interesting which virtues are mentioned by Choniates praising the ancestry of the Tessarakontapecheis, albeit it is more important that the quoted text indicates the fame and reputation of this family. This prestige is not surprising in regard to the old history of the house, yet Choniates’ opinion implies that the Tessarakontapecheis were able to maintain this honour. The marital kinship between George and a governor is also a significant information despite the lack of clear identification. One can agree with the son-in-law’s identification by Kolovou with Demetrios Drimys appears due to the Choniates’ remarks on the official. The metropolitan’s narrative implies a close experience of the curious son-in-law’s abilities, and Drimys was possibly of that age fitting for a marriage alliance with Tessarakontapechys. If the identification is correct, the marriage definitely aimed to maintain the already strong ties between George’s family and the Constantinopolitan bureaucracy. Choniates dated letters to George Tessarakontapechys were written in the reign of Andronikos I or shortly after that. Another member of the latter’s family

364 However, Choniates’ narrative also suggests Tessarakontapechys’ ambivalent attitude towards intellectual activities. Since we do not know George’s own works, we can rely only on the metropolitan’s account that requires critical interpretation. Nevertheless, while some remarks imply that Tessarakontapechys frequently dealt with intellectual matters, Choniates mentions George’s complaint about this subject. These accounts indicate that Tessarakontapechys was not as interested in scholarly issues as Michael Choniates, and he was involved in such activities under the cultural pressure of his social milieu.

365 ὅταν μὲν γὰρ τὸ γένος ἀναλογισμένῳ ἡλίκων τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ σώματος καὶ τὸ εὐφραῖος ὀποίον καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἀπόδον ἀνδρὶ πολιτικῷ καὶ φοροῦντι τὰ μαλακὰ, ἐν τοῖς οὐκοὶ τῶν βασιλείων διατρίβειν σε στοχαζόμεθα, Michael Choniates, Letters, p. 16, no. 11, ch. 2.

shows however that they were able to maintain their relatively high position in the second-tier élite.

The prestige of the Tessarakontapecheis is testified by a certain Constantine in the very late twelfth century. He was involved in a judicial procedure concerning a dispute as a judge. The debate arose between the Monastery of Lavra and some offices of the central government over the exemption of the former institution from paying a tithe on wine. The issue led to several judicial hearings, sessions and two documents from May to June in 1196. The charters were issued and sealed by John Belissarites *megas logariastes*.\(^{367}\) Constantine Tessarakontapechys is mentioned among the judges during three of the four occasions. In all cases, he is recorded as *megalodoxotatos, protonobellisimoypertatos* and the judge of the velum. It is worth noting that Constantine held the two honorary titles and the judicial position simultaneously with other individuals.\(^{368}\) The documents show that Tessarakontapechys’ position was not exceptional and extremely high, since the judges of the velum composing a body belonged to the minor authorities.\(^{369}\) Nevertheless, unlike in the case of George Tessarakontapechys, we know the exact rank of Constantine even for a short period.

We are far from having a clear picture about the history of the Tessarakontapecheis in the ‘long’ twelfth century. Although evidence is derived from various sources, one can only draw hypotheses about some moments of the career of the family. It is clear that the Tessarakontapecheis emerged into the higher élite by serving in the military administration. According to the sources, the tradition of military service was seemingly maintained until the early twelfth century. However, it is a question when the Tessarakontapecheis left the army for the civil administration. There is no clue that any members of the family took charge in the military government. Although this does not necessarily mean that the Tessarakontapecheis transferred to the civil administration in the twelfth century. The old history of the family suggests the possibility that a partial relocation to the bureaucracy occurred earlier as the cases of other ancient houses, such as the Phokades or the Skleroi, show. One can interpret the remarks of Michael Choniates on the Tessarakontapecheis’ long tradition of

\(^{367}\) For a more detailed analysis, see *Lavra*, vol. 1, pp. 345–49, 354–55. The texts of the two documents are edited in idem, pp. 349–54, 355–58.


\(^{369}\) On the judges of the velum, see Gkoutzioukostas, *Η απονομή δικαστικής*, pp. 119–81.
administrative activity as references not only to officeholding in general, but precisely to civil service. The problem of military and civil charges raises the question of branches, and the branches lead to the issue of extent of the lineage in the Komnenian era.

It is worth noting too that the known Tessarakontapecheis in the twelfth century show a relatively great variance of first names without repetition. Due to the restricted Byzantine custom of name giving that the sons inherited the names of grandfathers and uncles, this tendency indicates two options. The first is that the majority of the known members represents two generations at the most. The second option indicates a rather large family producing a great variation of names and the lack of information about a member who inherited the name of his paternal grandfather. In truth, a mixture of both possibilities can be taken into account too. The great variation of first names, regardless of the aforementioned options, indicates that the Tessarakontapecheis successfully maintained their position in the administration and the élite. The success of this family was probably based on the reputation of their ancient ancestry.

When we take prestige into account, it is important to consider the nature of a specific family’s reputation. In the case of the Tessarakontapecheis, we have a vague evidence of the characteristics of their fame. Still it is more than that of other numerous families in the second-tier élite. In his letter, Choniates gives some remarks on George Tessarakontapechys’ kin, and he suggests a long tradition. However, he stresses the officeholding and mental dignity, dealing with the family. The lack of reference to the military virtues may be related to the metropolitan’s disinterest in such merits on the one hand. The narrative context treating the activities of the addressee, a civil bureaucrat, easily leads to the ignorance of warlike values on the other. Therefore, our views on the reputation of the Tessarakontapecheis should carefully depend on the opinions of Choniates.

3. 6 A comparative analysis of families

The detailed analyses of the five families served the exploration of large-scale tendencies. The long twelfth century included changes in the government and society along with persistent social and political frames. Nevertheless, the analysis of the five houses can provide us with distorted results due to the nature of the selection. All the selected families represented the Constantinopolitan élite and were primarily connected to the civil administration of the period. This is one of the reasons why I decided to compare the houses

370 For a more detailed analysis of Michael Choniates’ political attitude, see the subchapter 6.3.
intensively studied in this chapter with other ones examined by other scholars. This subchapter focuses on several questions such as the progression of the families, the relations between the houses, and the factors that determined the political and social positions.

The general progression of the second-tier élite is one of the most interesting questions in the study of this stratum. It may show clearly how the political frames, the extended family government affected those families, which were excluded from the privileged circle of imperial kin. There has been the idea for decades that the second-tier élite was subjected to a general decline in a longer term.\textsuperscript{371} Several family histories confirm this argument and Magdalino supports his argument with other reasonable points. He mentions some factors, such as the fragmentation of property by inheritance, that definitely placed burden on the members of the second-tier élite. Does the investigation on the selected houses confirm or challenge this theory of general degeneration? The Akropolitai were a relatively old family with Constantinopolitan origins who did not reach the higher echelons of the bureaucracy neither in the eleventh nor in the twelfth century. Their positions appear stable at the lower levels of the administration nonetheless. The Aristenoi emerged from humbleness in the early eleventh century. They probably took advantage of the renewal of urban culture. They definitely reach their apogee in the Komnenian period. The Pantechnai appears in the sources in the late eleventh century, thus their rising is almost related to the ascension of the Komnenian dynasty. They managed a considerable but gradual development in the hierarchy until the reign of Alexios II. The Pepagomenoi did not hold any higher offices of the civil administration, but some of them built close connections to the emperors. These ties mainly relied upon the physical closeness to the head of the empire. The Tessarakontapecheis were one of the oldest families in the Byzantine élite. They had a long military tradition before the Komnenian era and they maintained their connection to the army until the twelfth century. Throughout the twelfth century, civil offices were the Tessarakontapecheis’ main interest. According to the sources, the Tessarakontapecheis reached the peak of their reputation under Manuel I when one member received the title of sebastos. None of these families experienced a gradual decline throughout the period. Most of them managed to develop and rose to their climax at different times in the twelfth century without entering the leading élite. These families represent only a small part of the second-tier élite nonetheless.

Other families of this stratum also need attention in this analysis. The second-tier élite included a wide range of individuals with various political and social ranks and was a

\textsuperscript{371} Magdalino, \textit{Empire}, pp. 188–89.
heterogeneous social group in terms of the origins of the houses. Thus, it is beneficial to briefly observe other families, which have been the focus of other studies. The Skleroi are attested in the sources throughout the entire period, yet we have little information about their exact situation after the death of Alexios I. The lack of reference to their offices suggests low ranks in the twelfth century nevertheless. In this case, they experienced a considerable decline.\textsuperscript{372} The Basilakai reached important ranks in the army until the early twelfth century. The signs of decline already appeared in the late eleventh century according to the testimony of Mary Basilakaina and her siblings. It is well known that Nikephoros Basilakes the Younger left the military service for intellectual activities.\textsuperscript{373} This clearly shows that the possibilities of his family decreased in the army in the reigns of Alexios I and John II.\textsuperscript{374} The Opoi primarily served in the army and took charges in the military administration in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. They seemingly played an important role even in the reigns of John II and Manuel I without any evidence of kinship between the family and the imperial dynasty.\textsuperscript{375} The Anzades belonged to those families, which never reached the higher levels of the government throughout their known history. Unfortunately, all information on their positions comes only from the eleventh century. The considerable sigillary evidence of the Anzades from the twelfth century remains silent about both the offices and the titles. Still, Seibt and Nesbitt opine within reason that the Anzades had a relatively stable position in the lower echelons of administration.\textsuperscript{376} It is worth mentioning that Seibt and Nesbitt ignore the Monk Basil Anzas\textit{ orphanotrophos} who is mentioned in a\textit{ lysis} of Manuel I in 1171.\textsuperscript{377} The Krateroi were in a similar situation in the twelfth century, although they had a significantly longer and more distinguished ancestry.\textsuperscript{378} The Kastamonitai and the Xeroi had a good reputation in the first half of Alexios I’s reign. The former family flourished in the army, while the latter one rather in the civil bureaucracy. Both houses seemingly lost their prestige in the


\textsuperscript{373} Basilakes, \textit{Orations}, p. 74, ll. 3–10, no. 3, ch. 38.

\textsuperscript{374} Alexander Kazhdan, \textit{Армяне в составе господствующего класса византийской в XI–XII вв.} (Yerevan, 1975), pp. 103–6.


\textsuperscript{377} Nicolas Svoronos, ‘Les privilèges de l’église à l’époque des Comnènes : un rescrit inédit de Manuel 1\textsuperscript{er} Comnène’, \textit{TM}, 1 (1965), p. 326. Magdalino, ‘Innovations’, p. 159 n. 49 also refers to Basil Anzas, but questions the date given by Svoronos. Seibt and Nesbitt record several Basils among the Anzades (Seibt and Nesbitt, ‘Anzas Family’, pp. 201, 204–5, nos. 19, 27, 32), but there is no clear evidence of their identity with the\textit{ orphanotrophos}. On the\textit{ orphanotrophos}, see pages 121–22.

imperial court due to involvement in the Anemas conspiracy around 1100. They were in a marginal position under the Komnenoi, but rose to higher ranks again in the reign of the Angeloi. These examples confirm the picture indicated by the investigation on the five families. The Anzades particularly show a similar way by Basil orphanotrophos who reached a position considerably superior to those of his kinsfolk. The houses of the second-tier élite show different ways of social mobility, primarily inside the stratum. There is no evidence that the families in this social group sustained a general decline throughout the period. There were several houses that gradually lost their positions in the government. However, their histories represent individual cases, and are related to the own abilities of these families and their members, or rather inabilities, to maintain their social status. The study of the families also shows that the various tendencies of social mobility presents only a part of the problem.

The stability of political and social position is another important question. It has been mentioned that several members of the new Komnenian second-tier élite were able to reach significant positions in the government. The real difference between the two strata of the Byzantine élite was the ability of the families to maintain their positions. The cases of the Aristenoi, the Pantechnai, the Kastamonitai and the Xeroi demonstrate that none of the families of the Komnenian second-tier élite were able to retain their reputation and influence at a high level in the court and the administration for a period longer than one generation. Conversely, the great houses related to the imperial dynasty managed to hold their importance for a longer time. This inability of the Komnenian second-tier élite mainly occurs in important positions due to more intensive competition. This characteristic leads to the idea that the main factor of distinction between the two strata of the Byzantine élite was the kinship to the imperial family instead of the offices.

Kinship between the families of the second-tier élite is an interesting problem of research. The relations and intermarriages among the houses of the leading élite is a well-studied area. The kinship ties inside the second-tier élite have received less attention however. One of the reasons for the moderate interest is the paucity of evidence for this kind of relations at the lower levels of the ruling stratum. We have still interesting examples of


marriages and other ties. Anna Skleraina was probably married to Elias Bourtzes phylax sometime in the twelfth century.\textsuperscript{381} George Skylitzes, possibly the acclaimed poet, married Anna Eugeneiotissa.\textsuperscript{382} Niketas Choniates was the brother-in-law of John and Michael Belissariotes.\textsuperscript{383} The Hephaistoi (the family of Theophylact of Ochrid) had intermarriage with the Tornikai.\textsuperscript{384} These cases give a complicated picture about the family politics of the second-tier élite. Several examples (Bourtzes, Skylitzes and Choniates) imply that marriages were proposed between families of similar reputation. However, the alliance of the Hephaistoi and the Tornikai demonstrates ties between houses with different background. Such marriages can indicate a decline of the social position of the more distinguished family. Nonetheless, Tornikai’s relations to the Hephaistoi and their effects are intricate. The marriage of Anna Skleraina and Elias Bourtzes implies that the decline of the Skleroi began only in the second half of twelfth century. It is worth noting that the five families that were the focus of this chapter do not give any clear evidence for this problem. However, it is interesting that the Pantechnai had close connections to two houses, the Hephaistoi and the Tornikai, which had kinship with one another, for more generations.\textsuperscript{385} The problem of kinship among the families of the second-tier élite may deserve a broader investigation. However, the fragmented evidence still remains a great constraint.

The detection of kinship between the members of a given family causes another problem. We know numerous representatives of several families in the second-tier élite, yet there is significantly less information about the exact relations between the kinsmen, kinswomen. John and Michael Pantechnes, father and son, are among the few exceptions. George Tornikes informs us about his two brothers, Demetrios and Leo. Furthermore, one cannot forget the cases of the Choniates and the Belissariotes brothers. A less direct evidence suggests fathers and sons behind the repetition of names, John and Leo, among the Pepagomenoi. Without any proof of the grade of kinship, only the combination of names in a given family can give opportunity for presumptions. The Akropolitai, the Aristenoi, the Pantechnai were apparently able to provide more than one member with a position in the administration


\textsuperscript{382} Marcianus 524, pt. 2, p. 152, no. 249. For several notes on this poem, see Andreas Rhoby, ‘Zur Identifizierung von bekannten Autoren im Codex Marcianus graecus 524’, MEG, 10 (2010), p. 186.


\textsuperscript{384} Theophylact, Letters, p. 529, no. 109, ll. 11–13; Tornikes, Letters, pp. 25–28.

\textsuperscript{385} Theophylact of Ochrid had good relations to Michael Pantechnes, the imperial physician, and his father. George Tornikes, a grandnephew of Theophylact, was a friend of John and Theodore Pantechnes. See pages 76–77, 79–81.
simultaneously. One can assume furthermore that the source material only preserved a part of such situations. It is not surprising that the second-tier élite did not restrict the number of children despite its political and economical instability. However, we should add that large family could benefit the members of the stratum. The bigger family could increase the density of the connections with other houses and thus, it might have strengthened the political and social position. Due to the nature of the élite and the Byzantine government, influence in the administration was more important than the unity of the patrimony even in the Komnenian period. However, this family policy did not result in a great spread of families in a longer term according to the sources. There could be many reasons for this discrepancy: the decline of several branches, early death, childlessness or monastic life of some descendants.

The analysis of the families revealed some characteristics of the second-tier élite. These were tendencies, which now demonstrate the effects of the political circumstances. They also show the development of the stratum and the changes in its position in the Byzantine society. The histories of the families indicate that the regime still provided opportunities for the second-tier élite to gain some significant offices throughout the period even without ascension into the leading élite. The position of the stratum as a whole was rather stable in the twelfth century. Instability occurred among the houses of the second-tier élite, especially among the prominent ones, instead. Unfortunately, the investigation on the families does not completely answers the important questions of family politics in the social group. Individual and separated cases of marriages are known, but their impact on entire families is ambiguous. The study of the individual level may reveal more about the effects of family politics in the following chapter.
4 Individuals in the Byzantine élite

The analysis of the personal level is an important part of the investigation on the second-tier élite. The previous chapter dealt with numerous individuals, but the main focus was on the tendencies, which concerned the position of whole families in the stratum. Ancestry and family become the background in this chapter however. This part of the thesis focuses on three individuals with several restrictions. Firstly, the main factor of the selection is a specific phenomenon, which is related to all three cases. It is the titles of dependence, *anthropos*, *doulos* and *oikeios* that were held by the bureaucrats in question. These designations were the semi-official affirmations of special ties between a powerful individual and a member of his retinue. The special interest in this particular element provides the fine opportunity for a comparison between different agents in the bureaucracy. Secondly, two of the three selected individuals had flourished in the early Komnenian period, before the old second-tier élite transformed into the Komnenian one. The reason for this choice is that these bureaucrats in the earlier examples built careers, which show similarities to the progression of the officials in the Komnenian second-tier élite later. Thirdly, this chapter does not give complete biographies or a description of whole careers, since neither the evidence nor the interests of this section support this kind of efforts. This chapter seeks to reveal the personal opportunities and strategies of the individuals to build their careers in the administration. It also has a special interest in the analysis of the relation between the titles of dependence and the progression of the officials.

4.1 John Melidones and Thessalonike

This subchapter deals with those connections and networks which worked out of the official hierarchy of the administration and helped officials belonging to the second-tier élite to build their careers. Personal ties were very important for both the superior individuals and the subordinates. Still, the career of a bureaucrat who reached a lower rank depended on which network built around an individual of higher status he joined. Furthermore, connections to various regional networks were of considerable importance. The focus of this subchapter is John Melidones, about whom charters of the Athonite monasteries, Iviron and Docheiariou give some information for a period almost identical with the rule of Alexios I. John Melidones was a civil official, whose career and connections with several agents and
social groups reveal some characteristics of the lower bureaucracy in the early Komnenian period.

John Melidones is first mentioned in a charter issued by Theodoulos, the bishop of Ezeba, to the Athonite monks of Ivron in 1085. The charter determined the dispute between the bishopric of Ezeba and Ivron on the ownership of the Spelaiou monastery, a mill, a vineyard and other estates.¹³⁸⁶ The bishopric asked the Caesar Nikephoros Melissenos for judgement, although he was not able to make a decision himself. Thus, John Melidones, together with Stephen Chrysodaktylos, was sent to inquire the affair and to adjudge.¹³⁸⁷ The geographical aspects of the dispute meant that Melidones got connection with the vicinity of Thessalonike during the investigation at latest.

What makes this affair interesting for the analysis is the offices held by Melidones. According to the charter, he was judge of the Hippodrome and _megas oikonomos_ of the Constantinopolitan Oikoproasteion Monastery, which offices highly connected him to the capital.¹³⁸⁸ Leonora Neville states that Byzantine administration had some flexibility in regard to the appointment of functions and duties.¹³⁸⁹ Andreas Gkoutzioukostas revealed however that it was a custom to send the judges of the Hippodrome to provincial affairs.¹³⁹⁰ Melidones’ attendance at a provincial affair did not harm the system, but conformed to the mechanism of Byzantine government. The dispute needed a careful investigation that Nikephoros Melissenos was not able to make, and this caused the invitation of other judges whether they were local or ‘outdoor’ officials.

However, the question remains of how John Melidones got involved in a provincial dispute. The main factor can be revealed by means of a title, which shows personal ties between Melidones and Melissenos and informal connections out of the official hierarchy of the government. This title is the _anthropos_, which showed that its bearer is ‘the man of’ an individual with higher reputation, and was similar to the _oikeios_ and _doulos_.¹³⁹¹ Beside the

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¹³⁸⁶ _Iviron_, vol. 2, pp. 141–150, no. 43.
¹³⁸⁷ _Iviron_, vol. 2, pp. 146, no. 43, ll. 13–14.
¹³⁸⁸ _Iviron_, vol. 2, pp. 146, 149, no. 43, ll. 14, 59. It is interesting that there is no mention of Chrysodaktylos’ office, only his titles were recorded: _idem_, pp. 146, 149, no. 43, ll. 13–14, 58.
¹³⁸⁹ Neville, _Authority_, pp. 20, 34–38.
offices and court titles of John Melidones and Stephen Chrysodaktylos, the charter of Theodorou mentions that they were ‘the men of our master and Nikephoros Melissenos caesar’. The judges sent from Constantinople were chosen for the investigation due to their close connections to the caesar. This case indicates how personal ties were important between officials serving the different institutions or segments of government.

Another document shows that Melidones had economic interests near Thessalonike, which strengthened his relation with this region. Economic interests, especially landed property, could give a more stable and enduring connection with the local society. John Komnenos, the doux of Thessalonike issued a praktikon recording all estates of Iviron monastery in 1104 (after Melissenos’ death), which mentions the lands of Melidones:

‘Distinctly defined fields of 300 modioi are found in the locality of Galykos near Bramodilon, lying at the border of the lands of Demetrios Margarites koubouclesios and libelios recently possessed by John Melidones proedros, which fields have such a description: the possession of Melidones proedros lies in the west, the middle road driving from Michalitzes to Thessalonike in the north, another road driving from Kleidion to Thessalonike in the south, and the crossing of the two roads on the east. After we measured and acknowledged these fields, we have given them to the monks. And these are the properties out of the town of Thessalonike.’

It is worth noting that this document focuses on the property of Iviron, revealing only the extent of the monastic lands and missing the measurement of the neighbouring estates. Thus, the scale of Melidones’ estate remains in obscurity. Furthermore, we do not know whether it was his only landed property, since most of the domains of Byzantine landlords did not form unified clusters of lands. They lay dispersed across the empire instead. Thus, we are not closer to determine Melidones’ wealth, however the fact of his landed property is crucial.

393 Εὐρήθησαν (καὶ) καὶ (α)τ(ὰ) τὴν τοποθεσίαν τοῦ Γαλυκοῦ πλη(σί)ον τοῦ Βραμοδίλ(ου) χ(ωρά)ρ(ὶ)α(in) ἰδιοπεριφέρεισσα μοῦ(ὸν) τριακοσίων δυν(ὸν) ἀπὸ τοῦ περιορισμοῦ τῶν τοπίων Δημητρ(ὶ)ου κοιμομελεσί(ί)ου (καὶ) λαβελεσιοῦ τοῦ Μαργαρίτη, τῶν δεσποζομ(έν)ον νῦν παρὰ Ιω(ανν)οῦ προέδρου τοῦ Μελιδόνη, ἔχοντα σκιαγραφίαν τούτῳ ἐκ μὲν δύσεως ἐστὶν ἢ αὐτὴ δεσποτείατο τοῦ Μελιδόνη προέδρου, ἐξ ἀρκετοῦ ἡ μεσαία ὁδὸς ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ Μιχαήλ(ῆς) πρὸς Θεσσαλονίκην ἀπέγουσα, ἐκ μὲν(ὴ)μημ(ῆ)ς ἢ ἐπὶ τοῦ Κλειδίου πρὸς(ς) Θεσσαλονίκην ἀγοῦσα, ἐκ δὲ ἀνταλλάξας ἢ μὲς τῶν δύο τοῦτ(ον) ὀδόν ἄντινα δὴ χωράτη(ὶ)α τῶν τριακοσί(ον) μοῦ(ὸν) μετήρπαντες (καὶ) συνοράσαντ(ες) τοῖς μοναχ(ῶ)ις παρεδώκαμεν. (Καὶ) τὰ μὲν ἐκτό(ς) τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης τοῦ κάστρου ταῦτα, Iviron, vol. 2, p. 237, no. 52, ll. 321–25.
394 However, evidence from a later period indicates the attempt of landlords to build unified landed property: Paul Magdalino, ‘The Byzantine Aristocratic Oikos’, in Byzantine Aristocracy, pp. 99–100.
It is important to inquire how Melidones acquired his estate. This information could help the reconstruction of his career and social background. The *praktikon* of John Komnenos states that Melidones succeeded Demetrios Margarites in lordship, whose name appears only in this charter, yet he was possibly an official in the church of Thessalonike. This part implies that the estate was possessed by another individual in the time of a former record of possession, possibly a part of the so-called *kodix*, the cadastre of all cultivated lands in the empire. Another solution could be that the *praktikon* got the record on Maragarites directly from the document, which authorised the acquisition of the aforementioned fields by the monastery. Our knowledge of Margarites is a key point of the research, although it still helps hypotheses rather than real answer.

It is plausible that Melidones received his estate from Nikephoros Melissenos as a reward for his earlier services. Melissenos was the semi-official governor of Thessalonike for a while, and he had the right to grant lands to anyone in the territory under his authority. Another charter records that the *caesar* adopted this way of rewarding as he gave an estate to one of his relatives, Samuel Bourtzes, and this donation was later confirmed by the emperor too. John Melidones did not have kinship ties with Melissenos, but had personal ties as ‘the man of the caesar’, and he probably was a useful man of the emperor’s brother-in-law. Thus, Melidones could deserve the donation of an estate near Thessalonike.

Melidones developed close connections to the local élite of Thessalonike through his relation with Melissenos. Furthermore, this relation apparently persisted after the death of the *caesar*. His estate near Thessalonike was probably a factor that helped him to maintain a relatively lasting interaction with the local society. He appears as a *protokouropalates* and judge in a charter, which is the sale contract between Eudokia and the Docheiariou monastery on her dotal estates near Thessalonike in 1112. Melidones is mentioned here as a judge and a member of a council inquiring the legality of the sale. The council was full of representatives of the local élite that indicates Melidones’ reputation in Thessalonike.

The mention of Melidones’ office in Eudokia’s charter gives an equivocal reference. Either Melidones could have remained a member of the judicial council of the Hippodrome

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395 *Iviron*, vol. 2, p. 237, no. 52, ll. 322–23. We know further two individuals, who simultaneously held the offices kouboukleisios and libellesios. They were Nicholas in 982 (*Iviron*, vol. 1, p. 129, no. 4, l. 79) and Stephen Argyros in 1097 (*Lavra*, vol. 1, p. 278, no. 53, l. 42). Both of them were related to Thessalonike through their offices.

