

# The Byzantine State and the Dynatoi

A struggle for supremacy 867 - 1071



J.J.P. Vrijaldenhoven  
S0921084  
Van Speijkstraat 76-II  
2518 GE 's Gravenhage  
Tel.: 0628204223  
E-mail: [joerivrijaldenhoven@gmail.com](mailto:joerivrijaldenhoven@gmail.com)

Master Thesis Europe 1000 - 1800  
Prof. Dr. P. Stephenson and Prof. Dr. P.C.M. Hoppenbrouwers  
History  
University of Leiden  
30-07-2014

# CONTENTS

<b>GLOSSARY</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>6</b>
<hr/> <b>CHAPTER 1 THE FIRST STRUGGLE OF THE <i>DYNATOI</i> AND THE STATE 867 – 959</b>	<hr/> <b>16</b>
STATE	18
<i>Novel (A) of Leo VI 894 – 912</i>	18
<i>Novels (B and C) of Romanos I Lekapenos 922/928 and 934</i>	19
<i>Novels (D, E and G) of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos 947 - 959</i>	22
CHURCH	24
ARISTOCRACY	27
CONCLUSION	30
<hr/> <b>CHAPTER 2 LAND OWNERSHIP IN THE PERIOD OF THE WARRIOR EMPERORS 959 - 1025</b>	<hr/> <b>32</b>
STATE	34
<i>Novel (F) of Romanos II 959 – 963.</i>	34
<i>Novels (H, J, K, L and M) of Nikephoros II Phokas 963 – 969.</i>	34
<i>Novels (N and O) of Basil II 988 – 996</i>	37
CHURCH	42
ARISTOCRACY	45
CONCLUSION	49
<hr/> <b>CHAPTER 3 THE CHANGING STATE AND THE <i>DYNATOI</i> 1025 – 1071</b>	<hr/> <b>51</b>
STATE	53
CHURCH	60
ARISTOCRACY	64
<i>Land register of Thebes</i>	65
CONCLUSION	68
<hr/> <b>CONCLUSION</b>	<hr/> <b>70</b>
<hr/> <b>APPENDIX I BYZANTINE EMPERORS 867 - 1081</b>	<hr/> <b>76</b>
<b>APPENDIX II MAPS</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>82</b>

# Glossary

## Aerikon

A judicial fine later changed into a cash payment.

## Allelengyon

Collective responsibility of a tax unit to pay each other's taxes.

## Anagraphis / Anagrapheus

Fiscal official, or imperial tax assessor, who held a role similar as the *epoptes*. Their major function was the revision of the tax cadastre. It is implied that they measured land and on imperial order could confiscate lands. They would often combine their function with that of *krites*.

## Charagma

Any tax up to two thirds of the total amount had to be paid in gold; change would be given in smaller denominations.

## Charistike/charistikion

An arrangement where a lay person gained the management and financial exploitation of ecclesiastical land.

## Chorion / Choria

The village community that held a central place in the Byzantine tax system.

## Demosios kanon

The basic tax on land on those that cultivated it. Tax was calculated on the quality of land and was 1/24 of the value. Which means that a farmer owning 24 *modioi* of first quality land (and a pair of oxen making him a *zeugaratos*) had to pay one gold *nomisma*. For second quality this would be one *nomisma* for 48 *modioi*. Tax on third quality land was often exempted or reduced.

## Epi ton kriseon

Judicial office created between 1043 and 1047. Its role was to support thematic judges but it seems likely they were also there to limit the power of the thematic judges.

## Exkousseia

A transfer of revenues and other obligations from the state to a private landowner. Documents were drawn up to stipulate the number of peasants and the range of obligations the state was willing not to exact.

## Dynatoi

Translated as "the powerful" those that held power within the State bureaucracy.

### **Follis / Folles**

A Copper coin, worth 24 to the *miliaresion* and 288 to the *nomisma*.

### **Kaniskion**

A quantity of food and drink supplied to tax officials by the rural population.

### **Klasma / Klasmatic land**

Land where the taxpayer had disappeared, it was worked by the village community before being returned to the state. It was given a grant of *sympatheia* for thirty years to remain part of the village community after which it became *klasma* and became state land; it could then be sold, leased or given to anyone the state wished.

### **Logisma**

An attribution to a land owner (mostly religious institutions and monasteries) by the state for certain fiscal incomes.

### **Miliaresion**

Silver coin, worth 12 to the *nomisma*.

### **Modios**

A unit of surface measurement, could also be used to describe the capacity of a ship or quantity of produce. Though there is still quite a lot of discussion about the exact meaning of a *modios* generally a tenth or twelfth of an hectare is used (about 833 to 1000 m<sup>2</sup>).

### **Nomisma**

Gold coin, Byzantine gold coinage remained at a theoretical 98% pureness right up to 1040 when the first debasements began. It was later also named *histamenon* to distinguish between the light weight *tertarteron* and the full weight *nomisma* (4,50g.)

### **Parakolouthemata**

Personal tax or better put the main surtax that varied greatly over the years. It was often used to increase the tax load and it could mean varies things from provisions for tax collectors to additional tax on the total tax owed.

### **Paroikoi**

A peasant (and later a peasant household) settled on state or private land, he paid taxes to his landowner (the *pakton*).

### **Penês**

An independent farmer with limited resources.