396 This part of the *kodix* was called *isokodikon* in Byzantium. The most famous example of the *isokodikoi* was the so-called Theban cadaster: Nicolas Svoronos, ‘Recherches sur le cadastre byzantin et la fiscalité aux XIe et XIIe siècles: le cadastre de Thèbes’, *BCH*, 83/1 (1959), pp. 1–145.

397 This donation is studied in more details in subchapter 5.3.

398 *Docheiariou*, pp. 68, 72, no. 3, ll. 13, 71–72. The sales contract is analysed in details in the subchapter 5.2.
or could have become an administrator of a province. The word *krites* was not an attributive given for his judicial duty during the assembly, since he had no special role then according to the document. Therefore, it was his real office. Since Andronikos Doukas was the civil and military governor of Thessalonike and Serres, as *doux* and praetor at that time, Melidones cannot have been the judge of Thessalonike nevertheless. Furthermore, his dignity indicates he was not a modest provincial bureaucrat, but he held a more considerable office such as the judge of the Hippodrome in Constantinople. His participation in the investigation, therefore, was accidental, and its goal was to increase the significance of the council.

After the reconstruction of John Melidones’ career, it is also important to place his successes into a social environment. The main question was whether he had an origin from Thessalonike, Constantinople or another region. There are two factors that oppose the first option. Firstly, Melidones appears as a reliable member of Melissenos’ retinue some years after the appointment of the *caesar* to the administration of Thessalonike. This seems a less likely situation for an individual who belonged to the local élite of a province. Melissenos probably spent a considerable time in the capital instead of Thessalonike. Only those could hope for recognition and favour who accompanied him in Constantinople for a long period. Thus, it was more plausible that Melidones built a connection with Thessalonike through his service under Melissenos. Secondly, the only known landed property of Melidones was clearly a new acquisition, and it was related to the government of the *caesar* in the district. Of course, Melidones could have provincial origins, yet his offices suggest Constantinopolitan education. Thus, his career was primarily connected to the capital. Beside his origin, Melidones’ progression in the administration is also an important question. His dignities seem higher and higher at first sight, yet they steadily lost their values from the middle of the eleventh century and this progress did not come to an end under Alexios I. This indicates that Melidones may not have achieved a massive rise in the hierarchy, but he at least kept his rank for many years.

John Melidones was able to build a stable career due to his connection with Nikephoros Melissenos, however he seemingly could not rise above the rank of the judge of the

399 The document tells that Melidones was the leading inquirer during the audition of Eudokia, but the decision was officially made by a council of local dignitaries. Furthermore, the decree was issued by Elpidios Chandrenos *logariastes*. See subchapter 5. 2.
400 *Docheiariou*, pp. 67–68, no. 3, ll. 10, 16. Before the Komnenian period and in the early years of Alexios I’s reign, the civil administration of the themes of Boleron, Strymon and Thessalonike was under the authority of judges and, later, that of a common *krites*: A. Gkoutzioukostas, ‘Judges’, pp. 67–68. By the second half of Alexios’ rule, the civil and military governments of these provinces were apparently united in the hands of a *doux* as in the majority of the empire: Hélène Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, ‘Recherches sur l’administration de l’empire byzantin aux IX–XIèmes siècles’, *BCH*, 84/1 (1960), pp. 61–64.
Hippodrome. Many questions about Melidones’ career are still open, and his family background is entirely obscure. It is difficult, if not unreasoned, to determine which substratum of the second-tier élite he belonged to not only for the narrowness of source material, but for his close relation to the élites of Thessalonike and Constantinople. Nevertheless, this study of John Melidones’ career provides useful additions to the history of Komnenian government and elite structures.

4. 2 The man of Alexios I: Constantine Choirosphaktes

Constantine Choirosphaktes was an interesting figure of the early Komnenian period. He appears in enough sources for a reconstruction of his career. However, he was never considered among the most influential individuals during the reign of Alexios I. This is the kind of situations, which is the main interest of the research. It is important to note that Choirosphaktes represents a period, when the Komnenian second-tier élite had not developed yet. It is also a question, to which strata Constantine belonged in the old élite. Nevertheless, he is connected to several phenomena and features that marked the Komnenian second-tier élite later.

Constantine Choirosphaktes was a descendant of an old family of the Byzantine élite. The history of the family can be traced from the ninth century. The sources suggest that the Choirosphaktai came from the theme of Hellas or the Peloponnese.  

The family apparently had connections with both the civil and the military administrations. The first known member of the family, Leo Choirosphaktes, built a successful career in the imperial court in the reigns of Michael III, Basil I and Leo VI. He was also a famous intellectual of his time who supported the absolutism of imperial power. Numerous members of the family are known from the late tenth and the eleventh centuries. I would only mention two of them by name here. Michael Choirosphaktes was a powerful local landlord at Lakedaimon in the time of Saint Nikon the Metanoite.  

Around 1030, Leo Choirosphaktes was the archon of the exkoubitoi, one of the imperial guards at that time. Other members of the family held various offices throughout the century: strategoi, judges in the capital and the provinces, court  

401 Georges Koliás, Léon Choerosphactès magistre, proconsul et patrice. Biographie—correspondence (texte et traduction) (Athens, 1939), pp. 16–17. Koliás relates the success of the Choirosphaktai to a more general tendency of the rise of families originating from the Greek mainland. This phenomenon was probably connected to the reign of Irene who relied on the houses from this region. Consequently, the social ascension of Choirosphaktaí can be compared to the emergence of the Tessarakontapecheis.


403 The Life of Saint Nikon, pp. 195–207.
bureaucrats. It is worth noting that we know several contemporary relatives of Constantine Choirosphaktes. The only problem is that most of them are preserved in the sources without titles and offices. There is one exception, Basil Choirosphaktes proedros who was a logariaastes and the ‘servant’ of John Komnenos in 1103. It is important to note that the evidence of the family becomes highly fragmental after the generation of Constantine. There is one more factor that needs attention here. According to Nikephoros Bryennios, Constantine was a kinsman of Nikephoros III Botaneiates by marriage. The evidence thus shows that the Choirosphaktai were a powerful and successful house before Constantine. They were able to build kinship with the imperial family sometimes. It is also interesting that they attempted to maintain strong connections to both the army and the civil bureaucracy for a considerable time. However, the civil way seemingly became more successful by the second half of eleventh century. These factors definitely determined Constantine career.

Constantine’s career began in the reign of Nikephoros III. A source suggests that he was a prominent figure in the government in those years. Bryennios informs us that Choirosphaktes was sent by Nikephoros III to the rebelling Nikephoros Bryennios the Older together with Straboromanos as an ambassador. The historian and soldier praises Constantine as a clever, learned and decent official. It is a question whether Choirosphaktes proved these abilities in his early years or Bryennios mentioned them as retrospective remarks on Constantine’s whole career. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that all these characteristics, intelligence, education and prudence, were primarily civil and meritocratic virtues. Furthermore, Bryennios refers to Choirosphaktes’ kinship with Nikephoros III, but not to the fame of the paternal ancestry.

Constantine progressed rapidly in the early years of the Komnenian regime. This is interesting due to the fact that he was a favoured by the emperor who was overthrown by the Komnenoi. A document of the trial of John Italos mentions Choirosphaktes as protoproedros and protonotarios (first notary) of the post (dromos) in 1082. This is the earliest information about him from the reign of Alexios I. In 1083, Constantine was sent by the emperor to an embassy to the Holy Roman emperor, Henry IV. Anna Komnene gives a detailed account about this event, and she calls Choirosphaktes protoproedros and the leader of the

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406 Iviron, vol. 2, p. 211, no. 51, l. 133.
408 Bryennios, bb. 261–63, 4. 2.
409 Bryennios, p. 261, 4. 2.
dignities (katepano ton axiomaton). He became one of the major judges as epi ton deeseon by 1088, when he was involved in imperial donations of fiscal exemption to the Monastery of Saint John the Theologian on Patmos. He was ‘the man of the emperor’ according to the two documents of the grant. These examples show that he considerably rose from subordinate position to one of the most important civil offices in few years. His duty first known from this period suggests much about his situation at the moment of the main political change. His post as protonotarios seems inferior to his political position under the former emperor, Nikephoros III. The title protoproedros, which was still a notable dignity in the first years of Alexios I, also implies that he was situated in a less favourable milieu for a short time after the ascension of the Komnenian dynasty. However, his attendance on the trial of Italos suggest that he began to recover his reputation in the court by that time. Considering these circumstances, his emergence in the hierarchy of the administration appears even more remarkable.

Constantine’s progression raises questions in the last decade of the eleventh century. The chronology of his appointment is uncertain in these years. He attended the council of Blachernai in 1094, when he bore the honorific title of kouropalates. Cheynet presumes that Choirosphaktes was not designated to any office at the time of the synod. Two types of seal testify that he was a praetor, and one of them defines the subordinated theme, Hellas and Peloponnese. The other seal only testifies Constantine’s governorship without the territory. Thus, it is a question whether the bulla was issued during his charge in Hellas and Peloponnese or not. It is even more interesting what his appointment to a province meant to his career. The praetor was slightly inferior to his former office, epi ton deeseon. The difference between the two position was not only their significance in the administration. The

411 Alexiad, vol. 1, pp. 112–23, 3. 10. 2–5. The katepano ton (basilikon) axiomaton was a curious dignity, it was probably a variant of the older epi ton basilikon (or protospatharios/katepano ton basilikon); DOS, vol. 3, p. 58; Nicholas Oikonomidès, Les listes de préseance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles (Paris, 1972), p. 328. It is worth noting that Nesbitt and Oikonomides assume a certain Constantine protospatharios and katepano of dignities identical with Constantine Choirosphaktes. The former individual is known from a lead seal dated to the eleventh century: obv.: Κ(υριε) β(οή)θ(ει) τῳ σῷ δού(λῳ) Κων(σταντίνῳ) (πρωτο)σπαθ(αρί)ῳ ἐπὶ τὸν Χρ(υσο)(τρι)κ(λίνου), rev.: Κων(σταντίνῳ) πρ(αί)τω(ρα) τῷ Χοιροσφάκτῃ, DOS, vol. 3, pp. 58–59, no. 39. 9. It is generally believed that the seal was issued decades before the ascension of the Komnenian dynasty. Cheynet rejects the identification due to the chronological distance between the sealer and Constantine Choirosphaktes’ proven service as the katepano of dignitaries: Cheynet, ‘Choirosphaktai’, p. 101.

412 Patmos, vol. 1, p. 337, no. 48, l. 188; p. 343, no. 49, l. 255.

413 Blachernai, p. 218.


415 Obv.: Ε[ΛΛ]ΙΩΣ ΜΕ ΚΑΙ ΠΕΛΟΠΟ[Σ] ή νήσος δέχου, rev.: Κωνσταντίνου πραίτωρ τῶν Χοιροσφάκτην, Wassiliou-Seibt, Corpus, vol. 1, p. 332, no. 733. There is no iconography, since both sides are filled with inscription. Obv.: Χ(ριστ)ὶ βοηθεῖ ἐν λόγοις ἐν πράκτοις, rev.: Κωνσταντῖνῳ πραίτωρ τῷ Χοιροσφάκτῃ, Laurent, Bulles métriques, p. 243, no. 738. There is no iconography, since both sides are filled with inscription.
closeness to the emperor was even a more important factor of the value of these posts. The *epi ton deeseon* was definitely more eminent in this sense. However, the designation to praetor did not necessarily suggest the decrease of imperial favour. Constantine’s reputation was still high in the early twelfth century according to several events.

There is a point of Constantine’s career, which needs more consideration. He was probably a civil governor of a theme, which partly coincided with the diocese of Ochrid in territorial terms. This information is suggested by a letter of Theophylact of Ochrid, which was written to Nicholas Anemas. The narrative of this letter is ambiguous, however. Theophylact praises the recipient as if the latter would be the new governor. However, the archbishop asks Anemas to help Choirosphaktes. This implies that Constantine was the superior of Nicholas. It appears improbable that Choirosphaktes was designated as a *doux*, for his career does not indicate such an appointment. Therefore, Constantine had to be the civil governor and Nicholas was his subordinate. In truth, Theophylact never mentions the specific office of his friend. His remarks on the governance by Anemas can be an implication of the deputy’s regular attendance and his importance in the daily management of the district in the absence of the governor. The letter is undated and, thus, it is difficult to determine the date of his governorship in this region.

The most interesting point of Constantine’s career was his semi-official title, ‘the man of the emperor.’ He received this designation in the early years of Alexios I’s reign. There are only two sources about this title of Constantine, charters of Alexios I and Anna Dalassene to the Patmos monastery in April 1088, as it has been mentioned above. These documents were official orders (*pittakia*) that informed different offices of the central government on the imperial donation of tax exemptions and its confirmation by a chrysobull. Both charters indicate that Constantine first granted the privileges to the monastery. The imperial chrysobull only authorised this preliminary act in truth. It seems therefore that Choirosphaktes played a significant role in the donation. Given the fact that man of the emperor was a designation of close personal tie between a superior and a subordinate individual, Constantine’s involvement in this sensitive political affair is not surprising. The dignity shows that Choirosphaktes belonged to the retinue of Alexios I. This also underlines Constantine’s progression in the government. However, it is important to note that this title is only connected with

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Choirosphaktes for a specific affair in the sources. There is no more evidence out of the two
documents about the donation. The highly honorific and semi-official title coincided with
Constantine’s most prominent office, the epi ton deeseon. In the same time, he was far from
the end of his career. His governance in more districts was a diminishment in the later years
in terms of official position. Still, this course does not indicate the loss of imperial favour.
An event shows that Constantine’s reputation remained high until his late years.

The Life of Saint Meletios the Younger written by Nicholas of Methone provides a short
portrayal of Choirosphaktes, which deserves our attention. Meletios gained great fame in the
second half of the eleventh century and he lived near Myoupolis when Choirosphaktes met
him. The narrative clearly states that the event happened in the time, when Choirosphaktes
was the civil governor of Hellas and Peloponnese. The life tells us that the reason for the
meeting was the serious disease of the governor’s favourite servant. The author repeatedly
mentions in the short narrative that Choirosphaktes continuously begged the hesitant saint
to heal the suffering member of his entourage. The account does not include much informa-
tion about Constantine Choirosphaktes at first reading. However, it is very interesting that
the life principally represents Choirosphaktes as a powerful figure. He is introduced into the
narrative as the concurrent governor of the province, and is also portrayed as an individual
surrounded by subordinates. In fact, his repeated requests to Meletios suggest an assertive
figure. It is striking that there is no general statement on piety of Choirosphaktes. The life
only mentions his confidence in Meletios, i.e. reverence for the holy man, but it serves the
portrayal of the saint rather than the description of the governor. One cannot state without
doubt that the life provides a negative narrative on Constantine Choirosphaktes. Still, this
hagiographic work definitely shows a distant attitude to the governor.

The Life of Saint Cyril Phileotes is another hagiographic work, which shows the reputa-
tion of Choirosphaktes. Cyril had a great influence and reputation in the Komnenian court
in the second half of the eleventh and the early twelfth century. The holy man was visited by
several members of the imperial family and other important individuals. Constantine also
saw Cyril in his cell shortly before the death of the saint. Choirosphaktes intended to donate
an estate at Derkos, yet the saint refused to obtain the property. The date of their conversa-
tion is unknown, but it had to happen some years before the saint’s death. Cheynet argues that

420 The Life of Saint Meletios, p. 68, no. 1, ch. 22.
421 It is worth noting that this account belonged to a chapter, which deals with Meletios’ miraculous cures: The
Life of Saint Meletios, pp. 67–69, no. 1, ch. 22.
422 The Life of Saint Cyril, pp. 143–45, 34. 1–4.
Constantine’s access to the holy man demonstrates Choirosphaktes’ closeness to the Komnenoi. The high reputation of Choirosphaktes is indirectly indicated by the life of the saint nevertheless. Constantine’s intention to donate his estate for religious purposes also implies that the meeting happened in a very late moment of Choirosphaktes’ career. The event shows that Constantine could maintain his high prestige in the court in his late career too.

The account on the conversation with Cyril provides us with other information about Choirosphaktes. The narrative definitely focuses on the holy man, yet it still shows some interesting clues about Constantine’s circumstances. Kataskepenos, the author, shows a generally positive attitude towards the visitor. He describes Constantine as a pious individual that is a crucial aspect in this work. The positive attitude is not disturbed by one moment in the account when Choirosphaktes corrects the saint. Cyril paraphrases a biblical phrase, which he had heard right before Constantine arrived, to his visitor: ‘Do not give your heart to wealth, if it is donated.’ After the holy man’s monologue, Constantine replies, citing the right words of Psalm 61: ‘Wealth if flows.’ Cyril only gives a short, but important answer: ‘You as you learnt, but me as I was taught.’ The modified citation from the psalm plays a key role in the account, since it sets the main idea of the story about the rejection of the grant. Although Constantine’s correction does not affect the primary argument of the narrative, his remark on the main thought of the conversation has a special function. It focuses the reader’s attention to a contemporary debate. The vocabulary of Cyril’s explanation shows the same thing from different aspects. In the case of Constantine, the text indicates his own knowledge. In the case of Cyril however, the stress is on the teacher, even if he is not identified. It suggests the authority behind the saint’s education, and the account implies its divine background. This comparison thus reminds us of the rivalry between the learned church élite and the supporters of the ascetic and monastic life in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Kataskepenos’ work definitely promotes the latter faction. Constantine was probably not involved in this debate, but his figure was suitable for making such reference.
The most important aspect of short passage is that it represents Choirosphaktes as an educated individual in a religious narrative. It is striking that this is a characteristic of Constantine, which gets attention beside his piety from an author outside from Choirosphaktes’ main milieu, the administration and the imperial court. It also corresponds to the opinions of other authors. His education and intelligence were Choirosphaktes’ main abilities, even if he did not become a notable intellectual, but a competent official.

Constantine Choirosphaktes’ career shows the opportunities of a civil official in the early Komnenian period. His progression under the Komnenoi is interesting, since we know his strong connections with the former regime. It makes his case comparable to other individuals, because it treats a general problem. This issue includes the effects of political change at the top of the government on the bureaucracy, which did not belong to the closest circle of the emperor. This question deals with the confines of old second-tier élite, and Choirosphaktes is a good subject of an investigation on the problem. However, Constantine’s social and political position raises doubts in a period before the development of the Komnenian second-tier élite. His offices and his semi-official title, the man of the emperor, became attributes of the second-tier élite later. Still, the evaluation of imperial favour in a reign, when kinship did not overwhelm the traditional ties of service between the head of the empire and his servant yet, is intricate.

4. 3 The man of Alexios III: John Belissariotes

John Belissariotes’ built an extraordinary career in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. His administrative activity represents the last and declining stage of the Komnenian period. For chronological reasons, he is the only one among the three individuals in the focus of the chapter who belonged to the Komnenian second-tier élite. His career continued after the fourth crusade, the ending limit of our main interest, and it is necessary to pay attention to those years in this case too.

John Belissariotes is not the only known representative of his family in the twelfth century. However, the evidence suggests the Belissariotai did not belong to the old houses of the Byzantine élite. Cheynet deems the Belissariotai a family which emerged in the Komnenian period. Our earliest clue of them, a metrical seal of Stephen Belissariotes, is dated to a period from the late eleventh and the first half of the twelfth century. Neither Stephen’s...

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430 Cheynet, Pouvoir, p. 415.
431 Rev.: Σφραγ(ὶς) Στεφάνου τοῦ Βελ(σ)αρ(ι)ωτ(ου), Wassiliou-Seibt, Corpus, vol. 2, p. 724, no. 2894. The obverse depicts the bust of the Virgin (Theotokos Episkepsis).
function nor his rank is revealed on the bulla. Further representatives of the house appear in the sources from the middle of the twelfth century. The seal of the Basil Belissariotes was created with a concept similar to that of Stephen’s bulla. According to this Basil’s position remains in obscurity too. The situation is different in regard to Theodore Belissariotes who witnessed a letter written to Soterichos Panteugenos, the patriarch of Antioch, in 1157. This document calls him a deacon of Hagia Sophia. Our knowledge about the Belissariotai significantly increases in the time of one generation, three brothers and a sister. John Belissariotes whose career is discussed in details belonged to this generation and was the eldest brother. One of his siblings, Michael, was designated sebastos and dikaiodotes, which meant one of the highest positions the members of the second-tier élite could reach in the late twelfth century.

The evidence implies a significant ascension of the Belissariotai in rank and authority in the second half of the century. Although it is important to note that there is no information about the position of the family in the early Komnenian period. In the middle of the period, the Belissariotai seemingly possessed moderate ranks in the church, yet this assumption is derived from a lonely record related to a specific situation. Nevertheless, one can have a little doubt about the emerging tendency of the family’s social and political status.

The intermarriage between the Choniatai and the Belissariotai raises some questions about the circumstances of the latter house. Niketas Choniates married the sister of John Belissariotes, and this information is valuable for the analysis of second-tier élite due to the paucity of clues concerning this aspect of the stratum. The evidence is given by the Choniatai through their letters and orations. Michael Choniates’ remarks on his kinship with the Belissariotai implies two facts about the marriage: this alliance was forged after a long friendship between them and it was formed after Michael’s appointment to the metropolitan see of Athens in 1182. Another letter by him shows the practical side of the relation when the metropolitan asks for support concerning the rights of his church. However, in several cases, Michael Choniates stresses that the good relation to the Belissariotai was based on their friendship rather than the marriage alliance. Nonetheless, the sources and the general

432 Rev.: Σφραγὶς Βασιλείου Βελισσαρειώτου, Laurent, Orghidan, no. 433. The obverse depicts the standing figure of Virgin with a medallion.
434 Lavra, vol. 1, p. 357, l. 36; Patmos, vol. 1, p. 108, l. 34.
435 Michael Choniates, Letters, no. 15, ch. 1. Simpson suggests that the wedding was around 1186: Simpson, Niketas Choniates, p. 16.
circumstances explain the interests of the Choniatai in the marital kinship with the Belissariotai. The question is what were the benefits of this alliance to the latter family. Although Cheynet ranks the two families into the same category of emerging houses with reason, the Belissariotai, in truth, had been residents of Constantinople for a longer time. Their connection to the capital can be traced from the middle of the twelfth century through the testimony of Theodore, the deacon. Therefore, John Belissariotes and his siblings were at least the second generation of their family in the city. Referring to the marriage as a marker of troubles that the Belissariotai had building relations to the other houses of Constantinople, even to the older or notable ones, is misleading however. We have no information about the marriages of the brothers, and thus the context of marital policy and the position of the Belissariotai in this aspect is missing for such an assumption. The Choniatai’s personal abilities indicates more.

The interest of the Belissariotai was probably related to the network of Michael Choniates. The majority of this network was built during Choniates’ years of education with his teacher, Eustathios Kataphloron, the later archbishop of Thessalonike, and the other pupils. It is well-known that such circles, which were assembled around several teachers, were crucial phenomena and factors in the Byzantine élite throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries.\textsuperscript{438} The letters of Michael Choniates testify his extended network, which includes some really important figures of the imperial administration beside the Belissariotai.\textsuperscript{439} Some scholars suggest that the successes of Niketas Choniates significantly relied on his elder brother’s network.\textsuperscript{440} The mechanism of this support is clearly revealed in a letter of Michael to Constantine Pegonites, whom the metropolitan begged to care of Niketas.\textsuperscript{441} The testament of Michael Choniates shows the political aspects of such network and its benefits to the family. It is possible that the friendship between the metropolitan and the Belissariotai formed in the circle of Eustathios. Therefore, the network of John Belissariotes probably shared various common elements with that of Choniates. However, we have too little information about John’s circle to make certain assumptions. Nevertheless, Michael Choniates


\textsuperscript{439} Among the members of Choniates’ network one can find numerous illustrious individuals such as Demetrios Tornikes, Euthymios Tornikes, Basil Kamateros, Michael Autoreianos, George Xiphilinos, or Theodosios Matzoukes. A valuable analysis of Michael’s personal network is given by Roskilly, ‘Λογισται τοι πολυμενες’, pp. 316–23.


\textsuperscript{441} Michael Choniates, \textit{Letters}, p. 6, no. 3, ch. 6.
connections to important figures were still valuable for his other acquaintances. Such networks of education were even more significant for relatively new and emerging families, such as the Belissariotai. Since their ancestry lacked considerable prestige, strengthening the ties among the members of a circle by marriage was an effective and essential way of securing their social status.

Fortunately, we have some evidence for the education of John Belissariotes. Niketas Choniates’ funeral speech for John and Michael Belissariotes surveys John’s career in this oration, although he focuses on several moments for rhetorical purposes. The speech shortly deals with John’s education and the beginnings of his career. Niketas argues that John focused on pragmatical rather than theoretical knowledge. This attitude was manifested in different ways. John preferred rhetorical studies to philosophy according to the oration. Furthermore, Niketas briefly suggests that his deceased friend did not have an excellent education. The orator attempts to shade this information by comparing John’s natural abilities with those of several ancient idols, Demosthenes and Cicero. It is clear that Choniates presents an imperfect characteristic of Belissariotes as in a positive way as possible. John apparently got an appropriate or good education, yet it was far from the complete and ideal one by the civil and intellectual standards of his milieu. Belissariotes’ learning completely explains why he is known only for his administrative activity instead of any intellectual work.

The early years of John’s career remains in obscurity. Michael Choniates gives a remark on the situation of the Belissariotai in the funeral oration for his brother, Niketas. In this passage the metropolitan indicates that John and Michael Belissariotes took charges in Constantinople, while Niketas Choniates was appointed to offices in the provinces. The indication of provincial duties clearly shows that these lines deal with the early stage of Niketas’ career. However, it is a question whether John still spent his early years in the administration in that time. He was probably older than Niketas and closer to Michael Choniates in age. Therefore, John began his career earlier with probability, yet this part of his life is completely unknown. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that John stayed in the capital during the early 1180’s.

442 Choniates, Orations and Letters, p. 150, ll. 31–33, no. 15.
443 Choniates, Orations and Letters, p. 152, ll. 1–3, no. 15.
444 εἰς ἐν ἐκράθησιν σύνταγμα παρὰ τοσὸν ἀχώριστον παρ’ ὅσον Βελισσαριώτα τις μὲν ὡς τὰ πολλά εἰσι τῆς μεγαλοπόλεως τὰ πρόσφορα οἷς εἶχον ἀξιόματι διεπολιτεύοντο, ὁ δ’ ἐμὸς ἀδελφὸς καὶ εἰς ἐπαρχίας καὶ τὰς ἔξω πόλεις... ἐστέλλετο, Michael Choniates, Σωζόμενα, vol. 1, p. 352, ll. 12–16.
Fortunately, we also have some information about Constantine’s duties in Constantinople in the early years. Our source, Niketas Choniates’ oration, does not give too much details about this period. Nevertheless, the rhetorical work still provides sensitive facts. Niketas states that John began his career at an unidentified tribunal. The orator later states that Belissariotes successfully attempted to enter the imperial court and gained the favour of the emperors. Except the very late offices, orpanotrophos and protasekretis, Choniates does not mention any exact position that Belissariotes held throughout his career in the core text of the oration. The repeated implication in the speech that John dealt with law and judicial matters gives little help, since the vast majority of the Byzantine bureaucracy had to perform tribunal activities. It is noteworthy that Choniates refers to the beginning of Belissariotes’ judicial service and his entry to the imperial court separately. The two events are isolated by an intermediate argument about John’s education and rhetorical abilities. It can mean that Belissariotes had started his career at a tribunal in the capital, before he joined the imperial court itself. However, one should be careful about the chronological arrangement in this section of Choniates’ speech. It is possible that the account on John’s first duty is essentially identical with the later description of his entry into the central government.

The evidence remains ambiguous in the later part of Belissariotes’ career too. There are several informative sources about John’s position in the government, yet they are mostly related to a very short period of his life. Therefore, we still rely on Niketas Choniates’ oration in order to broaden the scope of the investigation on Belissariotes’ progression. Niketas states that John frequently changed his position in the administration and held several offices simultaneously. It is also important to note that Belissariotes constantly emerged in the rank throughout his career according to the orator. This latter remark is probably a euphemism, yet John was on an ascending way in the administration in the late twelfth century as we will see later. The main problem of Choniates’ narrative and the development of his friend’s career is that Niketas does not mention any emperor of those years by name. Belissariotes

445 Choniates, Orations and Letters, p. 151, ll. 13–25, no. 15.
446 Choniates, Orations and Letters, p. 152, ll. 24–26, no. 15.
447 The title is another story. It presents numerous offices of John Belissariotes: epi ton oikeiakon, logothetes of the sekreta, megas logariastes, protasekretis and orpanotrophos, Choniates, Orations and Letters, p. 147, ll. 22–24, no. 15. It is worth noting too that he refers to the office of logariastes with the phrase λαγοποτεον τα δημοσα χρηματα, Choniates, Orations and Letters, p. 153, ll. 18–19, no. 15.
448 The main reason for this characteristic was the lack of distinction between the financial and judicial functions in the Byzantine administration: Paul Magdalino, ‘Justice and Finance in the Byzantine State, Ninth to Twelfth Centuries’, in Angeliki E. Laiou and Dieter Simon (ed.), Law and society in Byzantium, 9th-12th centuries (Washington, DC, 1994), pp. 93–116.
449 Choniates, Orations and Letters, p. 151, l. 26–p. 152, l. 21, no. 15.
450 Choniates, Orations and Letters, p. 153, l. 32–p. 154, l. 12, no. 15.
served under numerous rulers and survived several radical changes on the imperial throne. The paucity of evidence prevents the scholars from the analysis of John’s efforts to maintain his position in the government in the turbulent political circumstances. However, the lack of alternative sources causes the real problem rather than the undetailed account by Choniates.

An interesting implication can be found about the early position of Belissariotes in a letter of Michael Choniates. The metropolitan of Athens wrote to the Belissariotes brothers shortly after the fall of Andronikos I. In this letter, Choniates refers to the reign of Andronikos I, representing it as a tyranny. The metropolitan uses a biblical parallel, the story of the children and the oven, to describe the dangerous and immoral political circumstances under Andronikos I. A very similar narrative can be found in a letter of Choniates to Theodosios Matzoukes. The writer strengthens his argument with a reference to the same biblical account. However, Choniates parallels Matzoukes to Obadiah, the pious official of Ahab, too. Furthermore, the metropolitan describes his friend as a lion trainer who tamed the tyrannical emperor, Andronikos I. It is interesting that Michael Choniates applies similar ways to discuss about the same period with different individuals. However, the letter to Matzoukes includes a longer and more detailed argument that is based on biblical references. It indicates that Matzoukes’ office placed him very close to Andronikos I. The letter to the brothers implies that the Belissariotai also took charges in the central government in those years. Still, the shorter narrative about their danger in Andronikos’ court suggests that they were not designated to as distinguished positions as Matzoukes.

One of the few obvious periods of Belissariotes’ career is dated to the late years of the twelfth century. John was involved in several affairs related to two monastic communities, the Great Lavra at Athos and the Monastery of Saint John the Theologian on Patmos. The first affair was the aforementioned debate between the sekretion of the sea and Lavra about the latter’s exemption on the freight of wine. Belissariotes led a tribunal for the inspection in 1196. John held the title sebastos and was appointed to megas logariastes and the logothetes of the sekreta during the sessions of the court. The second case is recorded in a document sent by Belissariotes to the doux of Crete, Nikephoros Kontostephanos, in November 1197, in order to have the local government acknowledge an imperial decree on a

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454 See page 89.
455 *Lavra*, vol. 1, p. 354, no. 67, l. 114; p. 358, no. 68, l. 53.
tax exemption of estates owned by Patmos on Crete.\textsuperscript{456} The third case treated Patmos and Crete again. Belissariotes then requested Kontostephanos to give the monastery a complete fiscal exemption.\textsuperscript{457} John Belissariotes was \textit{sebastos} and \textit{megas logariastes} at the time of these latter affairs.\textsuperscript{458} He almost reached the ranks that a member of the second-tier élite could do in the late twelfth century. He was designated to the two most important positions of the civil administration, the \textit{megas logariastes} and the \textit{logothetes} of the \textit{sekreta}. There is an interesting change between 1196 and 1197 in the position of Belissariotes. John signed the two documents sent to the Monastery of Saint John the Theologian only as \textit{megas logariastes}. It appears that he was dismissed from the office of \textit{logothetes} of the \textit{sekreta} in the meantime. As it has been mentioned he frequently changed his positions in the government according to Niketas Choniates. This and other evidence suggest that the change between 1196 and 1197 was not a sign of decreasing prestige and imperial favour.

The affair of the Great Lavra was the occasion when Belissariotes was called the man of the emperor. It is interesting that this designation only appears in a lonely moment of the case. The earlier decree of Belissariotes cites some parts of the order (\textit{prostaxis}) of Alexios III, which asks John for the investigation on the exemption of the monastery. In one fragment, the emperor calls John his household servant (\textit{oikeios}).\textsuperscript{459} The \textit{oikeios}, \textit{oikeios anthropos} in its complete form, was parallel with the titles \textit{doulos} and \textit{anthropos}. Since the imperial request was the starting point of the judicial progress, it had to be issued shortly before the sessions of the tribunal and their documentation. It is noteworthy therefore that Belissariotes himself does not use this semi-official title in his decrees. The ignorance is more striking in the later document (no. 68), in which there is no citation from the imperial order. Thus, there is no mention of the designation, which shows the close ties of service between him and the head of the empire. This ambiguity asks for a reconsideration of this kind of titles. The case not only shows the temporary nature of this designation, but it also raises questions about the selective representation of such honorary epithets.

An imperial chrysobull indicates an additional office that John could hold once. The document was issued by Alexios III on behalf of Patmos in 1197. Two copies are preserved in the archives of the Monastery of Saint John the Theologian, which differ from one another in content at several parts. The version B was signed by Michael Belissariotes \textit{sebastos},

\textsuperscript{456} \textit{Patmos}, vol. 2, pp. 108–14, no. 57.  
\textsuperscript{457} \textit{Patmos}, vol. 2, pp. 115–19, no. 58.  
\textsuperscript{458} \textit{Patmos}, vol. 2, p. 111, no. 57, l. 13.  
\textsuperscript{459} \textit{Lavra}, vol. 1, p. 350, no. 67, ll. 24–25.
John’s brother who was designated to dikaiodotes according to the subscription.\textsuperscript{460} Niketas Choniates mentioned that John and Michael shared the same honorary dignities and replaced one another in the official positions.\textsuperscript{461} This remark by Choniates was probably an exaggeration, yet it could have some background. One can assume thus that John Belissariotes was also appointed to dikaiodotes at in an uncertain period of his career. Since he reached even higher offices until the end of the twelfth century, a designation to dikaiodotes seems probable.

Another less obscure period of John’s career was his few years after the fall of Constantinople in 1204. Since Niketas Choniates had the opportunity to give a funeral oration for his friend, they must have stayed in the same court, that of Theodore I Laskaris. Choniates states in his speech that Belissariotes was orpanotrophos and protasekretis at the end of his career.\textsuperscript{462} It is worth noting that Niketas does not mention that John had any problems with receiving positions in the new government. Consequently, Belissariotes’ career lasted until his death around 1208. It is intriguing that John remained in Nikaia together with Niketas Choniates. He was a member of the retinue of Alexios III some years earlier, and apparently did not follow his master who built his own realm after the sack of Constantinople. Belissariotes’ life around the fourth crusade is highly obscure. Still, John’s separation from Alexios III raises questions about his political motivations and about the mechanisms of personal ties in general.

The last offices of Belissariotes also need some further consideration. The two positions, orpanotrophos and protasekretis, were slightly inferior to the offices held by him in the late twelfth century. However, Niketas Choniates pays a considerable attention to the fact that his friend was an orpanotrophos, the director of the imperial orphanage. Choniates use this position to strengthen the rhetorical argument about Belissariotes’ morality too. Choniates also refers to the importance of John’s ability to manage landed property.\textsuperscript{463} This latter remark implies that the orpanotrophos still maintained his old significance in a specific area. Magdalino argues that the Komnenian restoration of the imperial orphanage primarily served to increase the imperial authority over ecclesiastic and monastic properties.\textsuperscript{464} Nevertheless, the history of the orpanotrophos in the early thirteenth century is ambiguous.\textsuperscript{465}

\textsuperscript{460} Patmos, vol. 1, pp. 108, no. 11b, ll. 34–35.
\textsuperscript{461} Choniates, Orations and Letters, p. 156, l. 36–p. 157, l. 2, no. 15.
\textsuperscript{462} Choniates, Orations and Letters, p. 154, ll. 13–14.
\textsuperscript{463} Choniates, Orations and Letters, p. 154, l. 13–p. 155, l. 17, no. 15.
The evidence shows therefore that Belissariotes held very important offices after the collapse of the empire too. It is striking that he was able to maintain his reputation in the Nicaean government despite his former connection to a rival emperor. His personal abilities and a well-structured network could explain this achievement. However, we do not have enough information about the latter factor to observe its significance in this situation.

There are contradictions in the analysis of John Belissariotes’ career. One can find numerous holes in the evidence for his life, while several information about his progression deepens our understanding about the circumstances of the Komnenian second-tier élite in a certain scale. His relation to the title ‘oikeios of the emperor’ is a curious part of his career. The temporary appearance of the designation was conventional according to other evidence. It is striking however that he personally ignored the use of this semi-official title, when the emperor granted it to him during the same judicial process. John’s decision raises questions about the attitude towards the designation. The close connection with the emperor was one of the most important factors for any member of the Byzantine bureaucracy. Given this characteristic of the élite, Belissariotes’ separation from Alexios III after the fall of Constantinople is also a noteworthy case in the observation of the relations and ties in the Byzantine society.

4.4 A comparative analysis of individual prospects

The analysis on the individual level surpasses the confines of the stratum. The broad scope comes not only from the selection of officials for detailed observation, but from the nature of several phenomena that are related to the main interest of this chapter. Although the three cases reveal numerous aspects of the circumstances of individuals outside the leading circle, the comparative analysis pays more attention to one specific topic, the titles of dependence and their background. Furthermore, it briefly deals with the tendencies of personal progression and the opportunities of the individuals for a later comparison with the level of family. The limits of the thesis and this chapter does not allow to include more themes for detailed discussion in the following pages.

The semi-official titles of dependence raise several questions. This phenomenon was highly connected to the second-tier élite in the Komnenian period. However, it is important to note that it considerably surpassed the chronological limits of the stratum. Such designations existed before the development of the Komnenian second-tier élite, and they were used during the Palaiologan era too. The connection between these titles and the lower echelon of
the ruling stratum was not essential, but the correlations developed due to the inferior position of the social group. None of the imperial relatives, the members of the Komnenian leading élite became the ‘men’ or ‘servants’ of the emperor. Behind this difference, there was a factor more essential than the question of superiority and inferiority nevertheless. The titles of dependence are derived from the Byzantine idea of oikos, the household.\footnote{It has been well studied that the oikos was more than a microstructure of the Byzantine society. It became a fundamental element of the political and social views of the Byzantines, Neville, Authority, pp. 66–77.} The increasing influence of the oikos on the political culture is manifested in the appearance of gambros, the son-in-law of the emperor, as an official court designation during the reign of Manuel I too. Since the imperial relatives and their monopoly in the Komnenian leading élite was a part of the same phenomenon as the titles of dependence, there was no space for the designations of the latter kind among kinsmen of the emperor. This is the final reason why the anthropoi, douloi and oikeioi were connected to the second-tier élite in the twelfth century.

These titles appeared mostly in relation to administrative affairs and activities. The sigillary material that gives a considerable part of evidence from the period also suggest the official circumstances. This is suggested by the fact too that a considerable part of the evidence for the phenomenon comes from sigillary material dated to the period. Cheynet argues that the titles of dependence were used by the superiors for bestowing a part of their authority on the subordinates.\footnote{Cheynet, ‘Official power’, no. 7, p. 139. Cheynet clearly stresses the temporary nature of these titles. However, he deals with only the douloi and oikeioi of the emperor. I only add here that I do not see any essential difference between the men of the emperors and the men of other powerful individuals beside the distinction in prestige.} However, a letter of George Tornikes to the man of Giphardos shows that this kind of designation was applied in the communication out of the administrative and judicial processes too.\footnote{Tornikes, Letters, pp. 148–49, no. 19.} The clues are thus ambiguous, while the connection of the titles of dependence to administrative activity could explain the temporary appearance of such a designation beside the name of a given individual.

Not only the duration of these titles arouse interest, but the ties behind the designations too. The persistence of relations between the master and the servant is an issue. The case of Constantine Choirospahktes shows that someone could occasionally enter the retinue of the emperor and gain more official recognition of the special ties between themselves, ascending from an unpleasant situation. The pace of this progress is unknown however. The late career of John Belissarites indicates the potential instability of the membership in an imperial retinue. Dealing with individuals out of the main focus of this chapter, we can mention Gregory Antiochos and his dependence from a powerful figure, Andronikos Kamateros. This service...
endured for a short period in truth. These examples suggest the vulnerability of ties between the master and his servant. This kind of changes definitely had great importance for the Komnenian second-tier élite. However, there is no sufficient evidence for analysing the dynamism of these progresses in the period.

The three cases analysed in this chapter imply a correlation between the position of the dependent and the rank of the superior. A ruler or a powerful politician demanded the service of his retainer, but the latter expected the master’s support in his progression in the administration. John Melidones, a man of the caesar, apparently remained in the rank of minor judges throughout his career. Constantine Choirophaktes and John Belissariotes, men of their emperors, held significantly higher positions in the government. It is not surprising that an emperor was able to ensure higher offices to his attendants than any member of the leading élite. Nevertheless, there is a remarkable difference between Melidones’ position and the other two official’s appointments. Still, this problem definitely needs further evidence beyond the three examples above.

Broadening the scope of the observation about the problem, one can find the same tendency among the anthropoi, doulai and oikei. Among the men of Alexios I, one can find a certain John, the logariastes and Constantine, the logothetes of the dromos. However, Stephen Chrysodaktoulos, the man of the caesar, Nikephoros Melissenos, gained only modest offices and dignities as John Melidones.469 Eustathios Charsianites, the strategos and pronoetes of Samos and man of the Despoina Anna Dalassene, earned the highest office among those favoured by the relatives of the emperor or other powerful individuals.470 However, the most demonstrating case is given by Basil Choirophaktes. He was the servant of John Komnenos, a nephew of Alexios I, and held the office of logariastes, the assistant of the doux of Thessalonike.471 Most of these individuals appear for precious moments only in the sources, and one cannot fully reconstruct their careers. Still, the broader observation affirms the picture suggested by the three selected cases. Officials favoured by the members of the leading élite had lower prospects in the administration than those enjoying the support of the emperor himself. Eustathios Charsianites appears an exception. However, his mistress, the mother of Alexios I, had a special authority over the civil administration. Furthermore, his

470 Patmos, vol. 1, p. 333, no. 47, l. 8; vol. 2, p. 51, no. 52, ll. 3–4; p. 72, no. 53, l. 186.
471 Iviron, vol. 2, p. 211, no. 51, l. 133.
office, the strategos, had lost most of its original reputation by the time of his service.\textsuperscript{472} In general, the difference between opportunities is obvious.

Either the individuals in focus or other cases indicate an ambivalent attitude towards the titles of dependence. In theory, these designations, especially the man or servant of the emperor were honours to the holders. However, John Belissariotes did not represent himself as the man of the emperor either in official documents or on lead seals despite the occasion. Gregory Antiochhos complains about his service to Andronikos Kamateros in his different writings.\textsuperscript{473} Basil Choirophaktes was called the servant of the local doux in the praktikon that he issued together with his fellow. Still, the designation was mentioned by the subordinate of a given individual or by a third party in a considerable number of official documents. The lead seals of those who were the men of the emperor show the sealers’ and title holders’ awareness of this kind of designation. However, these bullae give a little portion of the sigillary material from the period. Several cases suggest that membership in a retinue could provide great opportunities for the individuals of the second-tier élite. Nonetheless, some figures of the stratum did not show a positive sentiment regarding the service as a whole or, at least, regarding the representation of the ties of service.

It is necessary to observe the individual prospects out of the personal retinues too. This comparative analysis has dealt with the aspect of the anthropoi, douloi and oikeioi. It has been also mentioned above however that some evidence indicates the temporary nature of the membership in a private entourage. Furthermore, not every member of the second-tier élite belonged to a retinue of a powerful individual in his entire career. Nevertheless, the evidence does not allow to recognise the close ties of dependence with a figure of higher rank in numerous cases. The letter collections of Theophylact of Ochrid and Gregory Antiochhos show how important the different kinds of connections in the Byzantine élite were.\textsuperscript{474} However, at this point, it seems beneficial to distinguish the ordained clerics and the bureau- crats of the church and lay administrations. Although the members of both groups struggled to maintain their positions, there were differences between their connections with the offices. Due to the limits of the thesis, I intend to deal only with the officials out of the clergy in the following lines.


\textsuperscript{473} Kazhdan and Franklin, \textit{Studies}, pp. 205–6. Kazhdan argues that Antiochhos’ negative attitude towards ‘voluntary servitude’ was unconventional in his milieu. It is worth noting that there is no evidence for the official representation of his dependence by titles. Nonetheless, the description of his service by himself indicates the existence of the ties, which were expressed by the titles of dependence.

Stability and progression in the individual scale is the main interest of this chapter. The investigation on these questions is restricted due to the fragmented evidence. The analysis of the three officials answers several questions, but also raises other ones. Niketas Choniates’ argument that John Belissariotes constantly ascended in the hierarchy of the government appears as a rhetorical tool. The evidence for Belissariotes’ career slightly contradicts to the constructed image of success. Nonetheless, the emphasis by Choniates on the progression in a rhetorical context suggests that it was possible but unconventional. The similarity between Melidones’ and Belissariotes’ situation is that both held multiple offices simultaneously at least at several moments of their careers. Choniates’ speech also suggests that Belissariotes was constantly appointed to a function. According to Cheynet’s interpretation, Constantine Choirosphaktes did not hold any official position in the time of the council at Blachernai in 1094. The difference between the two clues raises several questions. How much were pauses in administrative activity conventional in the bureaucracy? Is the chronological distance between Choirosphaktes and Belissarites a significant factor in the officials’ attitude towards hiatus from service? How much did such a pause affect the reputation of a bureaucrat? Probably other cases give answers about these issues.

Other cases rather make the picture on individual prospects more complex. Instability is well manifested in the following examples, but the evaluation of the elements is not a simple task. Nikephoros Chrysoberges apparently flourished in the church administration in the late twelfth century. However, he had to suffer a serious disgrace at the imperial court in the 1090s. He regained his reputation in the second half of Alexios III’s reign and became the master of the rhetors. Gregory Antiochos managed an instable progression in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Kazhdan assumes that Antiochos had a dynamically changing network in order to advance in the hierarchy. Gregory’s rhetorical skills are also considered as key factors of his successes. Rhetoric plays a significant role in Choniates’ argument on Belissariotes’ education and career too. However, this knowledge definitely was not the only way of the second-tier élite to a successful career in the administration. A factor that probably increased the instability of Antiochos’ position was his apparent failure to take more than one office at the same time. Furthermore, Antiochos’ and Chrysoberges’ unsteady progression implies that they spent some time without any function in the government. It is interesting that, shortly before the Komnenian period, Kekaumenos did not refuse

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the private life far from the government. The instability of the bureaucrat’s position in the administration is well known among Byzantinists. What is interesting here is that this instability was caused by the great variety of impacts on the personal reputation of a given official. For example, changes in an individual’s network could cause problem as well as offer the solution.

It is important to treat the individual aspects of marriage too. The former chapter approached this subject from the effects of marital alliances on entire families. It is also interesting however how a marriage influenced the career of an individual in the second-tier élite. It is difficult to understand the influence of affinity between Constantine Choirosphaktes and Nikephoros III who was dethroned by the Komnenoi. Some evidence shows that Choirosphaktes was favoured by Nikephoros III for their relation, but this situation was probably a disadvantage in the beginning of the new government built by the Komnenoi. Choirosphaktes apparently had to build his career again under Alexios I. The letters of Michael Choniates and the monody of Niketas Choniates to John and Michael Belissariotes show the numerous elements of the matrimony and affinity between the two families. The sources demonstrate how the Choniatai (and probably the Belissariotai too) benefited from their connections strengthened by the marriage in their administrative duties. We must deal with another example, which is not included by the main analysis of this chapter. It is the case of a certain Tornikes who was a relative of Theophylact of Ochrid by marriage. Theophylact asked his powerful friend to exempt this Tornikes from military service. This example shows the indirect influence of a marriage, which worked together with the network of the extended kinsfolk. The cases reveal some elements of the significance of marriage on an individual level. The individual aspects of matrimony confirm some results of the analysis of families. The protective character of this institution is more evident in the case of marriages between the families of the same social status. The evidence mainly shows that the matrimony improved the individual networks. This latter component helped the members of the élite to increase their influence in the administration and to maintain their social position.

The individuals of the twelfth-century élite raise numerous questions. Not all of them are answered in this chapter, and there are probably no real solutions in several cases. One can find serious gaps in biographies of many officials, or rather the vast majority of them. The analysis of the progression that the individuals performed throughout their careers highly relies on assumptions made according to fragmental evidence. The investigation on a

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477 For a more detailed discussion on this opinion, see chapter 6. 4.
478 Theophylact, Letters, p. 529, no. 109, ll. 11–19.
usual phenomenon of the second-tier élite, the ‘voluntary servitude’ is another example of the problems in the observation. The semi-official and, apparently, temporary designations of dependence, *anthropos*, *doulos* and *oikeios*, are the main clues to more durable conditions of the titleholders, their membership of a retinue. Thus, our evidence for the stability and the term of the connection between the subordinate and the head of the entourage is rather indirect. Although the analysis of the families indicates the complexity of mobility in the second-tier élite, the personal level better demonstrates the vulnerability of the dignitaries in the lower level of the ruling stratum.
We further narrow the scope of the observation on the level of distinct cases after the analysis of individuals in theory. However, this chapter shows that we rather change the focus than the range of interest. An affair stands in the centre of each subchapter, but the investigation occasionally turns the attention to several problems that are beyond the confines of a given event. The family background and careers of the involved individuals are normally among these elements. The source material is relatively homogeneous, since all the cases relies on official documents from monastic archives. The majority of the selected cases is related to Athonite monasteries and only one affair is connected to Mount Latros in Asia Minor. Thus, the interest of the chapter is relatively limited in geographical terms. The selection of the affairs and the location of the archives result in the situation that the analysis focuses on provincial matters. The circumstances of the local élites in the provinces is a subject that attracted little attention in the previous chapters of the thesis. Nevertheless, the observation of this social elements is crucial, since the local élites also belonged to the second-tier élite as it has been explained in chapter 2.

The chapter focuses on four cases, but the selection needs further explanation. Three of them happened in the early decades of the period before the transformation of second-tier élite. Therefore, the Komnenian second-tier élite is involved only in one case. It questions the validity of the selection at first. The investigation of the provincial elements of the second-tier élite is necessary without doubt. However, the Komnenian period relatively lacks sufficient evidence for the local élites of the provinces after the reign of Alexios I. Consequently, we can find more valuable details in the early Komnenian period. The lack of sources prevents us to analyse the circumstances of the provincial élite at the time, when the transformation of old élite into the Komnenian élite happened. It is a question however whether this social change considerably affected the provincial society. Without evidence, we can only hypothesise that the local élites of the provinces were less involved in a change of the ruling stratum, which mainly concerned the highest echelons of the administration. Thus, the analysis of provincial circumstances treats the correlations throughout the period rather than the influence of the transformation on this segment of the élite. The phenomena and characteristics revealed in the early cases can be associated with the Komnenian second-tier élite. The chapter seeks to reveal some elements of family policy and power techniques applied by the lower élite.
5. 1 The patrimony of the Kephalades

The patrimony of the Kephalades deserves the attention of scholars. The case has two main figures, Leo Kephalas who acquire the patrimony by great imperial favour and his son, Nikephoros who bestowed his possessions on the Monastery of Great Lavra at Athos. The basis of this issue is provided by several documents, four imperial chrysobulls and a donation preserved in the archives of Lavra. If we consider the different grants and the collection of the landed property as a single affair, it includes a relatively long period from 1082 to 1115, a substantial part of Alexios I’s reign. The case involves two generations of the family too. Therefore, this affair can reveal the circumstances of a family, which did not have kinship with the emperor, and its ability to maintain the patrimony for a considerable time. This case, especially the matters of Leo Kephalas, has attracted the interest of historians for decades. 479 Still, the complete affair rarely became the focus of a detailed analysis. This chapter aims to study the political and social circumstances of the Kephalas family through its landed property. However, it appears beneficial to begin the investigation with the career of the individual who founded this patrimony.