### **Praktikon**

An inventory listing the taxes as well as taxable lands and paroikoi households held by an individual or institution.

### **Pronoia**

A attribution of fiscal revenue to a soldier in return for military duties.

### **Ptôchos**

An improvised person.

### **Roga**

Cash salary, most importantly paid to the military and civil services. They were paid out the week before Palm Sunday in Constantinople where the emperor himself gave coins, bullion and other gifts (such as silk) to the highest dignitaries of the empire. Famously seen by Liutprand of Cremona in 950.

### **Solemnion**

An annual payment from the treasury to a beneficiary, usually a church or monastery.

### **Stichos**

The basic entry into a pratikon, it was the smallest fiscal unit and usually only consisted of one line (hence the name stichos). The property, name and tax payable were entered into this line.

### **Strateia**

A property whose owner was liable to supply the state with a soldier.

### **Stratiotes**

The owner of a strateia, could be the soldier himself but it could also be someone who paid for the weapons and armour but sent someone else to fulfil the military duty.

### **Sympatheia**

Fiscal term that designates tax alleviation, for example it was granted to land that had lost its tenant; it could then be reclaimed by heirs for thirty years before becoming *klasma*.

### **Telos**

Generic designation of taxes.

### **Tertartera / Tertarteron**

Light weight golden coin introduced by Nikephoros II Phokas, it was 4,13g. but still had the theoretical value of a *nomisma*.

## **Byzantine titles and court dignitaries**

### **Caesar**

The heir to the Imperial throne, it was often used to grant legitimacy when usurping the throne or used as a special favour.

### **Domestikos ton scholon**

Highest commander of the army, later split between an Eastern and Western Domestikos.

### **Droungarios ton ploimon**

Commander of the fleet of Constantinople.

### **Hebdomadarios**

Attendant at imperial banquets.

### **Koitonites**

Courtier serving in the emperor's bedchamber.

### **Kouropalates**

One of the highest ranking dignities behind Caesar, mostly given to members of the Imperial family or foreign dignitaries.

### **Krites**

A judge, most often used for the judges in the themes.

### **Praitor / Praetor**

From the mid ninth century used as a provincial functionary of a *strategos*. Later used as the synonym of *krites*.

### **Protospatharios**

The first spatharios, or "bodyguard". In the Byzantine Empire it was a dignitary in the imperial hierarchy and it is mostly identified with those that held a position as senator.

the themes was changed and many new *stratego*i installed.

### **Prôtovestiarios**

Keeper of the imperial wardrobe.

### **Strategos**

The ancient term for general, during the 8<sup>th</sup> century many *stratego*i were also military governors of a theme, their power was gradually restricted during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century when the administration of

## INTRODUCTION

Τὸ τῆς ἱστορίας χτῆμα πολλοῖς τῶν πάλαι σοφῶν σπουδασθὲν οὐ παρέργως χρήσιμον ἐς τὰ μάλιστα κατεφάνη τῷ βίῳ, τοὺς τῶν ἀριστων καὶ μὴ τοιούτων βίους ἀνακαλύπτει καὶ πράξεις ἐπιφανεῖς ἐξ ἀνεπιλήπτου βουλῆς καὶ σπουδῆς διαγράφει καὶ ἀδοξίας αὖ πάλιν ἐκ δυσβουλίας ἢ ὀλιγορίας τῶν προεστώτων τοῖς πράγμασιν<sup>1</sup>

Thus starts “the History” written by Michael Attaleiates, *krites* of the hippodrome. Michael was a low to mid ranking courtier in the eleventh century and he lived through a turbulent time of debasements, military defeats and rebellions. It was also a period of great wealth, both economically and intellectually. The Byzantine Empire was at its height of power following campaigns in the East that restored much territory lost to the Arabs in the seventh and eighth century. Emperors such as Nikephoros II Phokas and Basil II still loomed large in the minds of the Byzantines. Both these emperors were from a dynasty called the Macedonians. They owed their name to Basil the Macedonian (he was of Armenian descent but born in the theme of Macedonia) who had become emperor in 867 after murdering the legitimate emperor Michael III. This dynasty would rule Byzantium up to 1056 when the last Macedonian heiress died. During the Macedonian period there had been a social development of great importance. Following the Arab conquests the Byzantine Empire was greatly reduced in size and less secure than before. The main economic unit had become the independent farmer who lived in small communities and paid their taxes based on the land they owned. The civil aristocracy of the Roman period had mostly disappeared, but a new elite was forming on the fringes of the empire. They held military functions in the provinces where they enjoyed great power thanks to the thematic organisation of the empire; their military function was combined with civil duties and authority.

During the ninth century this elite became more and more prominent, they increasingly found their positions within the bureaucracy to be more or less hereditary since the emperors relied on these military men. They also translated their power and their wealth, which came more from employment within the bureaucracy, in ownership of land to which they had ready access. This newly formed aristocracy also included functionaries of the church and since the end of iconoclasm increasingly the great monasteries. To prevent these aristocrats from endangering the fiscal backbone of the empire

---

<sup>1</sup> History, the primary preoccupation of many wise men of the past, has proven to be exceedingly useful for life, as it reveals the lives of those who were virtuous and those who were not, describes illustrious deeds born of flawless planning or negligence of those governing public affairs. Michael Attaleiates, *The History* (translated by Anthony Kaldellis and Dimitris Krallis) (Cambridge 2012) 9.

(the independent farmer) by acquiring their land the state started legislating against these aristocrats. This corpus of laws is now known as “the land legislation of the Macedonian emperors”.

This research takes the struggle over land and the land legislation at its core. The struggle over land ownership was one not fought out over a decade but rather over centuries, during a period of great change for the Byzantine Empire. It has often been called the apogee of power, or the imperial centuries and one can broadly say that this period was from 850 to 1204. It is beyond the scope of this research to cover the entire period but in order to be able to paint both a broad and detailed picture this research will start in 867 with the reign of Basil I and the start of the Macedonian dynasty. And will end in 1071 which corresponds with the loss of Italy to the Normans and the defeat at Manzikert to the Seljuk Turks. What followed 1071 was a period of general hardship not so much due to the defeat at Manzikert but rather internal unrest in the Byzantine Empire. Only when Alexios I Komnenos took the throne in 1081 was the system changed so that stability was reached.<sup>2</sup>

The main goal of this research is to see; to what extent did the struggle for landownership influence the relationship between the state and the aristocracy, and how did this relationship develop during the period 867 – 1071? Within this question there are multiple problems to consider, what power did the Byzantine state have? Who were these aristocrats and how did this group change over the years? Was the threat of the aristocrats real or was it imagined so that the state could extent its power? These are not easy answers to find within the source material we have, nevertheless it is important since it contributes to the understanding of the Byzantine Empire and to our understanding of a medieval state similar, but also very different from Western medieval states. However, firstly it is important to answer one of the above questions regarding the aristocrats, who were they?

The land legislation uses the term *dynatoi* (δυνατοί) which literally means “powerful”. The emperors, at least in theory, tried to defend others groups from these *dynatoi*, those being the *ptôchoi* (πτωχοί) and the *penetês/penês* (πένητες). These last two groups are hard to define as legislators used different terminology in order to describe either a *ptôchos* or a *penês*. George Ostrogorsky simply identified them as “the poor” as opposed to the *dynatoi* “the wealthy”.<sup>3</sup> Paul Lemerle later revised this view to “the powerful” and “the weak”.<sup>4</sup> Rosemary Morris has shown in her article that both definitions are left wanting. She stresses the fact that both *penês* and *ptôchos* could mean a variety of things depending on what the legislators wanted to emphasise. In her view the definition of the *dynatoi*

---

<sup>2</sup> Maps are included in the appendices to see the geographic extent of the Byzantine Empire. One should note that most of this research focuses on the East rather than the West.

<sup>3</sup> G. Ostrogorsky's views are summed up in his: *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. J. Hussey, 2nd edn. (Oxford 1968) 269 – 87.

<sup>4</sup> For Paul Lemerle's fundamental work on this subject, see his ‘Esquisse pour une histoire agraire de Byzance’ in: *Revue historique* ccxix (1958) 32 – 74 and 254 – 284.

is much more important as three novels actually spell out who these people are.<sup>5</sup> Romanos I Lekapenos identifies them in his novels as:

“Considered to be *dynatoi* are those who, even if not personally but through the influence of others with whom it is common knowledge that they are connected, are capable of intimidating sellers or satisfying them with a promise of some benefaction.”<sup>6</sup>

“The illustrious *magistroi* or *patrikioi*, nor any of the persons honoured with offices, governorships, or civil or military dignities, nor anyone at all enumerated in the Senate, nor officials or ex-officials of the themes, nor metropolitans most devoted to God, archbishops, bishops, *higoumenoi*, ecclesiastical officials or supervisors and heads of pious or imperial houses.”<sup>7</sup>

Meaning that these *dynatoi* were not necessarily wealthy but rather those that held high positions in the administration, military or ecclesiastical offices. It also meant that most of the governmental elite were considered *dynatoi*, those the state depended upon to run its affairs, military men from the provinces, highly educated members of the Senate and pious men. It is from the above text that the division used in this research stems, on the hand there is the state (the legislator) and on the other the *dynatoi* (those legislated against). The *dynatoi* are further divided into two parties who both had a different relation to the state, the church and the lay aristocracy. Another important reason for the chosen parties in this particular research was to show continuity or discontinuity over the broad time-frame I have used, for their relation was different in the ninth century compared to the eleventh and it is imperative to this research, how did these relations develop over two hundred years rather than twenty? Some general notes must be made on these parties; further details are given in the chapters to cover the evolution of these parties for that particular time.

Firstly we have “the State”. In the autocracy that was the Byzantine Empire we can easily identify the state with the emperor. It is from him all authority came; promotions and demotions were concentrated in his hand both civil and military. In order to keep the state running the Byzantine Empire employed bureaucrats that were generally speaking chosen on merit rather than birth.<sup>8</sup> Other

---

<sup>5</sup> R. Morris, ‘The Powerful and the Poor in Tenth-Century Byzantium: Law and Reality’ in: *Past & Present* 73 (1976) 3 – 27.

<sup>6</sup> McGeer, *Land legislation*, 46 – 47.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, 54 – 55.

<sup>8</sup> I will discuss this ever changing system in the appropriate chapters below.

members of the state included thematic judges and tax collectors who both played a crucial role during the period here under review.