The early stages of Leo’s life remain in obscurity. The earliest information about his conditions is included in the chrysobull of Alexios I confirming a grant of Nikephoros III Botaneiates to Kephalas. 480 According to this document, Leo Kephalas was favoured by Nikephoros, however, he possessed the slightly modest court title of bestarches. 481 There is no evidence about the reasons of this imperial approval. This act could serve Nikephoros III’s general attempt to seek for loyal supporters, although the Komnenoi could also be related to it. 482 There is a remark in the prooimion of Alexios’ aforementioned chrysobull, addressing Leo Kephalas as a ‘trustful man’ who was loyal to the ‘emperors’. 483 Nevertheless, Kephalas’ role in this time appears obscure in comparison to the following years.

It is out of dispute that Leo Kephalas managed to maintain the imperial favour even after the serious change on the throne. Several sources show that Alexios I trusted Leo, and he graciously rewarded the latter’s service. Still the way as Kephalas transmitted his reputation to the era of the new regime is in question. Although Kephalas’ role in the coup d’état

479 For literature, see below.
480 Lavra, vol. 1, no. 44.
481 Lavra, vol. 1, no. 44.
482 There is no direct evidence whether Kephalas was ever involved in the rebellions on the emperor’s side. For the Komnenian connections, see below.
483 Ὑπηρέτης πιστὸς (καὶ) ἐρθογνώμων τοῖς δεσπότας φανόμενος, Lavra, vol. 1, p. 243, no. 44, l. 3. Although the meaning of this part is not clear, the phrasing of the whole document implies that the plural form of the ruler refers to Nikephoros III and Alexios I instead of the co-emperorship of Alexios I and Constantine Doukas.
of the Komnenoi could be another factor of his good reputation in the new government, narratives of this event remain silent on his deeds. Rouillard suggests mutual interests between Kephalas and Alexios I as the former individual was dissatisfied by the civil faction, while the usurper needed the support of such a potent general as Kephalas was.\textsuperscript{484} However, Anna Komnene introduces Leo as the son of Alexios’ ‘hereditary servant’.\textsuperscript{485} This remark implies that the Kephalades had old and good connection with the Komnenoi. One can suggest too that Leo Kephalas personally had close ties with Isaac or Alexios Komnenos. It is important to note that both Komnenoi were highly favoured by Nikephoros III before their usurpation. Therefore, it was possible that the Komnenoi played the role of ‘middlemen’ between the emperor and one of their supporters, Leo Kephalas, in the reign of Botaneiates. Still, little evidence supports this idea.

The narrative of the official documents raises doubts about the personal ties between Alexios I and Kephalas before the Komnenian regime. There is a lack of reference to close connections between the two individuals in that period. The chrysobull of 1082 focuses on the fact that Leo Kephalas was loyal to both emperors, while the other related documents invoke the deeds of Kephalas performed in the reign of Alexios I.\textsuperscript{486} However, one should take both the legal and the rhetorical aspects of these charters as well as the correlation between these elements into account. The chrysobull of Alexios I in 1082 confirms a donation of land by Nikephoros III to Kephalas and other involved decrees. The imperial charter as a legal document cannot ignore the role of the former emperor in the affair. The land was granted by the previous head of the empire who was dethroned by the one who issued the recent chrysobull. This document has to apply rhetorical instruments in order to obscure this context and to explain the emperor’s act. It is worth noting that Nikephoros III is represented in a positive manner, while Alexios I’s ascension to the imperial throne is portrayed with a conventional phrasing, a slightly euphemistic one in regard to the political background, in the chrysobull.\textsuperscript{487} Other sources also suggest the representation of the Komnenian usurpation as an affair separated from the personality of Nikephoros III. Alexios’ good relations to his predecessor before the rebellion helped the arguments of the chrysobull too. If Leo Kephalas really belonged to the circle of the Komnenoi even before their conspiracy, his loyalty to


\textsuperscript{485} ὁ… πατρίῳ τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος θεράποντος υἱός, Λέων ὁ Κεφαλᾶς..., \textit{Alexias}, vol. 1, p. 154, 5. 5. 3.

\textsuperscript{486} \textit{Lavra}, vol. 1, p. 243, no. 44, l. 3; p. 258, no. 48, ll. 3–5; p. 261, no. 49, ll. 4–8.

\textsuperscript{487} The document refers to Nikephoros III as ‘formerly ruling’ (προβεβασιλευκός) and ‘famous emperor’ (ἀοιδίμου βασιλέως), \textit{Lavra}, vol. 1, p. 243, no. 44, ll. 10, 14.
Alexios and Nikephoros III would seem identical to the editors of the imperial charter due to the circumstances of that time.

Another aspect indicates that Kephalas joined the coup d’état of the Komnenoi. A comparison can be drawn with the well-known case of George Monomachatos, the doux of Dyrrachion after Basilakes’ fall. Monomachatos made a double-dealing policy during the plot of the Komnenoi despite his good relation to Alexios.\(^{488}\) The latter did not forget this unreliability, and replaced Monomachatos by George Palaiologos in the governorship of Dyrrachion after his ascension to the throne.\(^{489}\) With regard to this analogy, it would not have been surprising, if Kephalas and his family had shown a supportive attitude to the Komnenoi during the rebellion at least. Nevertheless, the lack of clear evidence allows us only speculations on the situation at the moment of usurpation.

We have significantly more information on Leo’s career and opportunities in the years following the establishment of the Komnenian government. Kephalas was appointed to considerable military positions in the early years of Alexios I’s reign. Both Anna Komnene and an imperial chrysobull in 1086 mention Leo’s brave opposition to the Norman invaders as the governor of Larissa during the siege of the town.\(^{490}\) The same charter entitles Kephalas as proedros and katepano of Abydos.\(^{491}\) Leo’s real positions cannot be determined without difficulties. There is no distinct information on his office, when he defended Larissa against Bohemund and his army. The katepano suffered a considerable evolution from a high command, equal to the doux, to a minor military official in the Komnenian period.\(^{492}\) The aforementioned chrysobull was, however, issued in the early years of Alexios’ reign, when the decline of the katepano probably did not occurred, or was not complete. One cannot doubt the significance of Abydos after the devastating invasion of the Seljuk Turks in Asia Minor. Leo does not appear as an important figure in the concurrent political scene of the imperial court. Still, he was a loyal servant of Alexios I, and thus, was appointed to key strategical points of the empire that Larissa and Abydos were in that time.

Beside his position, Leo’s court titles also deserve attention. Kephalas’ honorary dignities seem to be inferior to his offices he concurrently held. He was designated bestarches when he was the leader of the bestiaritai, bestarches or magistros when he defended Larissa.

\(^{490}\) Alexias, vol. 1, p. 154, 5. 5. 3; Lavra, vol. 1, p. 258, no. 48, ll. 3–4.
\(^{491}\) Lavra, vol. 1, p. 258, no. 48, l. 3.
\(^{492}\) Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, ‘Recherches sur l’administration’, p. 66.
against the Normans, and proedros when he governed Abydos. Cheynet stresses that Kephalas is the only example of the combination of katepano and proedros in that time according to the sources. We can approach this problem not just from the viewpoint of administration, but from that of Kephalas too. The fact that Leo held considerable positions together with relatively low dignities in the period of the devaluation of titles is striking. It is likely that such tendency did not last for both the reigns of Nikephoros III and Alexios I. Nikephoros did not put an end to the policy of lavish designations performed by his predecessors. Alexios started a more careful management of honorary dignities nonetheless. Therefore, it is possible that Alexios entrusted higher offices to Kephalas, while he bestowed higher titles on his loyal servant with great care. In the same time, these relatively inferior dignities indicate that their owner, Leo Kephalas, had been appointed to lower positions during the reign of Nikephoros III. This is only a hypothesis due to the lack of evidence, still it contradicts the idea that Kephalas was an influencing general of the army in the eve of the Komnenian coup d’etat.

It is also an interesting problem whether Leo Kephalas was a ‘man’ of Alexios I. In this dissertation, it has been demonstrated how close ties between individuals, especially between the emperor and his favoured official, functioned and were described with several terms in contemporary Byzantium. In this terminology, we can find the word oiketes, which was rarely used in this sense and, like doulos, could generally mean a citizen as the subject of the ruler too. This problem occurs when a chrysobull of Alexios I calls Leo Kephalas ‘prudent oiketes’ in 1089. This term sometimes appears in the imperial documents of Alexios I, yet it is never adopted in the other chrysobulls concerning the Kephalades. The appearance of this word in the latest imperial narrative about Leo may imply a change in the relation between Alexios and Kephalas. However, any kind of explicit reference to the emperor is missing in the phrase that would show the direct ties between the two individuals. The chrysobull begins with the mention of ‘loyal ones among the oiketai’, where the notion of loyalty would be an unnecessary phrasing, if the document really referred to the emperor’s close attendants. Thus the chrysobull deals with citizens in general instead of the ‘men’ of the ruler.

493 There is no evidence about Kephalas’ title during his charge in Larissa. Nevertheless, the siege of Larissa, in which he was involved, happened approximately in a year after the chrysobull of 1082, which calls him bestarches. In 1084, he was designated magistros, the next dignity above bestarches. It is a question whether the title of magistros was granted by the emperor to Leo together with his appointment to Larissa, or it was a reward for his efforts during the defence of the town.
494 ἀλλ᾽ ἐν δυσὶ δορικῳ, ἀεὶ αὐτὸν ὡς οἰκέτην εὐγνώμονα ἡφιλοτιμήσατο, Lavra, vol. 1, p. 262, no. 49, l. 19.
495 Εἴ καὶ τοίς ἄλλοις πιστοῖς τῶν οἰκετῶν καὶ εὐ νας καταφαίνεται καὶ ἀγέραστος, Lavra, vol. 1, p. 261, no. 49, l. 4.
and it is the same case when this charter calls Kephalas an oiketes. Conclusively, there is no evidence that Leo Kephalas was ever granted such an honourable designation.

Kephalas was granted several estates by Nikephoros III and Alexios I. We know more about the donations given by the Komnenian emperor, yet the nature of the source material only allows us to make careful statements on the increase of imperial favour after the successful usurpation of the Komnenoi. Nikephoros gave him a deserted land (klasma) of 334 modioi at Tadrinou in the fiscal district (petiton) of Derkos, and Alexios confirmed this grant in 1082. Some time later, the latter emperor bestowed a proasteion called Ano in the theme of Makedonía, and, in 1084, he granted another estate at Mesolimia near Thessalonike. Two years later, Alexios donated a village called Chostiane in the theme of Moglena after Leo’s successful defence of Larissa. Except the earliest case, the extent of donations remains in obscurity, since the imperial chrysobulls were mainly confirmations of praktika previously issued by lower officials. Those praktika definitely included the measurements or at least the delimitations of the estates. Hence the chrysobulls in 1084 and 1086 ignored such information, and focused on the rights given to the new owner. Whatever extent these estates had, they definitely played an important role in the inheritance of the family.

The aforementioned four lands were given to the children of Kephalas as their heritage. Evidence about this action is provided by an imperial chrysobull, which confirms the rights of the heirs on their inherited property. This document also refers to the testament of Leo Kephalas, yet it mentions few details concerning this event: ‘When he gave his final will to his children, he transmitted their possession in the manner of a landlord, and ordered that those [lands] be governed by them and their families.’\(^\text{496}\) It is also important that Leo’s children sent a common request to the emperor for the confirmation.\(^\text{497}\) For the latter fact and the very short description of the testament prevent us from knowing the details of the inheritance. The chrysobull neither refers to the number of the heirs nor mention any specific name from the family except Leo Kephalas. It is worth noting too that there is no explicit reference to Leo’s death in the charter, yet the children’s request and the use of past time concerning Leo’s matters indicates that he passed away before this document.\(^\text{498}\) Our knowledge about the heirs becomes clearer for another document.

\(^{496}\) τελευταίας ὁστὸς διατάξεις ἐκθέμενος ἐπὶ τοὺς αὐτὸν παιδᾶς τὴν τούτων δεσποτικῶς μετεβίβασε κατοχῆν, καὶ δεσπόζεσθαι τὰ τοιαῦτα παρὰ τούτων καὶ τοῦ μέρους αὐτῶν διετάξατο, *Lavra*, vol. 1, p. 262, no. 49, ll. 50–52.

\(^{497}\) *Lavra*, vol. 1, p. 262, no. 49, l. 52.

\(^{498}\) Especially the reference to Leo’s ownership over those estates written in aoristos implies his death: Εἶχε μὲν οὗτο ταῦτα, *Lavra*, vol. 1, p. 262, no. 49, l. 47.
The donation of Nikephoros Kephalas is a crucial element of the affairs of his family. Nikephoros was one of Leo’s sons, and granted some estates to the Monastery of Lavra in 1115, confirming it with a document. The importance of this act is clearly proven by a remark of the confirmation stating that Nikephoros had to give all documents related to the granted estates.\textsuperscript{499} The aforementioned imperial chrysobulls were definitely transferred to the archives of the monastery then. Therefore, our information about the Kephalades’ situation remained as a result of Nikephoros’ decision.

The document clearly shows the reasons and motives of Nikephoros for his donation. Approximately thirty lines are missing at the beginning of the text, and they may have included some important information. Still, the remaining part of the document provides a complete narrative about the specific affair. Nikephoros justified his action by childlessness after two wives and by the hope of salvation.\textsuperscript{500} This explanation is crucial for understanding the situation of the family. It is evident according to these lines that a branch of the family was about to become extinct. Furthermore, Nikephoros’ personal motives and deeds can also indicate the wider context of his kindred. However, before a detailed analysis of the family, we have to deal with the estates donated by Nikephoros.

The granted property raises questions concerning the circumstances after the death of Leo Kephalas. The imperial chrysobull of 1089 on the patrimony of the Kephalades clearly presents the possessions transferred to the sons: Tadrinou, Mesolimina, Ano and Chostiane. The donation of Nikephoros Kephalas includes Archontochorion, Chostiane, Tadrinou (called Adrinou then) and several estates at Traianoupolis.\textsuperscript{501} Lemerle and his colleagues noticed the difference between the list of properties, identifying Archontochorion with Mesolimina and stating the lack of a reference to Ano in the latter affair.\textsuperscript{502} They also had two further hypotheses. They suggested that Ano was in the hand of another branch of the family. Furthermore, they assumed that the majority of Leo Kephalas’ heritage was possessed by Nikephoros as the last surviving child.\textsuperscript{503} In truth, despite the well-disposed theories of Lemerle and his colleagues, the changes in the patrimony in the period between Leo’s death and Nikephoros’ donation remains in obscurity. Nevertheless, it is necessary to stress that the narrative of the granting document seemingly divides the donated property into two groups. The first part includes Archontochorion and Chostiane, which are designated as

\textsuperscript{499} \textit{Lavra}, vol. 1, p. 313, no. 60, ll. 30–32.
\textsuperscript{500} \textit{Lavra}, vol. 1, p. 313, no. 60, ll. 15–20.
\textsuperscript{501} \textit{Lavra}, vol. 1, pp. 313–14, no. 60, ll. 25–37.
\textsuperscript{502} \textit{Lavra}, vol. 1, pp. 330, 337.
\textsuperscript{503} \textit{Lavra}, vol. 1, p. 337.
inherited properties. The other group involves Tadrinou and the properties at Traianoupolis, which were acquired by Nikephoros in other ways. The fate of Tadrinou under the Kephalades and the silence about Ano may be the most curious part of the case. Ano could disappear from later documentation, since it might have been sold by Nikephoros himself or by his brother. Still it seems more likely that Ano was possessed by the sibling or his heirs in the time of Nikephoros’ donation. According to this, Nikephoros possibly acquired Tadrinou by payment from his kin instead of inheritance. Beside the problem of Tadrinou and Ano the most important element is that Nikephoros Kephalas originally inherited half of the patrimony by the will of his father. This fact is significant in regard to the extent of the family.

It is a question how many siblings shared the patrimony inherited from Leo Kephalas. This problem occurs even in the chrysobull of 1089, which has no remarks on the number of Leo’s children, and it does not call any of them by name. Nikephoros is the only identified son of Leo. Theodore Kephalas was the abbot of Lavra in the time of the donation, but the document does not indicate his kinship with Nikephoros. Consequently, there is no evidence of the exact relation between the two Kephalades, yet Theodore’s office probably played an important role in Nikephoros’ decision about the endowment. A wider kinsfolk definitely existed in this time, since the family survived the generation of Nikephoros and Theodore as it is demonstrated by sigillary evidence from later periods. It is important to note that Nikephoros had lawful heirs even without children, who were partly his relatives by blood. The Byzantine customs of inheritance was essentially equitable, which provided equal portions from the heritage, especially in the case of landed property, at least among the successors of the same gender. As it has been mentioned above, Nikephoros succeeded two estates, half of his father’s landed fortune, as customary legacies. This strongly implies that Nikephoros had one brother who originally acquired Tardinou and Ano by the will of their father. Furthermore, the fact that Nikephoros demanded the monks to commemorate only him and his parents implies his brother was still alive in the time of the donation. This does not completely resolve the problem of kindred however.

504 *Lavra*, vol. 1, p. 313, no. 60, II, 7–9.
505 *Lavra*, vol. 1, pp. 312, 337. There are some uncertainties concerning Theodore, yet he appears to hold the office of *kegoumenos* for a relatively long period, recorded in 1107, 1115 and 1116, *Lavra*, vol. 1, p. 54.
507 *Lavra*, vol. 1, p. 313, no. 60, II, 53, 57.
The most curious part of the situation was that Nikephoros bequeathed none of these estates to the rest of his kin. The document indicates a couple of heirs who could have maintained the property in the hands of the Kephalades after Nikephoros’ death. The donor tells in his document that ‘I realised that I have to grant and donate lands acquired from paternal heritage to the aforementioned holiest great Lavra for the memory of me and my ancestors.’ Several other cases reveal that childless landowners did not necessarily prefer the closest living relatives in their wills. It is interesting that Nikephoros Kephalas’ donation does not contain any instruction, which indicates the use of the granted lands in favour of his kindred except the conventional request for the commemoration. At first sight, in the case of Nikephoros, personal interests, whether they were really pious or not, exceeded the benefits of the family as the quoted lines imply. The memory of ancestors did not equal the improvement of the economic basis of the remaining kin. However, there is an element, which deserves further consideration.

For the issue of the family, Theodore’s role needs a more careful examination. It has been mentioned that there is no evidence about the exact kinship between the abbot and Nikephoros. In the same way, Theodore’s part in the donation and in the management of the estates after the grant remains obscure. In her study, Morris reveals the complicate ties between the monasteries and the Byzantine élite. A certain control of the donating, especially the founding, family over the monastic community was a major element of this relation. The fact that Theodore, the donator’s relative, is mentioned only once in the document is striking. It is true that approximately thirty lines of the text is missing due to the bad condition of the parchment. This lost part may have paid more attention to Theodore, but such an idea remains hypothetical. It is more important that the more detailed instructions of this document lack any reference to Theodore. It is unlikely that such ties between the donator and the leader of the monastic community did not have a great significance in the affair. The document apparently fails to represent the correlation nevertheless. It appears possible that Theodore played an informal role in maintaining the connection between the monastery, the donated lands and the other kin after Nikephoros’ death.

509 δεῖν ἑγόνον δορήσ[α]σ(θαί) τε (καὶ) ἀφερόσθαι τὰ προσόντα μοι ἑκ γονικῆς κληρουχ[ί(ς)] κτήμ(α)τ(α) μνήμ(ης) ἐνεκα ἐμοῦ τε καὶ τῶν γονέων μου εἰς τῇ[η]ν] εἰρήμ(ένην) εὐαγγ[εστάτη(ν)] μεγάλην Λαύραν, Lavra, vol. 1, p. 313, no. 60, ll. 18–20.
513 However, the control of the Kephalades over the donated lands was not as strong and direct as the authority of the families over the property of their own private monasteries. Furthermore, such influence of the Kephalades on Lavra definitely disappeared by time, after the death of Theodore Kephalas at the latest.
remains in obscurity, the conditions of Nikephoros during his career are manifest in the remarks of the document.

The several properties in Traianoupolis indicates some features of Nikephoros’ career. These estates were the only, which did not belong to the inherited patrimony of the Kephalades according to our sources on the one hand. Therefore, they appear to be Nikephoros’ own attainments. Numerous and different types of possessions are recorded in a well-defined and restricted area of the empire in this account on the other hand. The donation gives a short enumeration of estates granted to Lavra in the town and its vicinity: ‘also, at Traianoupolis, my houses, rent houses inside the town together with vineyards, gardens, waste grounds, pastures and other possessions outside the town with their privileges…’  This passage shows a considerable concentration of property in the area of the Traianoupolis that indicates the importance of this location. It is difficult to compare the several estates in the hands of Nikephoros, since our sources remain silent about the extent of the lands except Tadrinou. Nonetheless, the relatively high number of estates implies that this lot of estates probably overpassed the other scattered and separate properties in size. Furthermore, the text evidently distinguishes (residential) ‘houses’ from buildings for rent. Thus, it seems reasonable to suggest that Traianoupolis served Nikephoros as a place of residence. He probably held positions in the provincial administration of Makedonia, the district, to which the town belonged. Nikephoros’ title, proedros, suited a higher official, but not the highest ones, of local government in the last years of Alexios I’s reign, yet there is no evidence of his distinct functions.

The patrimony of the Kephalades correlates a curious history of a family. The founder of this considerable property, Leo Kephalas, could hold high expectations for his own career and his family, being a successful and favoured officer of Alexios I. However, the rising of the family appears to end after Leo’s death. Nikephoros, Leo’s only identified, but definitely not the solely existing heir, appears to be a provincial official and landowner. He still possessed substantial landed property, which included the majority of the patrimony left by his father, until the donation. However, our source presents the position of Nikephoros, and it pays little attention to the kindred. The donation of the landed property to the Monastery of Great Lavra indicates an interesting attitude of a landowner towards his property and

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514 ἀλλὰ μὴν (καὶ) τὰ κ(α)τὰ τ(ῆ)ν Τραϊανούπ(ο)λ(ιν) ἐντὸ(ς) τοῦ κάστρου οἰκήματα μου (καὶ) ἐνοικικὰ, σὺν γε τῶν ἔξωθεν τοῦ κ(α)τ(α) τοῦ κάστρου(ου) ὁμολογών(ων) χωριαρί(ων) χέρσων νομισματικάς γῆς (καὶ) λοιπῶν δικαιῶν (καὶ) προνομίων(ων) ἀντίων [sic!], Lavra, vol. 1, p. 314, no. 60, ll. 35–37.
extended family, when his branch was about to become extinct. In general, the case of the
Kephalades reveals the ambiguous connection of the lesser élite with its estates.

5. 2 Eudokia’s dowry and the hungry landlords: the social background
of a sales contract

Impoverishment was a substantial problem in the second-tier élite. Wealth was not an
essential factor of élite status in Byzantium however.⁵¹⁵ Poverty appears in the case of a
certain Eudokia, daughter of George Burion who sold her dotal estate in Chalkidike to the
Athonite Monastery Docheiariou in 1112. The transaction raised numerous problems due to
the legal context, and it required the involved individuals to treat the affair with great care.
This subchapter pays considerable attention to the discrepancies concerning the event. This
interest, however, aims to reveal the nature of the ties between the local landholders and
authorities. The case also implies the characteristics of self-representation that needs consid-
eration too.

A detailed documentation of this affair exists owing to the involvement of the Monas-
tery Docheiariou. The archives of this monastic community preserve the sales contract,
which is a complicated document in fact. There are two main texts on the parchment: the
real contract of Eudokia, the seller of her own dotal estate, and the approval by her husband,
Stephen Rasopolos.⁵¹⁶ Furthermore, the contract contains some transcriptions of entirely dif-
ferent charters and of passages from different documents. This latter detail is crucial for our
investigation.

Although the whole affair did not last for a long time, it was complicated due to legal
problems. Its complexity provides us with several advantages, since it prompted a high pro-
duction of documents. The whole affair began with the written petition (deesis) of Eudokia
to Andronikos Doukas, doux and praetor of Thessalonike and Serres.⁵¹⁷ In her request, Eu-
dokia asked the governor to order the issue of a decree (dekreton, hypomnema) recognizing
the legality of selling her dotal estate.⁵¹⁸ She declared that she had been forced to sell her
dowry by the terrible pecuniary conditions of her family. She asked the doux for help, since
alienation of such property was firmly restricted by the laws.⁵¹⁹ Andronikos Doukas accepted

⁵¹⁵ See this issue in subchapters 1. 1 and 2. 2.
⁵¹⁶ It is worth noting that attachment of such confirmation seems unique in regard to Byzantine diplomatic
material: Neville, Authority, p. 146.
⁵¹⁷ Docheiariou, pp. 67–68, no. 3, l. 10, 15–16.
⁵¹⁸ Docheiariou, p. 68, no. 3, l. 19.
Eudokia’s argument, and, thus, the issue of the written decree was devolved on Elpidios Chandrenos, a subordinate of the governor. Elpidios discussed the lawfulness of the demand together with a council of dignitaries, and they examined Eudokia herself too. It was ascertained by the council at the end of the investigation that the economic status of her family indeed justified the sale of the dowry. Eudokia made the contract, by which she received twenty-eight nomismata for the estate, with Docheiariou. The role of this process was to avoid any legal charge due to ignorance of laws after the agreement.

The contract and the whole affair have attracted some scholarly interest. Modern studies on this case demonstrates the abundance of elements in the affair, which need observation. Cheynet analysed the case of Eudokia in regard to inheritance and anthroponomastics. Neville uses the contract in her investigation on the political conditions of the provincial society in Byzantium. Both scholars express their doubts about Eudokia’s argument as she gives unclear statements about her husband’s property or, at least, about his incomes. Reading the contract confirms their scepticism. However, not only Eudokia’s narrative causes problems, but the other transcribed documents make the complete affair questionable.

Problems occur even in Eudokia’s family background. Eudokia was the daughter of Gregory Bourion patrickios and wife of Stephen Rasopolos protospatharios. Research for the family names of these individuals gives no success to scholars however, since there is no more evidence of them. Interesting information is given by those references of the contract which state that the offered estate had been owed by a certain Plastaras earlier. It is certainly a family name, and it is mentioned in other documents later centuries, referring to holders of several lands near Thessalonike. Nicolas Oikonomidês, the editor of the contract, opines that this property was obtained by Eudokia’s father as a dowry. The evidence for the exact way of the transmission of the land is not clear. Nevertheless, the hypothesis leads to another idea that the estate in question did not belong to the core property of

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522 Cheynet, ‘Inheritance’, passim; idem, ‘Aristocratic Anthroponymy’, no. 3, p. 15. In the latter study, Cheynet refers to this contract as an evidence of using family names at the lower levels of Byzantine élite in the beginning of twelfth century.
523 Neville, Authority, pp. 144–47, 161–62.
525 Docheiariou, p. 67, no. 3, l. 1–2. The first reference of George misses his dignity, which appears later in the quote of Chandrenos’ decree (idem, p. 68, no. 3, l. 15–16).
526 Docheiariou, p. 70, no. 3, l. 41, 51.
528 Docheiariou, p. 63.
Eudokia’s family. Still, we have little information about the families to determine the position of Eudokia and her family in the local élite.