Secondly the first party that in a very broad sense are called *dynatoi* by the land legislation, the church. Again in a somewhat broad sense the church party can be split up into monasteries and the church hierarchy. Where the last consists of for example; priests, metropolitans, archbishops and the patriarch. The monasteries were, during this period, the greater landowner and they are therefore the more important faction within the church party. They also held a special place since they were under the protection of the emperor directly, not under the authority of a local bishop or local lord.

Thirdly, the second party that made up the *dynatoi*; the lay aristocracy. Of the three parties the aristocracy is by far the hardest to define. The aristocracy was by no means a closed off group and access to wealth and power came from the state which meant that the aristocracy was a group defined by upward and downward mobility. Within the aristocracy there was also a group that could be seen as an aristocracy within the aristocracy, a few families of extreme wealth and they could not easily be ignored nor destroyed by the Byzantine Emperors. Within this research this last group of elite within the elite is the most important for the first two chapters, once again mostly due to the nature of the source material. The land legislation seems to have been first and foremost aimed at this particular group of families like the Phokai, Maleinoi and Skleroi. During the third chapter light will be shed on the middle class and to some extent aristocrats of very recent wealth (*nouveaux riches*). This is also due to the end of the land legislation in 996, after which we do not know whether new novels were drafted at all and the emergence of other sources such as the “land register of Thebes” (of the eleventh century) that define the middle class much more prominently than anything we know from the ninth or tenth century. The last important remark about the lay aristocracy is that during this research for the most part I have included the military within the lay aristocracy rather than the state. Even though generals and admirals were employed directly by the state and during the tenth century emperors led the armies themselves, we still see that the elite within the army can be counted as *dynatoi* and they not always served the interest of the state.

It is important to remember that these parties also shifted and more can be seen of certain parties during certain years while during others one is void of any source evidence. Therefore every chapter had a more detailed introduction who is meant when discussing a certain party.

The struggle between the Byzantine emperors and the *dynatoi* has long been debated by modern Byzantine scholars. This started with Ostrogorsky who stressed the feudal character of the *dynatoi*. He therefore reads and explains the land legislation as one aimed at keeping these feudal tendencies at bay. This was an impossible task and one only Basil II seemed to have been successful in. He crushed the military element within the *dynatoi*, most importantly those living on the Anatolian plateau. After his death the feudal tendencies took over the empire and a civil aristocracy managed to

gain control of the imperial bureaucracy and basically ruled.<sup>9</sup> Alexios I Komnenos in the end took power but changed the state in such a way that from then on Ostrogorsky spoke of a “feudal Byzantine state”. He viewed the land legislation mostly from a social perspective.

Lemerle criticised this reading and sees the land legislation as an economical (or rather fiscal) corpus of laws. According to him the state tried to protect its fiscal interests when *dynatoi* increasingly began to encroach upon fertile areas and was becoming increasingly successful in acquiring tax exemptions.<sup>10</sup>

These two views are still the most important when viewing the discussion regarding the state and the *dynatoi*. Obviously other authors have weighed in on the discussion regarding the *dynatoi* and the state, and most if not all take the land legislation at their core. What still divides them is whether the land legislation is taken as a commentary on social or economic relations. In this regard most general histories of the Byzantine Empire still view the tenth century as one of conquest and a state that remained in control thanks to extraordinary individual emperors of which Basil II is the most important. The view of Ostrogorsky regarding the eleventh century is still mostly followed, the state began to lose control to an aristocracy or elite it no longer controlled, these being the civil aristocracy. In fiscal terms the state also lost ground since they began to donate tax exemptions which made the aristocracy more powerful still. Alexios I Komnenos gained the throne in 1081 and changed the state system to suit those of his days; a more or less feudal state.

Lately the land legislation and the discussion concerning *dynatoi* and state have found its way in more and more detailed studies. These take a certain aspect and use the land legislation only for their subject. Examples are Howard-Johnston, Catherina Holmes, John Haldon and Rosemary Morris.<sup>11</sup> Many others could also be named. All of these contributions have led to a much broader picture of the relation between state and *dynatoi* even if that is not the main interest of that particular article or book.

Many of these aspects have found its way into this work, both the detailed and the broad. It is also the reason for choosing this particular angle. Obviously there is the practical consideration; the

---

<sup>9</sup> Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*. But also Ostrogorsky ‘Observations on the Aristocracy’, 1 - 32.

<sup>10</sup> Lemerle ‘Esquisse pour une histoire agraire’, 32 – 74 and 254 – 284, P. Lemerle, *The Agrarian History of Byzantium from the Origins to the Twelfth Century: the Sources and Problems* (Galway 1979) (esp. 85 – 115).

<sup>11</sup> Howard-Johnston focuses on imperial authority (mostly in the Eastern parts of the empire) and stresses rhetoric elements within the land legislation (among many other great contributions). J. Howard-Johnston, ‘Crown Lands and the Defence of Imperial Authority in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries’ in: *Byzantinische Forschungen (BF)* XXI (1995)

Holmes has used the land legislation from Basil II’s rule in her book which details the reign of Basil II. C. Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976 – 1025)* (Oxford 2006)

Haldon uses the legislation to show the realities for the army and their social standing. J. Haldon, *Warfare state and society in the Byzantine world 565 - 1204* (London and New York 1999)

Morris stresses another, often times overlooked, group within the land legislation, the church and the monasteries. R. Morris, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium, 843-1118* (Cambridge 2003)

land legislation gives us the ability to look with some detail at social and economic relations. Another reason is to see, within the limits of the current research, how social and economic relations developed over a longer period of time. Of particular importance was to still include enough details to not make this another general history on this aspect of Byzantine history.