The extent of the whole property in the hand of the family is also a significant question. Eudokia sold her estate, which was divided into three portions without common borders according to the delimitation, near Bryai kastron. The contract explicitly suggests that the transaction did not involve the whole dowry, not even all the dotal estates. The landed property of Eudokia and her family, therefore, evidently surpassed the property presented in the document. However, the measurement of the estates, which are not considered by the contract, remains in obscurity.

The contract and the transcribed documents stress the poverty of the family, but the argument raises doubts. The financial crisis of the family is an essential part of the narrative, since it is the only reason that justifies the sale. It is suspicious according to Neville that the contract and the quoted documents ignore Rasopolos’ landed property. The document sometimes mentions the husband’s bad fortune and impoverishment. Rasopolos’ own statement in his approval that he placed his only property, half of the paternal house in Thessalonike, in escrow is the most direct indication of his financial troubles. Nevertheless, Eudokia’s petition tells that Stephen certainly had an adequate wealth in the early years of their marriage. In addition, a new husband had to give property proportional to the dowry to his wife according to Byzantine laws, ensuring that his wealth was harmonious with the fortune of the spouse’s family. The petition unsurprisingly states too that Eudokia was married to Stephen Rasopolos by her parents, indicating that Eudokia and Stephen lived in a marriage of convenience. From this stability, the family declined into a desperate situation. Eudokia says her husband ‘is in no way able to provide the needs for our life, and he does not have the sources of welfare on other ways’. The decree of Elpidios Chandrenos copied into the contract states that Rasopolos is ‘totally poor… so much that he has deprived

529 Docheiariou, p. 68–69, no. 3, l. 10–11, 37.
530 This information is important, since the estate was sold for twenty-eight nomismata that was considerably less than the fifty nomismata marking the property limit, above which anyone belonged to the ruling stratum according to the Byzantine legal tradition: Kazhdan and Ronchey, L’aristocrazia, p. 67.
531 Neville, Authority, p. 146.
533 Docheiariou, p. 72, no. 3, ll. 68–69.
534 Docheiariou, p. 68, no. 3, l. 17.
536 Docheiariou, p. 68, no. 3, l. 17.
537 μηδα[μός] δυνα(μ)ὲν τὰ πρὸ(ς) ζωὴν ἡμ(ῶν) πορίζεσθ(αι), μήτε ἔχοντες πόθεν ἄλλοθ(εν) ἀφορμὴν σ(ωτη)ρίας, Docheiariou, p. 68, no. 3, l. 18.
his wife of her daily meal and his children roam naked hither and thither as beggars. The transcribed charter also declares that Eudokia and her family was in troubles ‘for a long dearth of land and, coming from the former, a lack of the needs of life.’ The contract and the approval include numerous strong statements about Rasopolos’ poverty. However, all the related documents fail to describe the nature of the wealth that Rasopolos possessed and had to possess for the marriage. Since half of the paternal house was in his hand, the inheritance of the patrimony had been done by the time of the documentation. The inherited property also had to include estates beside Rasopolos’ residence, but the documents forget to mention the loss of all these lands itself. The affair including the investigation on its legality has many discrepancies. The contradictions of the case explain the nature of the documents and the deeds of the involved figures.

The political aspects of the affair are even more important. The events show the mechanisms of relations between landlords and the government and among the local potentates. As we have seen above, the sale of the dotal estate had a problematic legal background and its solution by the different parties of the case also appears ambiguous. The affair seems to be more than only a pursuit of opportunities for the accomplishment of the sale according to the laws. The different parties involved in the case practised different techniques to manipulate the progress of the affair.

Andronikos Doukas had a peculiar role in the confirmation of the sale of Eudokia’s dotal estates. As the doux and praetor of Thessalonike and Serres, Doukas was primarily responsible for the judicial matters of the district in theory. However, he in effect took little care of the whole affair. In the petition, Eudokia asked Doukas to order Chandrenos to make a decree. This meant that the confirmation was directly made by the logariastes, the deputy of the governor. The governor’s role is an interesting point of the process, and the key element of the evidence for it is a part of Chandrenos’ decree with the citation of Doukas’ permission:

538 […] (καὶ) ἐξείπων σωμφόνως ἄπαντες... ὅτι ὁ τῆς γυναικοῦ(ς) ὀμοιοφόρετ(ης) Στέφανο(ς) ὁ Ἱερασιωτής(ης) ἡμομορφός(ς) ὑπερασπίζεται(καὶ) ἐπί τοσοῦτον, ὡς τοῦ καὶ ἀὑτής(ης) ἐστερήσ(α) τῆς ἐφερέρουσα ἐφέρσθε (καὶ) ὅπως αὐτὴν γυναῖκαν (καὶ) προσαποιοῦντες(καὶ) ἑνώσθενται ἕως τῆς ἐκκλησίας περιέρχουσαν(αι), Docheiariou, p. 69, no. 3, l. 27.
539 διὰ τὴν πολυχρόνιον τῆς γῆς ἀφορήσαν (καὶ) τὴν ἐκ τούτης ἐνδεικνύειν τὸν πρὸς τὸν ἀνάγκη(ας) ἐναντίον(ας), Docheiariou, p. 69, no. 3, l. 27.
540 However, Smyris opines that the lands given to imperial episkepsis in the neighbourhood of Eudokia’s dotal estates (Docheiariou, p. 70, no. 3, l. 44) were originally her property confiscated by the state under the epibole: Kostis Smyris, ‘The fiscal revolution of Alexios I Komnenos: timing, scope, and motives’, TM, 21/2 (2017), p. 597. Oikonomides provides another interpretation for the neighbouring episkepsis, the usual transformation of an estate deserted for more than thirty years (klasma) into an imperial land: Docheiariou, p. 65. The epibole was the confiscation of private lands to harmonise the landed property to the permitted amount of tax: Smyris, ‘Fiscal revolution’, pp. 594–601; Nicolas Svoronos, ‘L’épibolé à l’époque des Comnènes’, TM, 3 (1968), pp. 375–95.
‘And, deciding in this way, he gave the permission to her who ordered me those word for word: ‘Since the reason, for which you want to sell the estates, befits the laws, Chandrenos protoproedros and logariastes should make a decree, as you claimed. On January in the fifth indiction.’ And, giving stability and security to the honourable permission, there is the ‘Doukas’ written by the hand of the pansebastos sebastos, our leader, according to her wish.’

This part of the document shows that Doukas’ order to Chandrenos was the permission sent to Eudokia, and it reveals the nature and mechanism of connection between the governor, his subordinate and the petitioner. If there had been a separated command from Doukas, Chandrenos might have copied that into his decree. The doux thus used Eudokia as intercessor. Doukas was definitely absent from his subordinated district, as it is indicated by Chandrenos’ decree. Furthermore, such absence was probably a custom.

Eudokia had to bring the governor’s answer to Chandrenos because the wife and the logariastes could communicate easier than the doux and his subordinate. Nevertheless, the influence of the doux on the affair is a more significant question in this situation.

A careful reading of the document or documents reveals the role of the doux in the events. The complexity of the situation comes from the fact that the impact of the governor, the logariastes and the council of local potentates on the progress is obscure at first sight. The assembly was responsible for holding an inquiry into the legality of Eudokia’s claims. Except Chandrenos logariastes, the council included individuals who were related to Thessalonike by landed property or kinship. Neville opines that the final decision was made by the council. It is true that the council apparently held a serious inquiry into the issue. Nonetheless, one cannot ignore the fact that Andronikos Doukas doux and praetor himself states the legality of the sale in his order. The council made a decision, which completely

541 (Καὶ) οὗτοι τούτου διαλαμβάνοντο(ς) λόγως ἐπορέχθη αὐτῇ ταύτα ἴμην προστάσσουσα ἐπὶ λέξι(ων) ’Ἐπεί (καὶ) νόμος δοκεῖ ἡ αἰτία, δι’ ἣν μέλλεις πωλῆσαι(σαι) τὸ ἀκίνητον, ὁ πρωτοπρόεδρο(ς) (καὶ λογαριαστ(ὴς) ὁ Χανδρηνὸς Ἰαννοῦν(ος) πασσάτος ἕνα ποιήσῃ, ὡς ἡττήσαι, δέκρετον(ν). Μη(ν) Ἰαννο(ου) Ἰαννοῦν(ος) ἰδίοι(κ) ὄνομος(ο)ς πέμπετ(ις). Ἄν ὡς δὲ τῇ τιμίᾳ ταύτῃ λόγῳ παρέχου τὸ ἐμπεδόν τε (καὶ) βεβαιὸν τὸ ὁ « Δούκας », χειρὶ γεγραμμένον(ον) τοῦ πανεξεραστοῦ σέβαστον (καὶ) ἀθήνη(ν)πο(ισα) ἵμην πρὸ(ς) τὸ τέλει ἁπαθή[

542 Analysing the administration of Hellas and Peloponnesos, Herrin argues that military and civil governors stayed away from their province or district more often, than provincial prelates: Herrin, ‘Realities’, p. 266. As Herrin argues, the civil governors of Hellas and Peloponnese were almost equivalent to the doxoi of other districts: idem, p. 257.

543 Chandrenos’ decree lists the members of the assembly: Docheiariou, p. 68, no. 3, ll. 21–23.

fitted the opinion of the governor, after a detailed investigation. The inquiry by the assembly was possibly a formal process to suit the legal customs. The nature of the sources also implies this theory.

The documents indicate a high pressure on their editors. The reason of this pressure is a crucial problem. Neville argues that the compilers of the contract made serious efforts to establish the authority of the document.\textsuperscript{545} The contract clearly shows the attempts of its creators. Nevertheless, we cannot neglect the complexity of Chandrenos’ decree too. It appears that the \textit{logariastes} transcribed two other documents into his charter in order to avoid the responsibility for the suspicious affair. Chandrenos’ made the governor’s own words visible for the readers of the decree. Therefore, it suggests that the \textit{doux} and praetor was responsible for the real decision about the case.

The affair demonstrates another interesting phenomenon that was the expression or representation of authority and influence. The representation of power was essential for the Byzantine élite. Since the individuals involved in the case were all the members of the ruling stratum, one can expect the appearance of this element during the affair. The expression of authority and influence could be performed in two ways: by actions throughout the event or by the documentation of the incident. Neville rightly argues on the inner tension of the argument in the contract due to the multifaceted and contradicting self-representation of Eudokia as both a poor and insecure woman and a potent landowner.\textsuperscript{546} Several elements of the contract show that the expression of authority by Eudokia was even stronger. In truth, the document implies that she was aware of her social rank whatever economic background she had. The decree of Chandrenos well testifies this awareness. Eudokia’s visit to Chandrenos with the governor’s order in her hands was a fine opportunity to show her rank in society. The contract also supports this representation. The transcription of different documents primarily served the authenticity of the contract. However, this method had a secondary, representative, function in this case. The long quote of Chandrenos’ charter tells that not only Eudokia had the opportunity to send a petition to the \textit{doux} and praetor, but the governor replied to her appeal. Due to the same decree the contract also includes passages such as ‘Chandrenos protoproedros and logariastes should make a decree, as you [Eudokia, M. R.] claimed’ and ‘there is the ‘Doukas’ written by the hand of the pansebastos sebastos, our leader, according to her wish.’ All these details supported a picture of an elevated rank that was connected to Eudokia. Of course, she and her family could not expect a considerable

\textsuperscript{545} Neville, \textit{Authority}, p. 147.
\textsuperscript{546} Neville, \textit{Authority}, pp. 146–47, 161–62.
audience for the contract and the representation in it, but this factor played little role. The Byzantine élite seized any opportunity for the portrayal of its own importance, regardless of the accessibility of the message. The examples above show that Eudokia used both ways to express her authority and influence.

The sales contract on a dotal estate demonstrates an extreme and obscure case. The discrepancies in the affair and its documentation reveal numerous valuable details about the provincial élite in the early Komnenian period however. It is not most important whether Eudokia and her family were in as serious economic crisis as the contract represents. The narrative of poverty is still the reason for several techniques and methods, which indicate the attitude of the second-tier élite towards the importance of representation and power practises.

5. 3 The patrimony of the Bourtzai: the provincial branch of an élite family

This case treats provincial matters in the early Komnenian period too. It concerns a contract between the Monastery Docheiariou and a landlord about an exchange of landed properties. The prominent individual was Nikephoros Bourtzes who is the main interest of this subchapter. The documentation of the affair provides useful information about Nikephoros and his family that reveals the conditions of the élite in the provinces.

Our observation starts from the exchange of properties. In 1117, a certain Nikephoros Bourtzes made a contract with the Monastery Docheiariou on Athos on their two estates. Bourtzes sold his land called Roussaion or Rousseon at Bryai or Brya on Chalcidice to the monastic community, while the other party gave its workshops on a property in Thessalonike and also paid him fifty nomismata in turn. The contract clearly states that both actors of the affair sought those kinds of estate that they acquire with the agreement. The transfer appears to be a simple business without any recorded trouble. Therefore, it is not the affair of exchange itself that becomes the focus of interest in this analysis. The observation concentrates on the figure of Nikephoros Bourtzes. The document provides considerable information about the circumstances of Bourtzes.

Nikephoros was a descendant of a prominent family, the Bourtzai. The genealogy of this family is not completely clear, but numerous members are known from the sources. The noted history of the Bourtzai began in the tenth century, but their origin remains in

547 Docheiariou, pp. 73–88, no. 4.
548 Docheiariou, p. 83, no. 4, ll. 14–16.
The first and most illustrious representative of the family was Michael Bourtzes doux of Antioch. His fame is indicated by the fact that John Skylitzes and Anna Komnene refer to several Bourtzai’s kinship with Michael. The Bourtzai primarily flourished in the army throughout the eleventh century. We have evidence of several representatives of the family in the reign of Alexios I. Beside Nikephoros, the sources mention Michael Bourtzes toparches of Choma and Cappadocia, his son, Bardas, and Constantine Bourtzes, landowner whose relation to the contemporary kin is unknown. One cannot forget Nikephoros Melissenos who was related to the Bourtzai from his paternal side but adopted his mother’s family name. The evidence shows that the family maintained at least a part of their old influence in the early twelfth century despite their serious losses in the Seljuk invasion. Constantine Bourtzes’ testimony shows that the house was granted several landed properties in the Balkans in compensation for the lost estates in Asia Minor. Nikephoros Melissenos could be the key point for the relatively good conditions of the family. Bardas Bourtzes also appears as a prominent figure, since the little evidence for his activities suggests his strong ties with the imperial court.

Due to the affair, we have some valuable information about the branch of Nikephoros Bourtzes. Since the estate that was the subject of the exchange was an inherited property, the document had to record Bourtzes’ immediate family to explain the legal background of the possession. The contract mentions Nikephoros’ father, Samuel Bourtzes, sister, Eudokia Bourtzaina, and her daughter. The connection between the branch of Nikephoros and the rest of the house is dubious. Cheynet reconstructs an incomplete family tree from the generation of Michael Bourtzes doux of Antioch to that of Eudokia’s daughter. According to Cheynet’s idea, the grandsons of Michael doux, Michael, Theognostos and Samuel, established three separate branches. Nikephoros belonged to one founded by Samuel Bourtzes, his great grandfather. Numerous questions remain open in regard to this genealogy. One of the problems is the origin of Nikephoros’ given name, since it has no evidence in the

549 There was a dispute about the question whether the Bourtzai had Arabic or Armenian origins. Nevertheless, the earliest known members bore Greek Christian names instead of Armenian ones, and this suggests Arabic background: Cheynet and Vannier, Études, p. 15.
551 Cheynet and Vannier, Études, p. 16.
553 Bryennios, pp. 85, 1. 6. Although the adoption of a maternal family name was not unconventional in Byzantium in general, it was more usual among women: J.-C. Cheynet, Aristocratic Anthroponymy, pp. 22–23. Cheynet opines that the name change was possibly inspired by the decline of the Bourzai and the growing difference between their fame and the prestige of the Melissenoi: Cheynet and Vannier, Études, p. 41.
554 Docheiariou, p. 83, no. 4, ll. 10–11.
555 Cheynet and Vannier, Études, p. 55.
ancestry. He could receive Nikephoros after his anonymous paternal grandfather, his unrecorded maternal grandfather or an unknown uncle in theory. In the latter two cases, Nikephoros had to have an older brother at least. The lack of information prevents any solution and more precise theory about this problem.

Given the prestige of the ancestry, it is a question which position Nikephoros Bourtzes held in the administration and in the hierarchy. Nikephoros’ status is also important for the interpretation of the affair. One can approach this problem from many aspects. Three seals, which belonged to a Nikephoros Bourtzes, have been revealed. Cheynet argues that the sealer of these bullae was identical with Nikephoros who made the contract of exchange. Two of the seals testify that Nikephoros was katepano and was elevated to magistros from bestes.556 There is an interesting discrepancy in the contract in regard to the Nikephoros’ titles. The document designates Bourtzes as proedros, while Nikephoros calls himself only magistros.557 Darrouzès assumes that Bourtzes’ signature at the top of the document was added before the contract was written. The scribe probably understood Nikephoros’ elevation to the rank of proedros and recorded it in the contract.558 Bourtzes’ position thus needs further consideration here. The seals were probably issued some years before the contract in 1117. Therefore, he served as a katepano in a period, by which this office had lost most of its old reputation. He was thus responsible for a kastron and its neighbourhood.559 Since the honorific dignities simultaneously held by Nikephoros, bestes and magistros, were given to lower officials in that time, Bourtzes’ moderate position seems probable.

Nikephoros’ marriage is also important to better understand his circumstances. The document gives not only a short mention of his wife, but her statement is also attached to the contract on the same parchment.560 The statement shows that Nikephoros Bourtzes married Anna, the daughter of Nicholas Spleniarios proedros.561 We have no more information about his father-in-law, but his family was related to several notable officials in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Michael Psellos refers to Spleniarios in one of his letters.562 George Spleniarios was judge of the hippodrome and then quaestor in the second half of the twelfth century.

556 Cheynet and Vannier, Études, pp. 48–49.
557 Docheiariou, p. 82, no. 4, ll. 1–2.
558 Docheiariou, p. 77.
559 The katepano was identical with the doux from the tenth to late eleventh centuries, but became an insignificant office in the reign of Alexios I: H. Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, ‘Recherches sur l’administration’, pp. 66–67.
560 Docheiariou, pp. 86–88, no. 4, ll. 65–97.
561 Docheiariou, p. 86, no. 4, l. 65.
562 Psellos, Scripta minora, p. 155, no. 132, l. 7.
century. Andronikos Spleniares is recorded as an imperial notary at the sekreton of sea in the documents in Athos and Patmos in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The evidence clearly shows that the Spleniarioi had multiple connections to Constantinople in the second half of the period. The connection between this family and the capital is obscure in the time of Nikephoros Bourtzes and Anna however. It is also ambiguous where Nicholas Spleniarios’ residence was located. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Nikephoros intermarried with a family of similar rank according to the title of the father-in-law. It was possible that the Spleniarioi already had connections to Constantinople in the early Komnenian period. This could well explain the intermarriage between the two families, since the Bourtzai definitely had ties with the capital. Thus, Nikephoros could strengthen his connection to Constantinople through the marital alliance with the Spleniarioi.

The affair of landed property raises the question about Nikephoros wealth and properties. The contract obviously describes both the old estate at Bryai and the workshops in Thessalonike in details. It is an important information that Nikephoros inherited half of the original domain. The other part was bequeathed to his sister, Eudokia, after the death of their father. In the time of the exchange, this latter portion was in the hands of Eudokia’s daughter. The contract does not mention the measure of land included by the estate. However, fragments of a separate document, which was entirely dedicated to the delimitation of Roussaion, have been preserved in the archive of Docheiariou. Fortunately, the signatures of the participants contain the extent of the domain that was 6111 modioi. The land measured by the latter document was probably identical with the estate given by Nikephoros to the monastery. The extent of the property and the fact that the patrimony was equally divided between Nikephoros and Eudokia are sensitive information. However, Cheynet stresses the problem that there is no clear evidence for the rest of Nikephoros’ entire property. Therefore, our evidence for Nikephoros Bourtzes is contradicting. His partage from Roussaion alone appears a considerable property. The magnitude of the domain is strengthened by the fact too that the monastery had to pay additional fifty nomismata beside the building in Thessalonike given in exchange to compensate the difference between the values of the land

565 Docheiariou, p. 83, no. 4, ll. 11, 19.
566 Docheiariou, p. 90–91, no. 5, ll. 5–22.
567 However, Oikonomides underlines the problem of the phrasing in the signatures of the participants: Docheiariou, pp. 89–90.
and the building. Nevertheless, it is definitely a crucial problem that there is a lack of information about Nikephoros’ complete wealth. The portion of the estate in the whole property is in question. It is plausible that Nikephoros had other estates and his landed property as a whole was disintegrated.\footnote{One clue to the fragmental property is that the contract does not mention any other estates, which belonged to Nikephoros in the neighbourhood of Roussaion: \textit{Dochetariou}, p. 83, no. 4, l. 12.} His connection to Thessalonike also implies that he had remarkable possessions in the town beside the new building with the workshops.

The location of Nikephoros’ residence is also an important but uncertain part of the case. The contract does not include any obvious statement about his home. The document refers to houses and the mansion of the landlord on the estate.\footnote{\textit{Dochetariou}, p. 83, no. 4, l. 13.} However, Roussaion is usually called \textit{proasteion} in the contract and thus it was not the owner’s permanent place of residence.\footnote{\textit{Dochetariou}, pp. 83–85, no. 4, ll. 9, 12, 34, 48} One should pay special attention to Nikephoros’ remark on Roussaion that it was too far from Thessalonike for appropriate management.\footnote{\textit{Dochetariou}, p. 83, no. 4, ll. 14–15.} This latter passage is a strong evidence for the idea that Thessalonike was in the centre of Nikephoros’ interest. It is highly probable thus that his residence was located in the town. Nikephoros’ location in Thessalonike is a crucial point to understand his circumstances. His life in a province also determined the nature of his personal network.

There is one more element that testifies Nikephoros’ strong connection to Thessalonike. The aforementioned factor about this relation mainly relies on geographical elements. In the contract, however, Nikephoros states that, seeking for an opportunity to exchange his distant estate for an urban property, he was informed by his ‘friends’ about the interest of Docheiariou.\footnote{\textit{Dochetariou}, p. 83, no. 4, ll. 14–15.} The information about the needs of the monastery was definitely a local rumour. The figures who helped Nikephoros had to be locals. This passage demonstrates that Nikephoros had strong ties in Thessalonike and was an integrant member of the local élite. The situation proves the effectivity of his personal network, even if the aim of the action was not too ambitious.

We have to return to Nikephoros’ relatives for a brief discussion. We have dealt with the significance of his family background and his kinship to the Spleniaroi by marriage. The first problem is that we do not have information about the communication between Nikephoros and his paternal kin. Consequently, we do not know whether Nikephoros was able to use his origin. In the generation of Nikephoros’ father, Samuel, the cohesion among the
Bourtzai was strong. Samuel acquired Roussaion by the donation of Nikephoros Melissenos, an offspring of the family. The division of the patrimony between Nikephoros and Eudokia strongly suggests that they were the only heirs of Samuel. All the other known Bourtzai had to be related to them with farther kinship. The whole Byzantine society had admiration for the extended family, and this sentiment was even stronger in the Komnenian period. It is thus probable that Nikephoros attempted to maintain active connections to the rest of his kin. Still, it is only a speculation. The ambiguity of relations is also a reason for the other problem that concerns the marriage policy of the Bourtzai. It is difficult to evaluate the significance of the marriage between Nikephoros and Anna for their family. Did Nikephoros use this alliance to strengthen his links to Thessalonike and Constantinople or did the Spleniarioi exploit their new ties with the Bourtzai to reach the capital? The evidence seems to be insufficient for a definite solution.

The inheritance of landed property by Eudokia Bourtzaina is also an important detail. As it has been mentioned, the proportion of Eudokia’s heritage in regard to the estates is uncertain. Nevertheless, her division from Roussaion is still striking. Female heirs mostly inherited chattels in Byzantium. The decision on Eudokia’s share in the landed property shows that her role became more significant in the family policy. Her own part from Roussaion increased her opportunities for a good marriage, which better served the purposes of the Bourtzai. Eudokia and her marriage was a clear tool for the network of her house, particularly for her branch. From another viewpoint, this detail indicates too that the Byzantine élite expected large families in a certain degree. It used the numerous descendants to strengthen the houses’ connections.

The case of Nikephoros Bourtzes shows numerous aspects of the circumstances, in which a provincial landlord lived in the early-twelfth-century Byzantium. Numerous details of the affair indicate a single phenomenon, the importance of networking. The desire to make bonds with the rest of the élite determined even the division of the patrimony among the few heirs. The marriage policy of the Bourtzai and Spleniarioi points to the significance of connections to the capital in the provinces. However, it is not clear how these families exactly

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574 Docheiariou, p. 83, no. 4, l. 10.
576 The focus of the Komnenian politics on the extended family discussed in subchapter 2. It was a consequence of this general cultural and social development. This progress surpassed the confines of the élite: Kazhdan and Wharton-Epstein, Changes, pp. 99–102.
handled their potentials for reaching the Queen of the cities. Nikephoros’ case definitely includes elements that suit comparisons with some other results of this thesis.

5. 4 Dispute over land: a case from the chartulary of Latros

In the last decades of the period, there was a dispute on an estate, which provides us with a picture of the circumstances of powerful landowners. The debate rose between the Monastery of Saint Paul on Mount Latros and a family of the local élite, the Karantenoi. The affair is recorded by five documents, which remained in a version of the chartulary of the aforementioned monastic community copied in the fifteenth century. The documents were first published by Miklosich and Müller. Their edition needed a reconsideration and it also includes some lacunae, which are now corrected with the new methods used by Gastgeber and Kresten. This subchapter focuses on the specific affair of the dispute recorded by the several documents. The analysis deals with the instruments, with which the Karantenoi were able to maintain their control over the estate, and the nature of the debate that indicates the authority of a local family. These are very important factors in an affair, which lasted for about three decades.