One of the main issues for any research into the Byzantine state is the lack of primary sources such as state archives, state budgets or imperial decrees. What we know about them comes either from fragmentary sources that lack completeness or they are described by Byzantine historians, who often times had personal agendas. A reason for choosing the particular angle in this research is the availability of the land legislation of the Macedonian emperors. The land legislation has come down to us in the form of novels.<sup>12</sup> The first novel is by the emperor Leo VI and has been dated to either 894 or 912, the last is by Basil II in 996.<sup>13</sup> This is the only source that deals directly with the struggle over ownership of land, and it therefore forms the core of my research.

The reliance on one source also had its drawbacks. The most obvious is whether or not this land legislation was followed and if so (or if not) was it enforced throughout the empire in far off places on the Eastern borders as well as the themes in the vicinity of Constantinople? We are not certain, but as will become apparent new and stricter legislation was needed which indicates the laws were not always followed or enforced and this held especially true for the themes on the Eastern border. A source often times linked to the land legislation was the *Peira* of Eustathios Rhomaïos, it gives us some insight into the workings of Byzantine law and its enforcement. The *Peira* and the workings of Byzantine law will be discussed in more detail in chapter 1 but for now it suffices to say that Byzantine law was often open to interpretation and judges had a great amount of freedom.

For the current research I have relied on two modern versions of the land legislation. Svoronos's version is in Greek and explanations are given in French while McGeer has a more up to date version in English (but still drawing heavily on Svoronos's version). Both take at their core the *Synopsis basilicorum major* which is an abridged version of the *Basilika* where the novels are included in the appendices and are known in two versions (appendix A and B) that mostly, but certainly not always, correspond.<sup>14</sup> These versions go back to a number of editions of the *Synopsis basilicorum major* divided into a "family A" which is then divided into branches one to four and where branch A4 is made up of three groups. Family B is divided into branches one and two. All of these branches and groups are taken from manuscripts written between the eleventh to the sixteenth century but the

---

<sup>12</sup> "Law texts".

<sup>13</sup> These novels can be found in: N. Svoronos, *Les Nouvelles des empereurs Macédonniens* (Athens 1994) and E. McGeer, *The land legislation of the Macedonian Emperors* (Medieval Sources in Translation 38) (Toronto 2000).

<sup>14</sup> The *Basilika* was the official collection of imperial law including the *Corpus Juris Civilis* and most of the *Codex Justinianus*. It consisted of six volumes or 60 books and was meant to eliminate superfluous laws and perhaps more importantly Latin texts were given in Greek. It first appeared during the reign of Leo VI in 888.

majority is from the second half of the fourteenth century. The manuscripts held in the libraries of Paris, the Vatican and Venice are the most important.<sup>15</sup> Even though some novels might be written later, there is little doubt about the authenticity of the land legislation as a whole.

The other major sources used throughout this research are what can be called “the histories”. Even though source material is scarce, the entire Byzantine period has been commented on by Byzantine historians who were contemporaries or near contemporaries of the events they describe. For the period here discussed the most important is the *Synopsis of Byzantine History*, or simply *Synopsis* by John Skylitzes. He treats the reigns Michael I (811 – 813) to the year when Isaak I Komnenos ascends the throne after his rebellion against Michael VI in 1057.<sup>16</sup> John Skylitzes wrote his work during the reign of Alexios I Komnenos (most likely at the end of the eleventh century) and it should therefore not come as a surprise that his writing is largely positive of the Komnenos clan and their allies. Like all medieval chroniclers he also draws heavily on the works of others, which he copies sometimes to the letter. Other important histories are those of Michael Psellos who was a courtier and the foremost philosopher and intellectual of his age. He served as courtier to many emperors and was in special favour to the Doukas family who he later assisted as chief-minister, meaning he is often times biased about his own role and that of the Doukas emperors. The personal touches when describing emperors or empresses are illuminating but also entertaining. Michael Attaleiates was also a courtier but of much lower rank than Psellos, his work has the great merit of painting a vivid, political picture of the Byzantine court which is very reliable. All three had access to state archives lending their work much great authenticity. Of course there are, and I have used, more histories than these three, they are, however, the most important.

In addition to the novels and histories some archival material is available through the monasteries of the Lavra whose archives were never destroyed or lost. Modern editions have been made in the seventies by a team led by Denise Papachryssantou, they are available in Greek with French comments. The monastic archival material has one major drawback; it only holds information on the Lavra and its subsidiaries, which was the largest and most privileged monastery in the Byzantine world. One should therefore be very careful not to overstate findings coming from this material; one simply does not know whether it would be a general trend in the Byzantine Empire or merely one found in the Lavra.

---

<sup>15</sup> A detailed list is included in Svoronos, *Les nouvelles des Empereurs Macédoniens*, 1 – 7. His texts are taken from: I. and P. Zépos, *Jus Graecoromanum, I – VIII* (Athens 1931) (reprinted Aalen 1962). Once again the texts used by Zépos come from an older version: K.E. Zachariae von Lingenthal, *Jus Graecoromanum I – V* (Leipzig 1856 – 1869). The *Synopsis Basilicorum Major* is included in book V (which corresponds with book V of the Zépos edition) and the *Synopsis Basilicorum Minor* in book II (which corresponds with book II of the Zépos edition).

<sup>16</sup> I have used the recent English translation of John Wortley which was published in 2010, for a large part he collaborated with Bernard Flusin and Jean-Claude Cheynet who published a French translation in 2003. J. Skylitzes, *A synopsis of Byzantine history 811 – 1057* (translated by John Wortley) (Cambridge 2010).

Other sources that have been used are named and explained, insofar as necessary, in the chapters and texts relevant to that source. It is my goal to show, through these sources, how the relation between the Byzantine state and the *dynatoi* developed, because of the chosen time frame one can see a broader picture emerge. The lack of sources for certain periods or a certain party means this broader picture helps to see what happened during these periods. Another important aspect of this research is to see what the effect of the land legislation was, even in the eleventh century when no new novels were drafted.

A last and essential link must be made between the importance of land for the state and how that affected the economy, which seems to have been what sparked the land legislation in the first place.

Land was the main fiscal unit through which tax was calculated (which formed the *demosios kanon*). Every thirty years the tax register (*praktikon*) was updated by local officials called *anagrapheis* and *epoptai*, who were responsible for assessing the land. Land was assessed in three categories, first class (irrigated), second class (suitable for agriculture) or third class (suitable for pasture), these were then taxed either one, half or a third *nomisma* per *modios*.<sup>17</sup> This meant a theoretical tax burden of 21% (second class land) to 25% (first class land) and up to 28% or 36% when the farmer was a tenant rather than an owner.<sup>18</sup> This made the Byzantine Empire, certainly during the period here under review, a heavily monetized, centralized and taxed society.<sup>19</sup> Both gold and land are so closely related that it would be hard to see one without the other. Whereas land was the main fiscal unit in the heavily agricultural economy of the Byzantines, gold was the fuel that kept the entire system running.

The reforms of Nikephoros I and Theophilos were at the centre of the Byzantine tax-system until the Alexian reforms of 1091.<sup>20</sup> It is clear that by the time of Basil I the tax system was

---

<sup>17</sup> There is quite a lot of difficulty in putting this in modern square meters, a *modios* could generally be just about anything seeing that measurements were different when dealing with different types of land (whether it was held by the emperor or by a monastery for example). For now let's assume it was a sowing *modios* which corresponds to 888.73 square meters. E. Schilbach, A. Kazhdan, "Modios" in: *ODB*. <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195046526.001.0001/acref-9780195046526-e-3588>.

<sup>18</sup> J. Lefort "The rural economy, Seventh-Twelfth centuries" in: *EHOB*, 302.

<sup>19</sup> This not to say that all tax was in coins, there were numerous taxes that were paid in kind like the *kaniskion* (obligation to supply food and drink to fiscal officials), *angareia* (corvées) and others. Payment in kind was more common in the provinces where gold coins were scarce, rather than the fertile coastal strips of Asia minor or the areas surrounding Constantinople where local markets also ensured gold availability.

<sup>20</sup> Nikephoros I (r. 802 – 811) was the first to drastically change taxation and increase government income. He was a skilled bureaucrat that had been finance minister under Irene I (r. 797 – 802). Though his reign has suffered much at the hands of later historians, Nikephoros I was an iconoclast, it included much needed reforms. Nikephoros introduced new taxes like the *kapnikon* (a small hearth tax) on *paroikoi* of ecclesiastical foundations, the *allelengyon* (which was a tax on villages for them to pay for poorer neighbors engaged in military service) along with many others that were mostly aimed at revising policy made by Irene who had given many tax exemptions. Theophilos (r. 829 – 842) was another important force behind increased state

increasingly centralised and would continue to be so for the coming centuries. The preferred (and demanded) payment of these taxes was in coins, especially gold coins. There were many different taxes in the middle Byzantine period but the most important ones were the land (*demosios kanon*, *δημόσιος κανών* or *δημόσιον*)) and the additional tax or personal tax (*parakolouthemata*, *παρακολουθήματα*). These taxes would have to be paid in gold for any fraction greater than 2/3 of a *nomisma* and change would be given in smaller denominations. This system was called the *charagma* (*χάραγμα*) and insured a steady flow of gold towards Constantinople and the imperial administration.<sup>21</sup> This gold in turn was put back into circulation through the system of *rhoga/roga*. Another way it reached to populace was through donations to churches, monasteries and charitable institutes, who would then donate to the populace. This also made sure that coins reached more distant parts of the empire where money would be scarce.<sup>22</sup>

Large sums of gold were paid out to all officials in imperial service, by the eleventh century ranging from 12 *nomismata* for a *spatharios* (imperial bodyguard) to 32lb (around 10kg or 2268 *nomismata*) for the *kouropalates* (a high ranking dignity).<sup>23</sup> When on a mission to Constantinople during the reign of Nikephoros II Phokas, Liutprand of Cremona left us a vivid account of the workings of the *roga*. He relates how the two highest military functionaries (*domestikos ton scholon* and *droungarios ton ploimon*) received so much gold that they were unable to carry it on their shoulders but rather had to drag the gold behind them with the help of others.<sup>24</sup> Although probably an exaggeration it still tells us something of the massive amounts of gold that came into and went out of Constantinople.