The participants and the stages of the affair explain the length of the dispute. In theory, the simple situation of two opposing sides characterised the debate. The dispute rose, when a certain John Karantenos appropriated the estate called Mesingouma, while he only rented it from the imperial monastery on Latros sometime before 1175. The first recorded petition of the monastic community was probably sent to Andronikos I who ordered the restitution of the petitioner’s rights on the aforementioned land. The documents attest that the family gained an official confirmation by a praktikon of the local governor, Basil Batatzes sebastos, doux and anagrapheus of Mylassa and Melanoudion. The monks deprived of their possession requested a following administrator of the same districts, Michael Angelos Doukas Komnenos to confirm their right on Mesingouma. Michael Doukas who usually referred to himself in this way allowed the appeal of the monastery, and issued a decree about his

578 Latros, pp. 13–30. The five documents are 11a, 11b, 12, 13a, and 13b. The petitions of the monastery and the imperial responses to them are numbered together.
580 Latros, p. 42.
581 Latros, pp. 190–192, no. 11a, ll. 15–24; p. 213, no. 12, ll. 82–86; pp. 226–28, no. 13a, ll. 4–18.
582 Latros, pp. 212, no. 12, ll. 87–88. In truth, referring alone to this document, the decree of Michael Doukas does not specify, which appeal and imperial lysis is mentioned here. About the identification of these charters, see Latros, p. 202, n. 10.
decision. Since the Karantenoi did not return the estate to the monastic community, the latter party delivered a petition to the emperor. Alexios III agreed to the request in his lysis, and he ordered the local governors to restore the jurisdiction of Latros over Mesingouma. The government then failed to enforce its arrangement on the Karantenoi, and John’s son bequeathed the land to another monastery. The monks of Latros had to appeal to the emperor again in the time of the fourth crusade. Alexios IV also confirmed the decision of Michael Doukas, and this is the last moment of the affair in our records. The very brief overview may demonstrate the complexity of the affair that resulted in a lasting debate on an estate with an olive orchard. It also indicates that this endlessness arose from the stratagem of the Karantenoi.

The Karantenoi had left behind the apogee of their old prestige and authority nonetheless long before the dispute arose. They belonged to the old and illustrious families of élite, and several members of this house held some key positions of the empire before the reign of the Komnenian dynasty. In the late tenth century, the family belonged to the local élite in the theme of Anatolikon. The most distinguished representative of this house was Constantine Karantenos, the brother-in-law of Romanos III. The Komnenian period seemingly witnessed the decline of the family, and the lack of kinship with the ruling dynasty certainly affected this course. The seals of the Karantenoi issued in the ‘long’ twelfth century provide little information about the position of the family, yet this evidence rather confirms the former statement. The case and its sources offer a bunch of clues about the circumstances of this family through the portrayal of its two representatives.

John Karantenos primikerios is an important figure for our analysis on the conditions of his family. He played a crucial role in the debate as the aggressor and the initiator of the

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583 The actual document: Latros, pp. 204–218, no. 12. References to Doukas’ decision in other documents: idem, p. 192, no. 11a, ll. 25–33; p. 194, no. 11b, ll. 58–64; p. 228, no. 13a, ll. 19–24; p. 230, no. 13b, ll. 44–48. Michael Doukas’ decree is not dated, its issue is determined between August 1189 and April 1195 according to the dates of other related documents, Latros, p. 198, n. 1.
584 Latros, pp. 190–94, no. 11a.
587 Cheynet, Poudoir, p. 223.
588 Skylitzes, p. 377, l. 16.
589 Cheynet, Poudoir, p. 457, n. 159.
struggle for Mesingouma. According to his influence on the affair, John is mentioned by all the documents issued by Latros and the administration to solve the problem. The most important information about him is that he took the charge of primikerios and his residence was located in Mylasa.\footnote{Latros, p. 190, no. 11a, ll. 16–17.} It is also worth noting that John had ended his life before any of the documents was dispatched as the earliest charter, the decree of Michael Doukas implies.\footnote{Latros, p. 190, no. 11a, ll. 15; p. 204, no. 12, ll. 3–9, pp. 226–28, no. 13a, ll. 16–18.} His function and official authority raises questions, since the dignity of primikerios was related to numerous positions and charges in the Byzantine Empire.\footnote{Guilland, Institutions, vol. 1, pp. 300–12.} However, the fact that he lived permanently in Mylasa, the see of a bishopric, decreases the possible offices. Thus, it is probable that John Karantenos was the primikerios of the notaries in the aforementioned diocese. This position did not give an official power the monastery of Saint Paul had to be afraid of in theory. Still this charge could be accompanied by ties and connections that were dangerous for the monastic community.

The situation around John’s son, Leo Karantenos, appears even more uncertain. He continued the debate with the monks on Mesingouma, yet the possible sources of his power and ability to maintain his ownership over the estate remain unrevealed. The decree of Michael Doukas refers to the transmission of the land into the hands of a son of John Karantenos through inheritance, albeit without mention of the heir’s name.\footnote{Latros, p. 214, no. 12, ll. 114–15.} The petition of the Monastery of Saint Paul to Alexios IV offers the successor’s name, Leo, noting that he kept the estate until his early death.\footnote{Latros, p. 228, no. 13a, ll. 25–29.} Nevertheless, none of the documents indicates John’s office or rank that may suggest the authority of his family and its position in the local élite. We do not know the exact date of his death, yet it definitely occurred between 1195 and 1204. The petition of the Monastery of Saint Paul in 1195 does not refer to Leo himself, but to the family with the general term μέρος (part, side). The later appeal of the monks in 1204 calls him by his name in a highly negative context however. This implies that Leo’s role became important in the dispute after the first petition, and there was a serious debate between him and the monastic community on a local basis for years. Therefore, Leo’s death can be rather determined closer to 1204. It is a question nonetheless how he was able to repel the imperial instructions given by Alexios III on behalf of the monastery after its ‘first’ appeal.

The praktikon of Basil Batatzes plays an interesting role in the affair. This decree of Batatzes, a governor of Mylasa and Melanoudion, belonged to those documents, which were
issued during the debate between the Monastery of Saint Paul and the Karantennoi, more specifically around 1189.\(^{596}\) It evidently gave instructions about Mesingouma in favour of the latter party. According to Michael Doukas and his document, Batatzes recorded the estate as a part of the patrimony possessed by the Karantennoi in his \textit{praktikon}.\(^{597}\) It is also mentioned that Batatzes provided the family with an extract from the cadastre that enumerated the taxes laid on Mesingouma.\(^{598}\) This latter action was also beneficial for the Karantennoi against fiscal agents, since Mesingouma was definitely granted exemptions from several burdens. Thus, Batatzes was considerably generous to the family in regard to the circumstances. The debate had arisen years before Batatzes issued his \textit{praktikon}, he consequently had to learn about the affair in time. It seems implausible that such a generosity was given without good connections between Basil Batatzes and John Karantenos. However, our sources pay to little attention to this specific episode for a more detailed analysis and more obvious conclusions.\(^{599}\) In the same time, Batatzes’ activity had a significant effect on the following development of the dispute.

The involvement of the \textit{doux} apparently influenced the decree of his successor, Michael Doukas.\(^{600}\) On the one hand, the document of the latter governor includes a highly detailed and long argument on the side of the monastery of Saint Paul. On the other, it absolutely exceeded the stylistic quality of the other existing writings, decrees and petitions, related to the affair. The introduction of Doukas’ decree is based on biblical quotations, notably the one from the Psalm 37: ‘I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a

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596 This governor was probably identical with Basil Batatzes, the \textit{domestikos} of the east and \textit{doux} of Thrakesion, later the \textit{domestikos} of west who was killed in a campaign against the rebelling Bulgarians around 1193, Choniates, \textit{History}, vol. 1, p. 400, ll. 74–77; pp. 435–36, ll. 61–67; p. 446, ll. 63–69; Polemis, \textit{Doukai}, p. 107. Niketas Choniates states that Basil had a humble origin (Choniates, \textit{History}, vol. 1, p. 400, ll. 74–75), despite the close relation between the imperial houses and some Batatzai. Cheynet doubts the trustworthiness of Byzantine accounts on the ancestry of élite members (Cheynet, \textit{Pouvoir}, p. 256). Polemis consider Basil as the father of John III Doukas (Batatzes) of Nicaea, yet the historian also refers to the historical problems of this idea: Polemis, \textit{Doukai}, p. 107, n. 5.

597 \textit{Latros}, p. 212, no. 12, ll. 89–93.

598 \textit{Latros}, p. 212, no. 12, ll. 93–94.

599 It is worth noting that Batatzes also issued another extract from the cadastre for the opposite party, the Monastery of Saint Paul, in order to confirm its possessions: \textit{Latros}, pp. 178–80, no. 10. The document originally recorded the estates under the jurisdiction of the monastic community, yet, unfortunately, Chortasmenos, the copyist of our only known version of the chartulary, neglected to transcribe the names of the separate lands. Therefore, there is no evidence that Mesinguma is ignored in that document. However, the other aforementioned sources indicate this action. The absence of Mesinguma from the confirmation of the landed property of the monastery could also strengthen the position of the Karantennoi. We know a seal type of Batatzes, which was identical with the one applied for the confirmation: Ταῖς τοῦ σεβαστοῦ Βατάτζη Βασίλειου γραφαῖς τὸ κύρος, παντάνασσα, σῷ δίδου, Zacos and Vegley, \textit{Lead Seals}, pp. 1549–50, no. 2740 (the document quotes the inscription too: \textit{Latros}, p. 180, no. 10, ll. 41–42).

600 Michael Doukas, son of John Doukas, was a great-grandson of Alexios I and a cousin of Isaac II and Alexios III. After the Fourth Crusade, he established the separate state in Epirus, Polemis, \textit{Doukai}, pp. 91–92. He was a representative of the Angeloi despite his chosen family name.
green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.’

In Doukas’ decree, the citation is not correct, since it replaces the phrase ‘the wicked’ (τὸν ἁσβή) with ‘man’ (ἄνδρα) for a more obvious reference to Karantenos. Furthermore, Doukas provides a fine rhetorical composition in the final part of his document. It refers to his master and kinsman, Isaac II’s attempt to rebuild the old status of the monastery and compares this emperor to Leo VI the Wise who founded this monastic community. These pieces overpassed the requirements of a conventional document, even by the standards of the imperial court. The refined narrative suggests that Doukas tried to perform a rhetorical competition with the instructions of his predecessor in the seat of doux. However, Batatzes’ influence is manifest in another part of Doukas’ argument.

Doukas’ decree includes an interesting account about a stage of his investigation. He personally visited Larymos, the vicinity of Mesingouma, to make inquiries about the situation of alienation. The narrative of this action contains some interesting elements:

‘Since the assessment of Batatzes furnishes Karantenos with a reasonable inheritance, of necessity, we have come for interrogation and, from the interrogation, to hear what one would say. Because there was no one who did not recite violation and plunder at home with the grief of heart. Some people reported the violation and plunder of houses, vineyards, inner and outer gardens and trees, others those of agricultural places, proasteia, ploughlands and other sorts of property, whom there is no way to describe. In the same time, each of them hurled the rights about these [possessions] in front of my feet. The following was the most pleasant sight to me. The church bawled, the monastery sounded like a trumpet, when it proclaimed the tyrannies of the man. Orphans, widows and a further band and group of people sang altogether, what they had suffered beforehand. All of them exalted and, so to speak, rejoiced that obtained the previously seized property.’

601 Ps. 37, 35–36 (Ps. 36, 35–36 according to the Septuaginta).
602 Latros, p. 204, no. 12, ll. 3–6.
603 Latros, p. 216, no. 12, ll. 131–44. Beside these solutions, returning to the detailed argument, the decree frequently applies diplomatic tools by referring to numerous documents, which were related to Mesingouma. The most important piece among these references was the apparently complete quotation of Michael Xeros’ decree, which re-established the rights of the monastery of Saint Paul after the Seljuk invasion, without doubt: Latros, pp. 208–212, no. 12, ll. 41–78.
604 Ότι δὲ ἡ ἐπιγραφή τοῦ Βατάτζη κλήρον τινά εὐλογον ἐχορήγει τῷ Καραντηνῷ, ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἢκομεν καὶ εἰς ἐρωτήσεις καὶ, τί ἄν εἶπῃ τις, ἀκούεται εἰς ἐρωτήσεως. οὕτω γάρ ἦν ὁ μὴ οἰκείαι β土耳 καὶ ἄρπαγην ἐξ ὀόνισης καρδιακῆς ἐκφώνων ἄλλοι μὲν γὰρ οἰκείαν καὶ ἀμπλώλαν καὶ ἐκεὶ περιβάλλον καὶ δένδραν βinars καὶ ἄρπαγην ὑπεδέκκουν, ἔτεροι χορμοὶ ἐντόπιοι, προσάτειοι, ξυστηματεῖον καὶ ἄλλον, ὅν γράφει οὐκ ἂν ἄρρητα ἢμων ἐκαστος αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ περὶ τούτων ἐπιρριπτόσι τὸν ἰδιωματα. καὶ μοι θέμα.
At the beginning, there is a clear reference to the influence of Batatzes’ *praktikon* on the events. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the Karantenoi caused significantly more serious problems in the region. Still, the most interesting characteristic of this account is its representative purpose. The narrative of the personal investigation is placed into a frame built with the words of the same root, κληρον and κληροσάμενος. The account proceeds from the inheritance of the Karantenoi to the restoration of the alienated lands. The narrative explicitly expresses in the following part of the document that Doukas re-established the possessions of the local inhabitants. Nevertheless, the text implies here that the positive development occurred as a result of his visitation and investigation. Both the described situation and the nature of the account shows the authority of the Karantenoi and the desperate attempt of the central government or rather its provincial agents to handle this family. Yet Doukas himself apparently failed to enforce the governmental purposes on an element on the local élite.

The Monastery of Saint Paul also applied rhetorical tools in its documents. It is more precise to say that the rhetoric changed in the two surviving petitions of this monastic community. This development is manifest in a different manner as the monks refer to the Karantenoi in their two documents. The petition in 1195 mentions John Karantenos and his family in a nearly neutral way by simply avoiding a judgment on them in the narration of their activities. The tone of the later appeal in 1204 clearly differs in the description of the Karantenoi and their scandals. This document once calls John ‘rapacious’ (ἀρπαξ δὲ ὄν) while his son, Leo is described as a man ‘doubling his father in greed and rapacity’ (διπλασιάσας τῷ πλεονεκτικῷ καὶ ἀρπακτικῷ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ). The portrayal of the two Karantenoi is accompanied by the reference to divine intervention and its role in their death. The difference is evident between the two narratives, yet the reasons for this change is in question. The former document applies a pure legal style while the later petition includes more emotional accounts at some points. The idea that differing scribes were responsible for these texts can explain such development. The long dispute and the perpetual failure of the Monastery of Saint Paul could also induce the members of the community to become more immoderate. The most plausible reason appears to be the transition of the dispute between

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606 Latros, p. 214, no. 12, ll. 116–21.
607 Note again that the Monastery of Saint Paul had to send two additional petitions directly to the imperial court after Doukas’ decree.
608 Latros, pp. 190–192, no. 11a, ll. 15–17, 34–36.
the monks at Latros and another monastery, which obtained Mesingouma in the late years of the debate. The more emotional manner and the appearance of religious elements in the narrative suggest the last hypothesis.

In the late stage of the debate, another monastic community also played an important role in the dispute. Leo Karantenos bequeathed Mesingouma to a monastery, which was not that of Saint Paul, after his early death. Therefore, the monks of Latros had to oppose another community in the later years. Nonetheless, it is a question what was Leo’s intention with the donation. In general, monasteries played an important role in both the spiritual and secular matters of the Byzantine élite. Beside the commemoration of several members of a family, the foundation or patronage of a monastery represented the social position of an élite house. Furthermore, a founder or patron could show his connection to a region by his support of a local monastic community. It is uncertain which of these aims Leo Karantenos personally pursued. However, his and the closer kin’s commemoration definitely inspired him. Still, the circumstances of this donation raise some questions. We have little information about Leo’s family after his death. Since he died relatively soon as it has been mentioned above, it is probable that he remained childless until his death. The act of the donation of his estate also indicates the lack of offspring. Yet we do not know what was the fate of Leo’s complete landed property, since the only evidence is given by a third party only interested in that specific orchard. Nevertheless, the second known petition of the Monastery of Saint Paul suggests that Leo had siblings. This can lead to the hypothesis that Leo intended to keep the estate close to his family by bestowing the land on a monastery, which was related to them. Although the connection between this monastery and the Karantenoi is obscure, the donation of Mesingouma alone was able to build such valuable ties.

The dispute on the orchard is a dubious affair in regard to its social aspects. One cannot state that the circumstances of the Karantenoi are clearly revealed by this case. Numerous documents recorded several moments and data of the debate, yet all of them were issued to support one side, that of the Monastery of Saint Paul on Latros. Nevertheless, the evidence shows the importance of local authority and influence that the Karantenoi were able to gain

610 See the subchapter 5. 1 The patrimony of the Kephalades.
611 The document states that John Karantenos bequeathed Mesinguma to his children, not only a single son, Latros, p. 226, no. 13a, ll. 15–16.
612 It is worth noting that this donation resulted in an issue of another document, which provided the monastery, the estate and the Karantenoi additional guarantees. Both the second petition of the monastery of Saint Paul and the imperial lysis responding to it demonstrates that the administration had to deal with the authority of the donation: Latros, p. 226, no. 13a, ll. 30–38; p. 230, no. 13b, ll. 51–57.
and express in the late twelfth century. The background of this power mostly remains in obscurity, especially the network of the family, which was definitely the main instrument of their potency. The relation between Basil Batatzes and the Karantenoi that is merely a hypothesis provides us with a fragment of this basis. Finally, another interesting problem is the connection of this case with the tendencies of the period.

5. 5 A comparative analysis of individual affairs

The four cases demonstrate numerous aspects of the élite in the provinces. It is not a simple task to keep the cohesion of the chapter with this subject. The observation relied on a relatively homogeneous source material due to the main focus of the chapter on official documents. However, the affairs themselves show a heterogeneity by their nature. Fortunately, one can find several subjects, which build connections between these separated events.

The diminishment of families occurs in two affairs. The donation of Nikephoros Kephalas and the contract of Nikephoros Bourtzes suggests this negative progress. Diminishment or marginalisation was definitely a nightmare of the whole élite. Bourtzes’ case presents a clearer evidence for his settlement in Thessalonike. Provincial residence is less obvious in the case of Kephalas. The problem of their situation becomes apparent in comparison with the potential of their families. Nevertheless, there are differences in the nature of the decline. In the case of Kephalas, the main element is the changes between two generations. Nikephoros Kephalas’ father, Leo, was a competent officer in the army under Alexios I and he gained the favour of the emperor too. Alexios granted Leo a considerable number of estates in the early years of his reign. The majority of the patrimony inherited from Leo was in the hand of Nikephoros Kephalas. Nikephoros did not remarkably increase his landed property according to the evidence. This detail, his court title and the possibility of provincial residence imply that Nikephoros was not able to keep up with the successes of his father. Nikephoros Bourtzes’ lower position is highlighted by the prosperity of his kinsfolk. The other contemporary members of the house, Bardas and Constantine Bourtzes, seemingly had stronger connections to Constantinople and reached higher ranks in the administration. Nikephoros Bourtzes belonged to a branch of the family, which was forced to flourish in a provincial milieu with weaker ties to the power centre of the empire. Nikephoros’ father had a powerful supporter from the highest echelons of the society, Nikephoros Melissenos. Nikephoros Bourtzes main interests were almost limited to Thessalonike some decades later.
These affairs happened in the time of the old second-tier élite. Nonetheless, they include several elements and factors, which probably affected the social stratum after its later transformation too.

Some cases draw attention to the representation of authority by the élite. It is not surprising that the Byzantine élite demonstrated the extent of its power. The nature of this representation and its connection with the division of the élite needs a little discussion here. The case of Eudokia, the daughter of George Bourion, is a fine example of this particular subject. First, she demonstrated her authority to the local élite and the local agents of the government by several deeds during the sale of her dotal estate. The presentation of the written confirmation given by the doux, which showed the valuable connection between the Eudokia and the high official, to the deputy of the governor belongs to these moments. Second, it is even more important how she used her sales contract to represent her power. Some phrases of the document clearly serve to portray her elevated position in the local society. The dispute between the Monastery of Saint Paul on Latros and the Karantenoi shows a similar effort. Michael Doukas, the governor of Mylassa and Melanoudion, attempts to represent his authority through his decree. Especially the account on his local visit and investigation aims to portray his power. These are two examples from the four selected cases of this chapter. Nevertheless, we can cite other cases too. George Tornikes, the metropolitan of Ephesos, also seeks to show his authority in a letter to John Pantechnes. Here, Tornikes tells his friend that he will compel the local governor to accomplish several duties.\textsuperscript{613} It is interesting that these three examples involve both strata of the élite. Eudokia and Tornikes belonged to the second-tier élite, while Doukas represented the Komnenian leading élite. Therefore, these cases demonstrate that there was no essential difference between the desires of the two strata to represent their authority. It is worth noting how important the written documents seem to be in this representation.

The affair of the dispute between Latros and the Karantenoi raises several questions. This is the only case among the selected ones, which happened in the time of the Komnenian second-tier élite. However, it developed in the final decades of the period, when the empire and the Komnenian political system started to decline. The affair testifies that even a member of a second-tier élite was able to defend his interests against an imperial monastery and even the central government. The problem is how much this potency was related to the crisis of the empire and the weakness of the imperial administration. Evidence from other parts of the

\textsuperscript{613} Tornikes, Letters, p. 170, l. 21–p. 171, l. 5, no. 26.
period indicate that the dispute between Latros and the Karantenoi was nothing unusual. An example shows that trials and debates on landed property could persist for a long time even in the apogee of the political system. A dispute between Lavra and different landlords led to several trials, but the final solution was apparently offered by the decree of John Kontostephanos doux of Thessalonike in 1162 after decades of debate. Thus, the Karantenoi were not necessarily successful, because they were able to exploit the impotence of the central government and the local administration. Still, we cannot ignore the possibility that the Karantenoi indeed gained benefit from the concurrent weakness of the state. It is striking that this family was able to defend its illegal acquisition against even the imperial interests for more generations. The heirs of Leo Kephalas, a favoured officer of Alexios I, felt the need of a new confirmation of their possession by the same emperor after legal imperial donations. Given the instability of the Kephalas patrimony in a more favourable environment, the ability of the Karantenoi to hold their possession appears even more impressive. It is also curious that Nikephoros Kephalas and the Karantenoi found the same solution for the uncertainties despite the different circumstances: they donated several estates to monasteries.

This chapter revealed different characteristics of the provincial social elements through an observation on the level of distinct cases. The selected affairs demonstrated both the threats to the provincial landlords and the abilities of those who were far from the centre of power in more aspects. We cannot state with certainty that all the revealed phenomena characterised the Komnenian second-tier élite. Nevertheless, they were mostly related to cultural, social and institutional factors such as the mechanisms of provincial administration, the significance of kinship and the gravity of Constantinople, which definitely existed throughout the period.

6 The value of office- and titleholding in the letters of the second-tier élite

Now, we reach a subject that differs from the interests of the former chapters. The observation turns to the attitude of the second-tier élite towards specific phenomena. These elements, the offices and honorary dignities, played an important role in the Byzantine élite in theory, since this elevated social rank depended on the membership in the bureaucracy. Therefore, although the chapter breaks the line of the narrowing range of interest, it deals with a subject that lies in the background of the previous analyses. The observation focuses on one source material, the Byzantine epistolography, in the period for both methodological reasons and the limits of the thesis. The chapter concentrates on the collections of four intellectuals in three subchapters. The reasons for this solution are that the principle of the division is the chronology in order that the analysis will thus cover all the three distinguishable parts of the era from the early Komnenian period with the reign of Alexios I to the late one with the regime of the Angeloi. In the final subchapter, we make a little attempt to compare our results derived from the letters with the views in other genres of the Byzantine literature in order to place our evidence into a broader context.

6.1 Office- and titleholding in the letters of Theophylact of Ochrid

Theophylact’s letters give us a picture about the attitude towards office and title holding in the early Komnenian period. Theophylact Hephaistos, well known as the archbishop of Ochrid, left a large collection of his correspondence with the lay and ecclesiastic élite of his time. After numerous years of teaching in Constantinople, he led the diocese of Bulgaria from 1088 to 1126 and the vast majority of his letters were written in this period. Theophylact lived in decades before the second-tier élite transformed into its Komnenian form. Therefore, this analysis plays a role similar to the investigation on John Melidones and Constantine Choirosphaktes above. It serves the comparison between the early Komnenian élite below the old leading group and the Komnenian second-tier élite from the reign of John II. The main reason for this comparison is that there were great similarities between Theophylact’s career and the progression of the other authors in the focus of this chapter, Michael

615 In truth, an integrated collection was created with the edition by Paul Gautier. The material had existed in a fragmental manuscript tradition and several incomplete editions: Theophylact, Letters, pp. 13–36; Mullett, Theophylact, pp. 79–82.
Italikos, George Tornikes and Michael Choniates. In accordance to the main topic of this part of my thesis, this subchapter seeks to reveal Theophylact’s attitude towards important phenomena of the Byzantine élite, namely office- and titleholding, in his correspondence.

Theophylact pays surprisingly little attention to the honorary court titles in his correspondence. The phenomenon mainly appears when the archbishop simply mentions a specific designation. Searching for the author’s general remarks on the honorary dignities nonetheless, the modern reader also faces a problem of terminology. Theophylact uses two related words, *axia* and *axioma*, which can mean title in theory. However, the Byzantine vocabulary was frequently ambiguous in this subject, since offices and honorary ranks were considered as the two sides of the same coin, the dignity in a broader sense. It is well known the Byzantines officially distinguished the two categories from one another with the terms *axiai dia brabeion* and *axiai dia logou*.\(^{617}\) It does not mean that functions and honorary ranks were completely unseparated in Byzantium. Some other designations were exclusively used for titles or offices. Theophylact mentions *axia* only twice and *axioma* thrice. In the relevant letters, most of these references concerns offices, especially ecclesiastic positions.\(^{618}\) The word *time* (τιμή), which was a clearer term for honorary titles in administrative context, is seemingly omitted from Theophylact’s correspondence. The derivative *timiotes* is used by the author to address his colleagues in the church.\(^{619}\) The evidence leaves no doubt about the paucity of references to honorary titles in the collection. Nevertheless, one should be careful to regard this characteristic as a sign of the archbishop’s indifference to ranks. There is one element that implies Theophylact’s appreciation of honorary dignities.