Another way gold was put into (or rather was taken out of) circulation was through the sale of offices. A system that was supplying large amounts of gold in the tenth century, until its final collapse in the eleventh. A position in the central administration could cost anywhere from 1,440 up to 4,680 *nomismata*. It is therefore highly unlikely it would ever return the investment to the purchaser through the *roga* system. Only when higher positions (such as *protospatharios*) were reached would the annual return amount to figures higher than normal interest on the open market (in excess of 6%). Not only

---

income and stabilization. His biggest achievement was the revival of the Byzantine military apparatus, as he increased discipline within the army, increased their pay (these two are obviously closely related) and increased the numerical strength of the army laying the foundation for later offensive campaigns. W. Treadgold, *The Byzantine revival* (Stanford 1988) 189 – 196 and 327 – 329.

<sup>21</sup> N. Oikonomides 'The role of the state in the Byzantine economy' in: A.E. Laiou (eds), *The economic history of Byzantium, from the seventh to the fifteenth century (EHOB)* (Washington DC 2002) 995 and N. Oikonomides, "Charagma" in: *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium (ODB)* (Oxford University Press 1991). <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195046526.001.0001/acref-9780195046526-e-0981>.

<sup>22</sup> A. Harvey, *Economic expansion in the Byzantine Empire 900 - 1200* (Cambridge 1989) 83 – 84.

<sup>23</sup> M.F. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine monetary economy c. 300 – 1450* (Cambridge 2008) 185.

<sup>24</sup> J. Becker, ed., 'Die Werke Liudprands von Cremona; The Work of Liudprand of Cremona' in: *Usus Scholarum Separatim Editi* 41 (1915) 157 – 158.

would it be very expensive to buy such a position it would also take a long time to be promoted throughout the civil services.<sup>25</sup> It is much more likely that these offices were not bought out of a financial interest but rather for the prestige these offices brought with them. This is attested by the fact that not all titles that were sold still held any direct meaning or responsibility, they were simply honorary titles.

What this clearly shows is that land in the possession of farmers was needed by the state in order to receive the gold, through taxes, needed to effectively run the state. If this system was endangered it could mean disaster for the state when it could no longer meet its obligations. On the other hand it was in the interest of both *dynatoi* parties to stay in the good graces of the emperor since employment for the emperor (whether in Constantinople or not) meant one could receive a *roga*, which would generally ensure wealth and prestige.

---

<sup>25</sup> N. Oikonomides 'The role of the state in the Byzantine economy' in: *EHOB*, 1008 – 1010.

# CHAPTER 1

## The first struggle of the *Dynatoi* and the State 867 – 959

---

The first period corresponds with the rule of Basil I up to the rule of Romanos II. It is during this period that the first novels were drafted and that we find the first major privileges being bestowed upon monasteries. The first novel is by the emperor Leo VI and has been dated to either 894 or 912. There are some concerns about its authenticity as it might have been a later fabrication. This novel is followed by two written during the reign of Romanos I Lekapenos (Romanos the Elder) and those can be dated to 922 and 934. The novel of 934 is of particular importance because it deals with the severe famine that ravaged the Byzantine countryside in 927 – 928. Skylitzes informs us:

“The same month [December 927] an intolerable winter suddenly set in; the earth was frozen for one hundred and twenty days. A cruel famine followed the winter, worse than any previous famine, and so many people died from the famine that the living were insufficient to bury the dead. This happened in spite of the fact that the emperor did his very best to relieve the situation, assuaging the ravages of the winter and the famine with good works and other aid of every kind.”<sup>26</sup>

These novels in turn are followed by novels by the emperor Constantine VII. Rosemary Morris divides the land legislation in four periods, dealing with different issues. Firstly and secondly we have legislation that dealt with natural disaster like the famine of 927 – 928 but also with a severe winter that she dates (in which she follows Vanderstuyf) to 933 – 934. The third period started in 949 and this was a period of military reverses, of which the failed invasion of Crete is the most important. The last period corresponds with the sole rule of Basil II and the defeat of Bardas Skleros and Bardas Phokas (996) and will be treated in chapter 2.<sup>27</sup> This period was also that of the great conquests under Nikephoros II Phokas, John I Tzimiskes and Basil II.

When looking at the novels as “one text” it is clear that the novels build upon one another, terms of sale are more confined and when followed to the letter it would have been very hard to encroach upon state or private land. When looking at each novel individually this is still true however it then becomes clear that each novel deals with a different problem while offering similar solutions. In total there are 14 novels that range from 894/912 to 996, with the bulk being written between 922

---

<sup>26</sup> J. Skylitzes, *A synopsis of Byzantine history 811 – 1057* (translated by John Wortley) (Cambridge 2010) 218.