A little evidence for the significance of titles is their use as salutation. Theophylact exclusively use the higher dignities, especially the *sebastos* or *pansebastos*, to address his recipients. This kind of salutations was used when an addressee held the same title. The most remarkable example of these addresses is in Theophylact’s letter to John Doukas *megas doux*, the brother-in-law of Alexios I. The archbishop addresses John as *pansebastos* in the beginning of the text. Theophylact praises the recipient for his glorious victory against Çaka, the emir of Smyrna, who is represented as a dragon.\(^{620}\) Then the addressee of the narrative visibly but smoothly becomes God, and the author praises him for caring people through

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\(^{618}\) Theophylact, *Letters*, p. 193, no. 18, l. 25; p. 249, no. 36, l. 20; p. 421, no. 79, l. 45; p. 491, no. 96, l. 111; p. 571, no. 127, l. 6. Letter 127 is the only one where axioma definitely means honorary dignity.

\(^{619}\) Examples: Theophylact, *Letters*, p. 339, no. 59, l. 34; p. 435, no. 82, l. 26; p. 559, no. 121, ll. 15–16.

After this section, the writer returns to John Doukas, explaining his words to the divine power: ‘Do you see, oh pansebastos, however, how I sing God’s gifts given to you with God’s utterances as much as possible, when it is necessary not to reduce the superhuman deeds with human language?’ The salutation is surrounded by a praising context in different parts of the letter. Thus, pansebastos, ‘all august’, becomes completely meaningful, since it suits its holder. This fine example of addressing with title nearly remains alone with its elaborated context however.

A more profane and more obvious reference to the significance of court titles can be found in another letter of Theophylact. The long letter written to Gregory Kamateros deals with numerous topics, but the metropolitan’s congratulation for his friend’s designation as nobellisimos and asekretis deserves our attention here. This passage contains a valuable remark on the title: ‘If we well serve so great men as high the dignity of nobellisimos, which sat in councils together with the emperor long ago, and the office of protoasekretis… place you…’ Theophylact refers to the old prestige of nobellisimos here. The passage does not aim to indicate the decline of the dignity. It rather intends to show that the dignitary gains a high stature through the tradition of the title. The few examples of references to titleholding imply a high regard for honorary dignities and their impact on the holders, but the amount of evidence cast doubts on the extent of significance.

Officeholding appears to attract the archbishop’s attention more than honorific dignities. It does not mean that the letters include a great number of specific designations. Theophylact rather talks about offices in a humble manner according to the general characteristic of Byzantine epistolography mentioned above. Furthermore, the number of references to offices or officeholding connected with political narratives is not large in comparison to the extent of the letter collection. It still appears sufficient for an analysis nonetheless.

Morality is an important and frequent topic in the letters from Theophylact. This theme appears in several writings, which deals with officials or their offices. A clear example of this attitude is given by a letter to John Komnenos, the governor of Dyrrachion: ‘Because I

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622 Ἀλλ’ ὡρᾶς ὃ πανεστὰτο ὃ τὰ Θεοῦ περὶ σὲ δωρήματα τοῖς τοῦ Θεοῦ λόγιοι ὡς δυνατὸν ὠννήσα, ἐπεὶ καὶ δεὶ μὴ ἀνθρωπίνη γλώσσῃ τὰ ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπων κατασμικρύνεσθαι; Theophylact, *Letters*, p. 155, no. 8, ll. 25–27.
623 This passage is observed from the aspect of officeholding too, see pages 167–68, note 639.
624 The affection of the élite for the tradition of the bureaucracy and the political system occurs in different ways in the sources. The rhetorical function is evident however. Zonaras’ criticism on the politics of Alexios I is an example of this phenomenon. Nevertheless, the interpretation of such account is delicate: Magdalino, ‘Kaiserkritik’, pp. 335–38.
625 Cf. Mullett, *Theophylact*, pp. 264–65 who rather deals with this topic in regard to the relation between Theophylact and his suffragean bishops.
utter to you, your high holiness in nature and education, like the marvellous Arsenios. For
the rest, aid the poor against those who take them as prisoners—since it is suitable to speak
so—and scare this bad destiny away from them for real.626 The protection of the poor is one
of the most important duty of a governor as Theophylact stresses it several times.627 It is
worth noting that the archbishop does not mention his recipient’s position directly. Still, the
remarks clearly show that John Komnenos was an official in the time of the correspondence.
Although the lack of direct reference to the addressee’s governorship is a general character-
istic of Theophylact’s letters, its effect on this specific narrative still deserves our attention.
It indicates the separation of morality from the officeholding in the argument. Moral behav-
ior is an obligation of the individual. It does not matter whether the performer of a rightful
act is an official or not. This letter argues about the moral duties of an executive without
clear implication of administrative positions. It indicates the superiority of morality over
officeholding. Theophylact uses another way to express this relation too.

The prelate also describes a more direct connection between morality and officeholding.
In this case there is a clearer reference to the appointment of the recipient, still without specific
designation. In a letter to a certain Pakourianos, one can see this different narrative on the
relation between morality and appointment: ‘Then you would be completely good, if you
painted your own soul with the divine colours of life above the justice. This would be yours
during the office, to which you have been appointed, if you were able or wanted to be dis-
dainful of the emperor’s orders too.’628 This passage is a part of a long argument on the
relation between the individual and justice. Theophylact stresses that the imitators of God
stand over justice while humans ignore it. The final purpose of the archbishop’s reasoning
is to ask Pakourianos to perform a moderate fiscal policy in the province.629 This is the right
decision for both a divine creature and a human. The striking part of the quoted passage is
where the moral deed conflicts an essential element of the official service. That is the obe-
dience to the imperial orders. In this way, Theophylact strongly asserts that moral matters
exceed any other aspects of officeholding. The narrative still deals with the correlation be-
tween morality and official appointment.

626 κατὰ γὰρ τὸν θεσπέσιον Ἀρσενίου σοι τῷ τῆς φύσις θειοτάτῳ καὶ παῖδευσιν φθέγγομαι. Τά τε οὖν ἄλλα
tοις πένθισιν ἐπικούρει κατὰ τῶν αἰχμαλωτιζόντων—οὕτω γὰρ εἰπέν ὦκελεύθερον—καὶ ὅ ὁ καὶ τίνους τὴν κακὴν
μόραν αὐτῶν ἀποσώβησον, Theophylact, Letters, p. 163, no. 11, ll. 4–7.
627 Other examples of this opinion: Theophylact, Letters, p. 161, no. 10, ll. 13–15 (also to John Komnenos); p.
237, no. 32, ll. 13–15.
628 Σύ τοῖνοι πάγαλος μὲν ἀν εἶχες, εἰ τὴν σαυτὸν ψυχὴν ξογραφοῦσις τοῖς θείοις τῆς ὑπὲρ τὸ δίκαιον ζωῆς
χρώματι. Τοῦτο δὲ ἐσται σοι κατὰ τὴν ἁρχὴν ταύτην ἐν δ’ ἑκατερίκεις, εἰ καὶ τὸν ἐκ βασιλέως ἐφεισμένων
ὑπέρστορος εἶναι δύνατο καὶ ὧν ἤμεος, Theophylact, Letters, p. 319, no. 55, ll. 31–34.
629 Theophylact, Letters, p. 319, no. 55, ll. 21–43.
Theophylact occasionally implies a more direct conflict between morality and office-holding. The prelate notices the dangers of official service sometimes, but his arguments on this problem were not necessarily placed into negative contexts. A positive message includes Theophylact’s thought on the perilous nature of offices in a letter to Gregory Pakourianos. The recipient was appointed to the government of the district where Ochrid belonged. Concerning this, the archbishop warns Pakourianos:

‘I say therefore that you have received authority over people as a young man susceptible in mind from every side. Thus, you need to be disciplined and to observe everything with more eyes than the all-seeing Argos watched the heifer entrusted to him in order that, what the myth means here, vice may not imprint his mark in your soul without your note. Since youth is reckless and energetic due to the soul, it speaks with sword, they say, whenever the power of office is at hand.’

Then Theophylact stresses the positive effects of prudence and the importance of the protection of the poor. There is another example of the opposition between morality and office-holding. In a letter to an unidentified sebastos, the archbishop complains about his issues with the imperial fisc:

‘However, for I have troubles with the administrators of fiscal affairs, I admit to have something common with the fisc, who himself thus trembles with Briareos as he conjectures from the stars. It seizes both who are culpable and who are innocent in order. Therefore, what Abraham dissuades God in some places from is that it kills the righteous together with the wicked whenever possible, because the agents are not enlightened by the spirit of distinction.’

One of the main ideas behind the whole argument in the first quotation is the corruption of the mind by political power. Although the archbishop does not ignore the possibility of positive results, they depend on the personal abilities of the official. Office is essentially...
dangerous in this narrative. Theophylact treats the power aspect of this phenomenon beside its moral side. The second citation includes an even more complex discussion on the problem. The fisc is personified by a mythical giant, Briareos, and the imperial treasury thus acts as one individual. The institution is represented as a whole, an indivisible entity. The immorality of the fiscal official mentioned in the end of the quoted part could refer to personal failure. However, the reasoning portrays the bureaucrats as part of the inseparable entity, the fisc. The immorality of office appears above the personal level here therefore. The two quotes tell the same idea from different approaches. The relation between morality and officeholding is only one of the questions that are connected to official assignment in the letters from the archbishop.

Officeholding is also identified by Theophylact as servitude on one occasion. In truth, slavery is one of the ways, in which the archbishop represents his service in Bulgaria. Servitude is beautifully represented in the letter to Adrian Komnenos, a younger brother of Alexios I, who was megas domestikos, the supreme leader of the landed armies. After the introduction, Theophylact recites Hercules’ service at the court of the Lydian queen. Then he returns to his own situation with a reference to the mythical story:

‘I described myself to you in the circumstances, in which I am. Except so far as I serve not a wealthy, decent and beautiful queen, the golden Aphrodite on the whole, but impure barbarian servants who has the rank smell of fleece and are as poor in livelihood as rich in malevolence, but rather those who rule all together with poverty in livelihood and malignity.’

After this description, the prelate begs the megas domestikos to release him from the servitude. Given Theophylact’s complaint about the insults at him in the introduction of the letter, he definitely deals with specific affairs. Therefore, he does not refer to his service as slavery in general. However, his troubles are connected to both the common people and the local élite of Bulgaria, and they have come upon him through his office. His function thus becomes servitude. The temporary nature of enslavement is manifested in the archbishop’s narrative on Hercules who was finally released from his enslavement, and became a hero

633 Theophylact, Letters, pp. 146–48, no. 5, ll. 9–33.
634 Ἐμαυτὸν ἔγραψα σοι ἐν ὀψις εἰμί. Πλὴν ὅσον οὐ βασιλεῖδι δουλεύω πλουσία καθαρίω τε καὶ καλῇ καὶ συνόλως ἀφροδίτῃ χρυσῇ. ἄλλα δὲ δουλεῖας βαρβάρως ἀκαθάρτως κινάβρας κεφάλων ἀπόζουσιν καὶ πενετέροις τὸν βίον ἢ ὅσον τὴν κακοθῆσαι πλουσίων, μίθλον δὲ καὶ τῇ τοῦ βίου πενίᾳ καὶ τῇ κακοθείᾳ συμπάντων βασιλεύουσι, Theophylact, Letters, p. 148, no. 5, ll. 34–38.
afterwards. In the argument of the letter, the mythical figure symbolises to individuals by his two aspects: the slave represents Theophylact, while the hero portrays Adrian Komnenos. This opinion of Theophylact on official appointment is occasional, but reveals a detail of his attitude towards officeholding.

Theophylact’s collection includes a letter that gives a positive narrative about officeholding. Some of the texts presented above also contain several remarks of the archbishop on the advantages of official designations. None of them contain as clear an argument on the positive aspects of service as the letter to Gregory Kamateros, probably the logothetes of the sekreta in that time: ‘Due to your dexterity concerning every good, because, since God has allowed you to have great power on the side of the emperor, you do not improperly use the divine grant, but you reveal yourself as worthy of even more authority.’

Some lines later, Theophylact praises Kamateros for the appointment of a decent governor, probably Gregory Pakourianos, and wishes the recipient, his friend, more authority in the future. The reasoning in these lines definitely shows a positive attitude towards authority. Here, Theophylact emphasises the divine origin of power that cannot be evil by nature. The argument apparently indicates the opposite of the message found in other letters: authority is a reward offered by God for the official’s excellence. This assertion is probably influenced by the meritocratic idea of the Byzantine élite.

As in the case of many other letters, the context of the quoted argument deals with a very specific event. Thus, the archbishop’s words on Kamateros’ authority and its nature are highly influenced by the purpose of the rest part. It explains the difference between this argument and Theophylact’s remarks in the other letters.

The appointment to a new position also appears in the correspondence of Theophylact. The most interesting example is a long letter to Gregory Kamateros, in which the prelate celebrates his friend’s progression in the government. In the beginning of the text, the writer approaches the new appointment from an individual viewpoint:

‘When we do good to the smallest one as the Lord says, we hope for compensations neither perceived with mind nor specified by word. If we well serve so great men as high as the dignity of nobellisimos, which sat in councils together with the emperor long ago, and the office of protoasekretis, which always serves the autokrator

636 Ἐκ τῆς σῆς περὶ πάν ἁγαθὸν δεξιότητος, δὲ γε, ἐπειδὴ σοι Θεός τὸ παρὰ βασιλεῖ μεγάλα δύνασθαι δέδωκεν, οὐκ ἐπαιριστέρας χρὰ τῷ θεῷ δορῆματι, ἀλλὰ φαίνεις σεαυτὸν καὶ τοῦ μείζω δύνασθαι άξιον, Theophylact, Letters, p. 369, no. 67, ll. 7–10.
637 Theophylact, Letters, p. 369, no. 67, ll. 13–23.
638 The ‘meritocratic model’ was one of the social conceptions in the eleventh-century Byzantine élite: Bernard, Writing and Reading, pp. 164–67.
as an assistant secretary, place you, and, especially now, the autokrator is so wise and considerate as to do all else and speeches himself, oh, what number and greatness of compensations it is, from which I receive deposits now."\(^{639}\)

This part of the text includes all the main elements that members of the élite expected from an appointment. The argument begins with a reference to the Gospel of Matthew.\(^ {640}\) It underlines the benefits of Kamateros’ progression and places the following lines into a moral context. It indicates the mutual nature of the two individuals’ relationship too. Nevertheless, the writer honestly deals with the topic. It is interesting how much Theophylact stresses the importance of closeness to the emperor through position. The archbishop also implies that the success of an official affects those who belong to his personal network. This part clearly includes a more concrete discussion about the officeholding than the previous cases. It has a clear rhetorical function: Theophylact wants an obvious message about his expectations on the support of his powerful friend.

Theophylact’s correspondence shows a contradicting picture about his attitude towards office- and titleholding. The archbishop’s few remarks on the court titles imply that the honorary dignities were connected to the bearer’s personality closer than the offices. Still, the evidence is too little to make certain statements about this particular question. One can find considerably more references to the officeholding in Theophylact’s letters and the analysis indicate greater results. However, the relevant material shows inconsistency in the author’s attitude towards officeholding. The most constant element in his remarks is the pre-eminence of morality. A triangle of correlations between individual (official), office and morality or immorality often occurs in the related letters. The main question of this triangle is whether immorality is a natural characteristic of offices or it relies on the personal traits of a bureaucrat. Theophylact apparently expresses different opinions about these connections. This discrepancy underlines the nature of the source material, the epistolography, since each letter can work as a separate narrative. One cannot ignore the rhetorical aspects of letter writing. The purpose of a given letter influences the argument on specific topic inside the text. The amount of interest in titles and offices is possibly related to the nature of the source material.

\(^{639}\) Καὶ τινὶ μὲν ἐλαχίστῳ καθὰ φησιν ὁ Κύριος ἀγαθόντος, οὕτω νῦ ὁ λατάς οὕτω λόγῳ ῥητάς ἁμοιβᾶς ἔλπιζομεν. Εἰ δὲ τηλικοῦτος εὖγραφεῖς ἧλικόν αὐτὸν σὲ τὸ τε τοῦ νοβελλισίμου ἄξιωμα τέθεικε, τοῦ πάλιν βασιλεύει συνεδρεύοντος, καὶ τὸ τοῦ πρωτοασηκρῆτος ὄρφικαν τοῦ ἁς τοῖς αὐτοκράτορι ὕπογραμματεύοντος, καὶ μάλιστα νῦν ὅσο καὶ σωφρόνος ὁ αὐτοκράτωρ καὶ ἐμμέλεστερός ὅπετα τὰ τὰ ἄλλα καὶ τοὺς λόγους ἀυτοῦγεν, βαβαί μοι τὸν πλήθους καὶ μεγέθους τῶν ἁμοιβῶν, ἃν ἢ ὁ ἡ καὶ ἀρραβώνας δέχομαι., Theophylact, Letters, p. 571, no. 127, ll. 2–11.

\(^{640}\) Mt. 25, 40.
too. Theophylact’s letters were not only rhetorical works but they had pragmatic aims in relation to the network of the archbishop of Ochrid. When the author deals with civil administration, he usually treats specific affairs. In these cases, there is more space for argument on the offices and the authority behind them then for discussion on the honorary titles. It is possible that Theophylact’s ignorance about dignities is rather about the nature of the sources than about his real personal attitude towards the phenomenon.

6. 2 Office- and titleholding in the letters of Michael Italikos and George Tornikes

This part differs from the rest of the chapter, since it focuses on more authors. It has been mentioned in the introduction that the division of the chapter rather relies on chronological aspects than on individual ones. Both Theophylact of Ochrid and Michael Choniates provide sufficient source material about the sentiment of their times, while Michael Italikos and George Tornikes left relatively few letters to the following generations. The most extensive letter collection from the middle Komnenian period (by far) was written by John Tzetzes, a pupil of Italikos. Tzetzes did not belong to the second-tier élite however, because he spent most of his time out of the bureaucracy. Therefore, even if he has remarks on office- and titleholding, his opinion is not relevant in this analysis, which deals with the attitude of Byzantine officialdom on two of its essential aspects. It is worth noting that Italikos and Tornikes built highly similar careers by reaching different teaching positions before the late years as metropolitans. Despite the similarities, this subchapter does not necessarily seek to compare the views of the two intellectuals. It rather focuses on the variation of approaches to the two phenomena, office- and titleholding.

Michael Italikos and George Tornikes do not treat the significance of titleholding in their letters. Of course, the extent of their collections of correspondence alone does not give numerous opportunities for arguments on the topic. Nevertheless, references to court titles still appear highly restricted. Both authors mention several honorary dignities, but the vast majority of these references is connected to the ranks of the first-tier élite, especially the sebastos. Italikos and Tornikes often use the titles to address the recipients. Tornikes ends his letter to John Kamateros with the sentence: ‘Let your succour be to me, oh sebasimos,

642 Some examples: Italikos, p. 136, l. 1, no. 12; Tornikes, Letters, p. 137, l. 1, no. 15; p. 140, l. 1, no. 16; pp. 150–51, ll. 1, 3, no. 20.
by character rather than by title.' Sebasmios is a literary form of sebastos, and it is also an example of using a dignity as an address. However, it is more interesting what this short passage indicates about the titles. The use of ranks for addressing implies a stronger connection between the title and its holder. It is evident that this kind of addressing worked only with dignities that were meaningful for the contemporaries. However, the quote from Tornikes shows the opposite, since it separates personality from titleholding. Therefore, addressing with court rank is only a highly polite formula in the correspondence of George. In the case of Italikos, one cannot make a similarly distinct statement, but the titles do not appear to have more significance in his letters.

We can find slightly more about the officeholding in the letters of Michael Italikos and George Tornikes. The number of references is still low due to the fact that the source material is restricted in these relatively little collections from the two writers. Both Italikos and Tornikes refer to offices, either by exact designations or humble allusions, but only a little part of these remarks is useful to analyse the authors’ attitude towards officeholding.

One of the few relevant topics that appear in Italikos’ correspondence is the opposition between officeholding and intellectual activity. Scholarly activities played an important role in the Byzantine élite even after the years of education. Intellectuality was an appropriate element of group identity at least in several segments of the ruling stratum in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It is not surprising therefore that Italikos who had been a teacher of different schools in Constantinople before he was appointed as metropolitan of Philippopolis. The following lines are quoted from his letter to a logothetes, probably Stephen Meles, the logothetes of the dromos:

‘I really know that, being responsible for military equipment and vessels now, you neither consider how you prepare a period and how you contract or unfold the antithetic form—these are the easiest and simplest for you—, nor how you transform the platonic form into that of Demosthenes or change the poetic verbosity into political rhetoric…’

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643 'Ἡ ἀντίληψις σος μεθ’ ἡμῶν εἶπ ο τὸν τρόπον πλέον ή τὴν ἀξίαν σεβάσμε, Tornikes, Letters, p. 134, ll. 20–21, no. 12.
645 Οἶδα μὲν οὖν ότι νόν πρὸς ὅπλα καὶ νῆς ἀξεταζόμενος, σκοπεῖς οὐχ ὅπως ἀποτονεύσεις περίοδον καὶ πῶς τὸ ἀντίθετον σχῆμα μετατέλεσαι ή ἐξαπλώσεις — ταῦτα δὲ τὰ σοὶ ῥάστα καὶ προχειρότατα — οὐδ’ ὅπως Πλατωνικὴν ἴδεαν μεταβάλῃς εἰς Δημοσθενικὴν ἤ ποιητικὴν μεγαληγορίαν εἰς πολιτικὴν ῥητορείαν ἀμείψειας…. Italikos, p. 165, ll. 8–13, no. 20.
Gautier assumes that the letter was written when Meles possibly attended John II in the latter’s military campaign in Cilicia and Syria in 1137. Italikos’ words make it clear that the passage is definitely related to a specific event. Still, it does not mean that this reasoning has no general validity. Detailing several intellectual exercises, the writer stresses how important things he lacks in the absence of his friend. The official duty is represented here as a hindrance to intellectuality. It emphasises the significance of scholarly activities in the narrative of Italikos. This argument shows the value of official service in relation to another phenomenon.

Michael Italikos’ remarks on his own appointment are crucial in our understandings of his attitude towards officeholding. In general, an author’s narrative on the progression of the officials in the administration is important for the investigation on the topic that is the main focus of this chapter. Italikos gives a commentary on his designation to the teacher of physicians in a letter to an aktouarios:

‘I give this census to my caesar. The reason is that I serve in your army now as you see too, but I have rather been enrolled among your men, since I was appointed to the teacher of physicians. Nevertheless, I dragged out that coin not from the mouth of a fish as that coryphaeus, but the thing was given to me by one of those in office.’

The rest of the letter focuses on the coin itself, which bears the depiction of Constantine the Great and Saint Helene. Given the portion of Italikos’ remark on his appointment in the whole letter, one can argue on the relative insignificance of official service in the author’s eye. However, there are some elements that contradict this. The military vocabulary used to describe Italikos’ service under the aktouarios is a key point. It resembles the narrative in Nikephoros Basilakes’ encomium to Alexios Aristenos. Basilakes describes Aristenos’ service in the civil administration, especially the offices of dikaiodotes and nomophylax, as a

\[\text{\footnotesize 646 Italikos, p. 165, n. 5. Italikos was the teacher of physicians in the capital then.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 647 This aktouarios was probably Michael Pantechnes: Italikos, p. 209, n. 1. For details, see chapter 3. 3.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 648 Κύρισον τούτον ἀποδίδωμι τῷ ἐμῷ καίσαρί: ἢδη γάρ σοι στρατῷ καὶ ὡς οἰκῆ, μᾶλλον δὲ τοῖς σοῖς ἀπογέγραμμι, διδάσκαλος ἰδρύων χειροτονηθείς. Πλην οὐκ ἀπὸ στοματος ἰχθὺος ἀνείλκυσα τὸν στατήρα τούτον καθάπερ ὁ κορυφάσιος ἐκεῖνος, ἀλλὰ ἐχαρίσθη μοι τὸ χρήμα παρὰ τινὸς τῶν ἐν ἐξουσίᾳ; Italikos, p. 209, ll. 2–5, no. 33.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 649 Italikos, p. 209, ll. 6–19, no. 33. In truth, this coin was a nomisma of Justinian II, not the solidus of Constantine I: Vera Guruleva, ‘К вопросу о монете-обереге Михаила Италика: солид императора Юстиниана II 705–711 гг. из коллекции Эрмитажа’, in Aleksandr Musin and Olga Sheglova (eds.), В камне и в бронзе. Сборник статей в честь Анны Песковой (Saint Petersburg, 2017), pp. 125–36.}\]
fight and military duty on the side of John II in an intellectual sphere.\textsuperscript{650} In the oration, the metaphor of war and martial activities aims at the augmentation of civil service. Italikos’ intention is similar in the letter, but he enhances the significance of his appointment in general with the military vocabulary. The long description and praise of the coin proposed to the aktouarios also serves the enlargement of the writer’s office. This sense is less evident, since the letter focuses on the magical and divine aspects of the present.\textsuperscript{651} Italikos himself does not ignore the fact that the amulet was originally a nomisma. We cannot forget the significance of coin as factor of social rank in the Byzantine Empire. Payment was strongly related to official service and titleholding in Byzantium. There was a solemn ceremony in connection to the salaries (rogai) in the court before Alexios I’s fiscal reform.\textsuperscript{652} Italikos received this piece from Irene Doukaina, the widow of Alexios I, but this grant was both a regular act of award and a reminiscent of the older imperial payment. Describing the nomisma and implying his ability to offer this kind of currency to his supervisor, Italikos represents his rank and his membership in the bureaucracy. The narrative thus shows in different ways that Michael appreciated officeholding.

An interesting argument also implies Italikos’ admiration for officeholding. He discusses about the comparison between rhetoric and philosophy in a letter to an unknown addressee. Here, the metropolitan of Philippopolis argues in favour of rhetoric, and he expresses a long reasoning for his opinion. The following quote is a curious piece of Italikos’ views on the topic:

‘Rhetoric is a herald on high walls, it speaks with confidence and confidently explains the words at the gates of the city. It is an assistant of emperors, a leader of

\textsuperscript{650} Basilakes, \textit{Orationes}, p. 24, l. 11–p. 25, l. 3, no. 1, ch. 31.


\textsuperscript{652} The rite of payment by the emperor or a responsible bureaucrat symbolised and strengthened the ties between the ruler and his officials: Oikonomides, ‘Title and income’, pp. 201–2; Neville, \textit{Authority}, pp. 22–23. The fiscal reform of Alexios I abolished the salaries for titles and those for high offices: Smyrlis, ‘Fiscal revolution’, pp. 593–610, passim. An oration by Nicholas Mesarites indicates that some offices, especially the lower ones were still paid by the government in the twelfth century: August Heisenberg (ed.), \textit{Neue Quellen zur Geschichte des lateinischen Kaisertums und der Kirchenunion}, vol. 1: \textit{Der Epitaphios des Nikolaos Mesarites auf seinen Bruder Johannes} (Munich, 1923), p. 27, ll. 10–13; cf. Oikonomides, ‘Title and income’, pp. 210–13.
the cities. It arranges the human affairs, it has not been ignorant of daily matters and it has discerned the farthest things."\textsuperscript{653}

The following lines of the letter show that Italikos’ main reason is the effectiveness and mundaneness of rhetoric in comparison to the spiritual and abstract philosophy.\textsuperscript{654} The most interesting element of this citation is that oratory is personified. Rhetoric then resembles a Constantinopolitan official with the connected characteristics and deeds. Therefore, the bureaucrat appears here as an ideal, since the figure is applied to a positive argument. This manner indicates that Italikos essentially had a supportive attitude towards officeholding.

George Tornikes approaches the officeholding from the aspect of enslavement. Tornikes apparently pays little attention to official service as a phenomenon in his correspondence. Officeholding as servitude is represented in a letter to John Kamateros sebastos and logothetes of the dromos: ‘However, the collar of pride subdues me and I am becoming a slave of the affairs now and I suffer visiting the house of men. The reason is that I do not buy occurrences myself as the Lydian of the proverb, but I am not repelled by the Holy Spirit from the payment.’\textsuperscript{655} This passage includes multiple themes. The first half of his argument clearly depicts the burdens of official duties. The other part expands the main idea of the quoted text. Tornikes argues here that he endures the situation according to divine desire. At the same time, it strengthens the sentiment that these matters do not run according to George’s inclination. This narrative represents official service as a barrier to Tornikes’ preferences on the one hand, but the connection between duties and divine desire enhances the overall significance of officeholding on the other.

Italikos’ and Tornikes’ letters give a narrow but multifaceted picture about the attitude towards officeholding. On the other hand, they show scant regard for the phenomenon of titleholding. Italikos makes several remarks, which indicate a great admiration for official service. It is interesting that he expresses this respect in different forms and topics. Although our evidence for Tornikes’ opinion on officeholding is too little for a clear conclusion, the theme of servitude chosen for his narrative on official duties deserves our interest. In all, the

\textsuperscript{653} Καὶ ᾲτηραρχὴ μὲν ἔτει ἄκρων τιχήνοι κηρύσσεται ἐπὶ δὲ πόλεως πόλεως θαρροῦσα λέγει καὶ θερμῶς ὑπαγορεύει τοὺς λόγους· πάρειδρος ἐστὶ βασιλεῖ πόλεως δημαγογεῖ· τὰ πόλεις δημαγγεῖ οὐκ αὐτὸς πριάμενος πράγματα καὶ τὰ ἐν ποισὶν ὦκ ἡγόμηκε καὶ τὰ πορρώτατα διέγινε, Italikos, p. 140, ll. 19–23, no. 13.

\textsuperscript{654} Italikos, p. 140, ll. 19–33, no. 13. This kind of argument is not unique however. Niketas Choniates also discussed about the superiority of rhetoric to philosophy in his funeral speech to John and Michael Belissariotes: Choniates, \textit{Orations and Letters}, p. 150, l. 29–p. 151, l. 12. The comparison of the two arts appears to be a commonplace in the Byzantine intellectuality.

\textsuperscript{655} Άλλα μοι τὸ τραχηλὸν διαμάζεται τὸ φορνήματος καὶ δύσης ἢδη τὸς πράγμασι γίνομαι καὶ περινοστεῖν οἷς ἄνθρωποι ἀνέχομαι, οὐ κατὰ τὸν τῆς παροιμίας Λυδῆν αὐτὸς πριάμενος πράγματα, ἄλλα δόματος παρὰ τὸν θείον Πνεύματος οὐκ ἀποστειάμενος, Tornikes, \textit{Letters}, p. 138, ll. 7–10.
analysis of the views expressed by these writers definitely provides sensitive information for our understandings of the Byzantine attitude towards official matters.

6. 3 Office- and titleholding in the letters of Michael Choniates

Michael Choniates and his letters represent the late Komnenian period and the first few decades after the fall of Constantinople. Nevertheless, not only the chronological aspects make his correspondence interesting for our investigation. Choniates was a *homo novus* in the capital with an Anatolian background, but he accomplished a successful career until the collapse of the empire as a teacher in Constantinople and the metropolitan of Athens in his later years. We face the problem that his correspondence surpasses the chronological limits and interests of this study. It is not the finest decision to tighten the scope of the investigation on literary material according to political dates. Nevertheless, the focus of the thesis questions the efficacy of studying letters dated to the years after the fourth crusade. The limited collection of letters still provides sufficient evidence for Choniates’ attitude towards office- and titleholding.

The analysis of Choniates’ attitude towards titleholding raises problems. His collection of letters contains numerous references to honorary dignities, but we face several difficulties for different reasons. When Choniates uses the words *axia* and *axioma*, the distinction between court titles and offices is uncertain, if ever separation is the writer’s purpose. The term *time* often appears in the collection, but it apparently has the more general sense of honour instead of official dignity in most cases. Choniates frequently mentions the specific title *pansebastos* in his letters, but these occasions do not lead to remarks on the phenomenon of titleholding. The correspondence of Michael Choniates does not reveal his opinion on this subject. Officeholding better attracts his attention as the rest of this subchapter demonstrates.

The conflict between officeholding and intellectuality appears an important topic in the correspondence of Michael Choniates. The Byzantine élite received an education of various quality due to its disorganised nature. Numerous individuals gained knowledge that significantly surpassed the requirements of official service in the administration, except the leading positions at several schools. Learning and sophisticated literacy were some factors and indicators of social status in the Constantinopolitan bureaucracy, a segment of the Komnenian second-tier élite. This social element consisted of individuals who were obliged to build administrative career but grew up in an intellectual milieu. It is not surprising that the two
fields occasionally opposed one another. Michael Choniates raises the topic in one of the letters to George Tessarakontapechys:

‘Then, it is necessary to be cheerful about these matters rather than you complain to me about the supplement of philosophy as a great misfortune. [...] Then, accommodated in the imperial palace, do you dare to mourn deeply for the loss of philosophy to the one who is brought among severe customs in this way?’

Although Choniates criticises his friend in long sentences, the main theme of this letter was his miserable circumstances in Athens. In this case, he stresses the intellectual problems. What is striking in the cited passage is that it includes contradictions in different ways. Firstly, Choniates suggests that Tessarakontapechys does not have enthusiasm for philosophical studies. Secondly, Choniates’ narrative on Tessarakontapechys’ attitude does not appear consequent. The recipient of the letter is represented as if he were also troubled by restricted opportunities for intellectual activity beside official duties. Nevertheless, the passage shows that there could be a rivalry between intellectuality and official service in the second-tier élite. The narrative also indicates that the second-tier élite, even its Constantinopolitan segment, expressed different opinions towards the significance of scholarly activities. The rivalry between the two fields is accompanied by another aspect of officeholding in this letter.

Michael Choniates also represents official service as a burden in his letters. The aforementioned topic of conflict between intellectual interests and officeholding easily leads to the portrayal of administrative duties as hindrance. The same letter to Tessarakontapechys includes remarks on this specific aspect too: ‘We, engaged individuals, are flooded by numerous affairs, but you live in the acropolis of philosophy like a man of leisure and you thus spend your youth among arguments.’ This part also increases the contradicting nature of the narrative in the letter. Choniates build the image of his issues with a contrast between his conditions and the milieu of his friend in the capital. It counters several other remarks in the letter, which imply that Tessarakontapechys is also occupied by his official duties. These
contradictions show the tricky nature of arguments in Byzantine epistolography and the difficulties of investigation on attitude towards officeholding (and titleholding) in a corpus of letters.

Choniates also represents the burden of official service as a virtue. The positive aspect of suffering was a conventional theme in literature, and the Christian tradition supported this sentiment too. Choniates mentions the virtuous side of officeholding in a letter to Demetrios Tornikes:

‘As I am really full of much hate from the moment that, I do not know how, I left the holy acropolis of freedom from affairs. I went and threw myself upon a multitude of tasks, with which I would primarily have felt confidence against priesthood, the most difficult duty now, if ever, that is also not bearable for numerous figures, if, now, the priest just as the people had not become that is lamented by the prophets.’

The passage begins with a strongly negative attitude towards Choniates’ situation, and the mood remains for the majority of the quoted part. However, the end of the argument changes the tone, since it describes Choniates’ troubles with his office as a moral duty. The moral aspect is underlined by the biblical reference at the very end of the passage. Here Choniates expresses his responsibility for the Athenians who are under serious pressure according to the letter. It is intriguing how the metropolitan portrays his official service in a different manner without modifying the general narrative about the problems of his position.

The metropolitan of Athens directly deals with the virtue of officeholding too. In this case, the admiration of service is not approached through the positive interpretation of burdens and suffering. Another letter to George Tessarakontapechys gives a fine example of this narrative: ‘Because whenever we consider the house as great in spirit as in body and similarly well-born, and as it does not fall short of politicia and those who wear utensils, I guess you spend your time in the palace of the emperors.’ The main topic of this letter is the intellectual activity of Tessarakontapechys. The opposition of intellectuality and

660 ὡς ἔγοψε πολλῆς μὲν ἐμπέπλημα ἄμβας, ἐξ οὗπερ τὴν ἱερᾶν ἀρχηγομοσύνης ἀκρόπολιν οὐκ οἶδ᾽ ὅπως προδέδοιχα, εἰς θύγον δὲ πραγμάτων φέρον ἐμεύτων ἐπέριρμα, οἷς προπετῶς ἱεροσύνην ἐθάρρησα, πράγμα ἐργοδέστων, εἴπερ ποτὲ νῦν, καὶ οὐδ᾽ ἀνεκτὸν ταῖς πολλοῖς, εἰ μὴ τοῦτο νῦν τὸ παρά τῶν προφητῶν θηρνύμενον ὁ ἱερεὺς καθὸς ὁ λαῖς γένοτο, Michael Choniates, Letters, p. 45, no. 32, ch. 4.
661 Is 24, 1–2.
662 ὅταν μὲν γὰρ τὸ γένος ἐναλλογισθεῖσθα ἠλίκον τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ σώματος καὶ τὸ εὐφρεῖς ὀποίον καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἄπατον ἀνδρὶ πολιτικῷ καὶ φοροῦτι τὰ μαλακά, ἐν τοῖς οἶκοι τῶν βασιλείων διατρίβειν σε σταχαζόμεθα..., Michael Choniates, Letters, p. 16, no. 11, ch. 2.
official duties reappears again, but officeholding clearly receives an approval here. Choni-ates praises the house of Tessarakontapecheis with a civil narrative. George’s service in the imperial court is thus represented as a continuation of family tradition. The portrayal of his strong connection with ancestry is to be regarded as a compliment on Tessarakontapechys’ service in the administration. It is striking that the opposition of the two fields is not accom-panied by a criticism of officeholding.

The letters of Michael Choniates demonstrate the attitude of an intellectual. The relation between intellectuality and official duties seems to be an important topic in his correspond-ence. Officeholding is sometimes represented as a barrier to the pleasure of scholarly activ-ities, a burden to the educated individual. Still, it is not Choniates’ final verdict about official service. Some letters include positive approaches to the administrative or political duties. Furthermore, one example clearly shows that the portrayed attitude towards officeholding strongly relies on the rhetorical purposes of a given argument. Thus, it is difficult to reveal the author’s opinion on official matters. Several letters also undermine the validity of distinc-tion between officeholding and titleholding in the subject of attitude.

6. 4 A comparative analysis of narratives on office- and titleholding

It is not a simple task to observe and interpret the attitude of different intellectuals to-wards officeholding and titleholding according to the correspondence. Byzantine epistolography is known for the humble narratives in the letters. The collections demonstrate the various interests of the writers, with which the topic of official service as phenomenon blends. The combination of different themes in a single letter raises the problem of the relations between distinct subjects and their effect on each other in the narrative. Each letter potentially owns its own separated purpose that manipulates the tone of discussion about any topic. These characteristics of epistolography evidently affect our investigation on the subject of this chapter.

The observation of opinions about titleholding well demonstrates the problem that oc-curs in relation to the writers’ interests. The four intellectuals selected for the main observa-tion in this chapter were mainly appointed to official teachers and later to metropolitans. Court titles probably played less role in the careers therefore. However, they had connections

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663 However, in an oration, Michael Choniates also expresses his negative attitude to public performances, which represented the official side of intellectuality in Byzantium. This opinion suits his bias on the opposition between service and intellectual activities. Furthermore, it suggests that his argument on the official duties has a personal character: Michael Choniates, Σωζόμενα, vol. 1, pp. 8–23; Magdalino, Empire, pp. 337–39.
with numerous lay officials in the administration and the army. Consequently, they were not unfamiliar with honorary dignities at all. It has been mentioned above in the thesis that the significance of court titles considerably decreased in the second-tier élite throughout the twelfth century. It is a question whether this development is reflected in the letters of the selected collections. The results of the analysis, however, lead to another direction. All the writers apparently paid little attention to the topic of titleholding in general in their epistolography. Although numerous references can be found to specific dignities in the letters, these mentions are not accompanied by any discussion on the phenomenon of titleholding itself with few humble exceptions. Given the aforementioned tendency of the period, such ignorance is not surprising in the cases of Michael Italikos, George Tornikes and Michael Choniates. The correspondence of Theophylact of Ochrid barely shows a different sentiment nonetheless. One of his letters seemingly represents a strong connection between the honorary dignity and its holder. Nevertheless, the evidence is too little for a clear conclusion about this idea. A letter of Michael Choniates suggests the idea that a distinction between officeholding and titleholding is not essential. This sentiment derives from the vocabulary of a passage in the letter, not from a direct statement of Choniates expressing such an opinion. In general, these characteristics imply that the paucity of discussion on titleholding is related to the nature of the source material instead of the political and social background. Now, it is the question how the characteristics of the letters affected the narratives about the officeholding.

The observation of the writers’ attitude to officeholding according to their letters promises more results. All the selected intellectuals express some ideas or opinions about official service. One cannot expect a considerable number of direct statements about the value of officeholding in the letters. The vast majority of the references are given to phenomena and their nature that are related to official appointment. Still, these connected elements can reveal the writers’ views on officeholding. A great variety of themes can be found in the letters about official service. Furthermore, the emphasis and the selection of the topics differs by writer.664 Theophylact of Ochrid pays much attention to the relation between morality and administrative duties. Michael Choniates is rather interested in the opposition between intellectuality and officeholding. The evidence is too little to observe the tendentious selection of topics in the collections of Michael Italikos and George Tornikes. Nevertheless, both writers from the middle period choose subjects that appear in the letters of the other two

664 There was a topic, which often appears in the Byzantine epistolography, and the selected authors were no exceptions. This subject was the service as exile: Mullett, Theophylact, pp. 248–60.
intellectuals. The identity of service with burdens appears in the collections of Theophylact, Tornikes and Choniates. The relation between intellectuality and officeholding is discussed by Italikos and Choniates. These examples show that the selected collections of correspondence better serve the investigation on the personal perception of official duties.

At this point we reach the question itself what the value of officeholding is among these different elements in the letters. A serious discrepancy occurs in the evaluation of administrative service by the intellectuals. Officeholding is often represented by Theophylact and Choniates in negative context. However, the aforementioned nature of epistolography, the opportunity of separated narratives, allows the two metropolitans to express positive arguments on official service. The result is inconsistency in attitude with a broader scope of observation at the individual level. Reconstructing the personal views in a simplified pattern, we can argue that Theophylact and Choniates place officeholding in the second place behind morality or intellectuality. Thus, administrative duties have great significance in the minds of the two intellectuals, but no priority. From another viewpoint, they consider officeholding as a necessary distress. It is something implied by Tornikes’ little discussion on the subject too. However, the primacy of morality or intellectuality is probably only a rhetorical declaration to meet the demands of an intellectual milieu. There is less uncertainty in the case of Italikos, since his letters show a clearer stance on the significance of administrative duties. Thus, the picture is not completely clear after the analysis of the selected collection. A brief comparison to alternative sources from epistolography or other genres may contribute to a more precise conclusion.

Other letter collections can deepen our understanding of epistolary narratives about officeholding. However, our possibilities are restricted due to the amount of the source material. Collections that reach the extent of those of Theophylact and Choniates are rare in Byzantine epistolography. Even the number of letters left by Italikos and Tornikes can be considered high in comparison to the vast majority of other writers. Gregory Antiochos belongs to those intellectuals from the Komnenian second-tier élite whose several remaining letters provide valuable historical information. Antiochos biography and oeuvre is well examined by Kazhdan. Reading the correspondence of Antiochos, the Russian Byzantinist notes two interesting details. Firstly, Gregory lamented the loss of the old days at the school, where he could deal with scholarly matters. Secondly, he put much effort into managing his progression in the administration even at the expense of his network. He broke his ties

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665 Kazhdan and Franklin, Studies, pp. 201–2.
with his old friend, Demetrios Tornikes, when the latter got disregarded by the emperor.\footnote{Kazhdan and Franklin, *Studies*, pp. 212–13.} There is an evident contradiction between Antiochos’ presented admiration to intellectuality and the preference for administrative career to anything else in his deeds. Gregory’s behaviour suggests that the expression of his fondness for scholarly matters was rather a rhetorical manoeuvre.

Not only letters demonstrate ambivalent attitude towards officeholding. It is beneficial to compare epistolography with other genres of Byzantine literature in regard to their views on official service. Magdalino examines two works, *Digenis Akritis* and the *Strategikon* of Kekaumenos, for the Byzantine perception of social values. Although none of them completely denies official service, they represent a reluctant approach to administrative duties and their preference for the independence of a landlord.\footnote{Paul Magdalino, ‘Honour among Romaioi: the framework of social values in the world of Digenes Akrites and Kekaumenos’, in idem, *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Byzantium* (Aldershot, 1991), no. 3, pp. 191, 200–3. A further interpretation of the Strategikon is provided by Koichi Inoue, ‘A provincial aristocratic oikos in eleventh-century Byzantium’, *GRBS*, 30 (1989), 563–65. It is worth mentioning that these works propagated an ideal, the landlord focusing on his estates, which might have caused a marginalisation of the family in the élite of the period. See chapter 5.} These opinions correspond to the comparison between enslavement and officeholding by several letter writers. *Digenis Akritis* and Kekaumenos testify that the ambivalent attitude to official appointment was a broader sentiment in the Byzantine élite.

The analysis revealed numerous discrepancies in the Byzantine views on office- and titleholding. The only firm statement we can make in the end of the observation is that official service was important for the second-tier élite in the twelfth century. It is indicated by the amount of the attention paid to this topic in the selected letter collections. It is not surprising of course. Nevertheless, the examples and their comparison imply some characteristics that may explain the contradictions of the evidence. It has been mentioned that the changing purposes of the arguments in the different letter are possible reasons. One can also presume that intellectuals did not have completely clear ideas on the value of officeholding. Some evidence shows that the second-tier élite did not have common opinions about administrative service. Furthermore, it is difficult to evaluate these elements, since we are then challenged by the limits of the genre, the epistolography.
7 Conclusion

The thesis reveals numerous characteristics of the Byzantine second-tier élite. Even with a focus on selected aspects, the subject repeatedly shows its magnitude through the complexity of the problems. The second-tier élite itself appears a complex phenomenon. The reason for this characteristic is not the broad definition of the stratum creating a heterogeneous social group from different elements of the concurrent Byzantine society. The complexity of the second-tier élite derives from its position among the subjects of the emperors. The stratum stood between the mass of ordinary people and the leading élite. The observation confirms this correlation. The second-tier élite was a privileged group, while it had to obey to those who stayed even higher in the social and political hierarchy. The contradiction of the situation is well presented by the notion of ‘slavery’ in the élite. Membership in an entourage of a powerful individual, marked by the semi-official designations of dependent service and subordination, were conventional in the second-tier élite. These titles provided a partial transmission of the authority from the leader of the retinue to the subordinate. However, slavery is rather regarded as a negative status in the letters, and this narrative suggests a stratum, which was constantly under pressure.

The ‘long’ twelfth century experienced a considerable transformation of the Byzantine élite. This change did not correlate with the ascension of the Komnenian dynasty to the throne directly. However, it was a consequence of a longer development of the Komnenian political system. The transformation occurred in connection with the position of the imperial extended family in the government. The influence of the Komnenian emperors’ kin is an interesting issue of the period. Only the reign of John II led to the monopolisation of the leading élite by the imperial relatives as a result of the troubles with the succession of the throne after Alexios I. Before this change, the difference between the old first-tier and second-tier élites was purely determined the administrative position. After the transformation, the distinction between the Komnenian leading élite and the Komnenian second-tier élite was defined by the imperial kinship or its absence.

The bipartite division of the élite resulted in a heterogeneous second-tier élite, especially in its Komnenian form. This dissertation contradicts the general idea that the second-tier élite was a Constantinopolitan stratum. It is without doubt that the vast majority of the civil bureaucracy, the higher clergy and the patriarchal officials belonged to this social group. However, we should consider further elements of the Byzantine society in defining the confines of the second-tier élite. Military élite had representatives who did not belong to the
leading élite. However, the evidence is highly fragmentary, especially in the second half of the period. It is evident that the transformation of the élite considerably changed the composition of the military personnel in the second-tier élite. The monopolisation of the leading élite by the imperial extended family caused the situation that higher officers without imperial kinship were the members of Komnenian second-tier élite. It is worth noting that the military segment of the second-tier élite probably corresponded to the provincial élites. This latter connection is not problematical, since provincial élites themselves belonged to the second-tier élite. This dissertation regards the Constantinopolitan élite only as one of the local élites of the empire, yet definitely a special one. High education played a very significant role in the capital. Still, numerous figures who definitely did not belong to the second-tier élite attended the several official or private schools of elevated learning. Therefore, education was not a clear factor of distinction between social strata in the Komnenian period. The heterogeneous nature means that one hardly finds a common group identity in the Byzantine second-tier élite.

The Komnenian second-tier élite had the opportunity to gain important and high offices in the central government. In the vast majority of the cases, these significant functions were the top of the civil and church administration. The Komnenian system is usually regarded as a military regime. In truth, the highest civil and church offices played an important role in the imperial government in this period too. The *orphanotrophos* is a fine example of the situation. It is not surprising that there was a little competition between the Komnenian leading élite and the second-tier élite for these positions, while the former group still focused on military affairs in the entire era. Of course, the ability of the second-tier élite to reach crucial positions did not eliminate the difference between the first-tier élite and the lower stratum in terms of authority and influence. The superiority of the Komnenian leading élite, the imperial extended family, occurred in several ways. Their quasi privilege of receiving the most sensitive military offices constantly is beyond doubt. The development of the title system was also a strong indicator. It is difficult to ignore the significance of the fact that, after the complete decline of numerous old honorary dignities by the reign of Manuel I a multitude of officials from the second-tier élite remained without any court title from the second third of the twelfth century. However, the perception of honorary titles by the lower stratum is a complex subject. Firstly, the analysis of several letters shows the growing inattention of the intellectuals to honorary ranks in the Komnenian second-tier élite. Secondly, it is an open question what the consequents were of the situation that titleholding became a privilege of those few individuals of the second-tier élite who were appointed to important positions at a
given moment. The majority of the stratum held only offices. It is worth noting here that the Byzantine terminology of official designation did not make a strong distinction between offices and honorary titles. The Greek words *axia* and *axioma* meant dignity in general and they could designate both offices and court titles. Therefore, the characteristics of the Komnenian system probably meant to the contemporaries that numerous members of the second-tier élite lost half of their ‘dignity’ in this period.

The manifestation of social pressure on the second-tier élite in different fields is a significant topic. The observation of the families and their progression throughout the period shows two remarkable characteristics. Firstly, the families of the second-tier élite were able to gain high positions as it has been mentioned above, but none of them were able to maintain such high influence more than a generation. Secondly, out of the aforementioned instability at the top of the stratum, the families under consideration demonstrated a stability in moderate ranks. It is also worth stressing that different families of the Komnenian second-tier élite reached their apogee in different parts of the period. This tendency indicates that the stratum as a whole did not come under the influence of significant changes until the end of the era despite the great transformation of the ruling stratum. Social pressure is more apparent on the level of individuals. This tension can be detected even in the case of successful bureaucrats. The aspiration for multiple offices suggests the general fear of decline. The little evidence of marriage policy among families of similar background also implies a desire for stability.

Dealing with prestige and political position, one cannot forget the extent of the élite families and its relation to the politics of the stratum. The egalitarian principles of inheritance in Byzantium could have resulted in the situation that long families were considered a hindrance to the stability of social position. However, the evidence shows that even the families of the second-tier élite had relatively numerous descendants. It could have been something that the élite only tolerated. Some clues indicate even more. The case of Nikephoros Bourtzes and Eudokia Bourtzaina implies that families relied on their populous kindred to build their networks. Large family seems to be a tool for the politics of the second-tier élite. Nevertheless, the peripheral branches of a given family probably experience considerable decline in long term.

The social and political pressure also appeared in the attitude of the stratum to office- and titleholding. Although the evidence is often obscure, it still tells something about the second-tier élite. Epistolography is not a convenient material for the observation on the subject. The difficulties in the interpretation of the writers’ arguments can also serve the aims
of the analysis, since we should focus on not only what the intellectuals tell, but also how they express their thoughts. From a systematic point of view, the entire evidence given by Theophylact of Ochrid, Michael Italikos, George Tornikes and Michael Choniates contains a considerable inconsistency in regard to the perception of officeholding. This is why we experience the contradictory sentiment in the letters that official service seems to be both essence and burden for the bureaucracy.

The former lines and pages present many characteristics of the second-tier élite. However, the thesis might have revealed numerous details that are ignored in this conclusion. Now, we have to determine the place and significance of the second-tier élite in the social history of Byzantium. Beside the several aspects mentioned above, the thesis also demonstrates in some cases that the Komnenian second-tier élite did not separate itself from the leading élite, but attempted to strengthen the ties as much as possible. The representatives of the second-tier élite also intended to exploit the benefits of the Komnenian regime with all its abilities. The thesis focuses on a specific group of the Byzantine society in a specific period. Nevertheless, the evidence shows the strong ties with the other segments of society and the continuity with the other eras in numerous aspects.
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