<sup>27</sup> Morris, ‘The Powerful and the Poor in Tenth-Century Byzantium’, 8.

and 969 (the reigns from Romanos I Lekapenos to Nikephoros II Phokas). Here will follow a short overview of these novels in chronological order.<sup>28</sup>

<b>EMPEROR</b>	<b>REIGN</b>	<b>NOVELS</b>
Basil I	867 – 886	None
Leo VI	886 – 912	A (disputed)
Alexander	912 – 913	None
Constantine VII (regency)	913 – 920	None
Romanos I Lekapenos	920 – 944	B and C
Constantine VII (sole rule)	945 – 959	D, E and G
Romanos II	959 – 963	F
Nikephoros II Phokas	963 – 969	H, J, K, L and M
John Tzimiskes	969 – 976	None
Basil II	976 – 1025	N (disputed) and O

---

<sup>28</sup> These refer to the novels in: McGeer, he has references to older works and original Greek texts. Text taken from: McGeer, *Land legislation*, 34.

## State

The Byzantine state was by 867 in better shape than it had been for centuries, it had benefitted from fiscal and military reforms during much of the early ninth century. Its greatest rival in the East (the Abbasid Caliphate) was beginning the break up caused by internal unrest.<sup>29</sup> This meant that the Byzantine Empire could go on the offensive by 867, which they did. Basil I launched campaigns in southern Italy, Sicily and in the East against the Paulicians who were allied with the Arabs. Though not great successes by themselves they were enough to promote Basil as a great ruler which helped secure his dynasty.<sup>30</sup> Ultimately their authority and military conquests must have helped greatly when they started to implement the land legislation aimed against powerful aristocratic elements within society. Land legislation will now be discussed as it is the most important source from the state perspective.

### **Novel (A) of Leo VI 894 – 912**

As mentioned before this novel's authenticity has been disputed as a later forgery to give a precedent for the later novels concerning land legislation.<sup>31</sup> There are problems determining whether this text is authentic but as of yet there is no conclusive evidence. If it is indeed a later forgery the reason behind it would be obscure as later text refers to "the old law" as a precedent for the land legislation, so there would not have been any need for a precedent stemming from the Macedonian era. The text is, however, very different in style and wording than any of the other novels. Whether it is a fabrication or an actual novel of Leo VI its contents are revealing and important to note especially when compared to the first novel of Romanos I Lekapenos.

This rather short novel deals with the right of pre-emption and terms of sale. It states that the holder of a property is free to sell his property to whomever he wishes as long as that person takes on the fiscal responsibility of that land. Neighbours (who generally have the right of pre-emption, or first right of sale) may object within 6 months of the first year of the sale. They then have to reimburse the purchaser for the full prize and take ownership. This means this novel does not eliminate the right of pre-emption but rather abolishes the abusive nature of this right. The novel clearly states that:

“For if a poor, impoverished person without abundant means wishes to sell his own property while the neighbours secretly wait from one day to the next for the

---

<sup>29</sup> W.T. Treadgold, 'The Revival of Byzantine Learning and the Revival of the Byzantine State' in: *The American Historical Review* 84 5 (1979) 1245 – 1246.

<sup>30</sup> W.T. Treadgold, *A history of the Byzantine state and society* (Stanford 1997) 461.

<sup>31</sup> A. Schminck, 'Novellae Extravagantes Leons VI' in: *Subcesiva Groningana* 4 (1990) 195 – 201. His views are followed by E. Papagianni, 'Protimesis (Preemption) in Byzantium' in: *EHOB*, 1072 – 1073.

impoverished peasant to abandon the property, and the neighbour takes it for nothing, this our Majesty considers completely unfair.”

Therefore the main goal of this novel was not to curb the power of the *dynatoi* but rather to help the poorer peasants and protect them from the power their neighbours had as a community. While at the same time protecting the fiscal responsibility a community had.<sup>32</sup>

### **Novels (B and C) of Romanos I Lekapenos 922/928 and 934**

There are two novels of Romanos I Lekapenos, the first one has a disputed dating and can either be dated to 922 or 928. The text itself says:

“Novel of the Lord Emperor Romanos the elder concerning the right of pre-emption, pronounced in the month of April in the tenth indiction in the year 6430.”

This date has generally been assumed to be correct and corresponds with the year 922. Both Svoronos and Kaplan argue for the latter date of April 928 just after the effects of the before mentioned famine and terrible winter of 927/928.<sup>33</sup> It seems clear from the wording of this novel that the effects of the winter were not yet fully known, which makes a strong case for the 922 dating. Romanos other novel of 934 is clear in its wording regarding the severe winter and refers often to it, this in contrast to the novel of 922/928. It is also in this novel that we find, for the first time, a direct reference to the *dynatoi* with an explanation who they are.<sup>34</sup>

Novel B has come down to us in three versions; version 1 is regarded by Svoronos to be the original text, version 2 is longer and more elaborate and Ostrogorsky therefore considers it to be a more advanced stage of a later date of the legislation and version 3 is an epitome of version 1.<sup>35</sup> The main theme of the novel is the right of pre-emption (*protimesis*) and ordering this right in groups (who takes precedent over whom?). If the novel of Leo VI is indeed authentic the novel of Romanos I takes a sharp turn away from that legislation as the right to buy up land is very much restricted to the same tax-district. The fact that this novel does not refer to novel A is a strong marker that the former is indeed a later fabrication. Instead of referring to novel A novel B refers to “the old law” by which an edict by Theodosius in 391 is meant.<sup>36</sup> The right of pre-emption was thus divided into three groups.

---

<sup>32</sup> McGeer, *Land legislation*, 36.

<sup>33</sup> Skylitzes, *A synopsis of Byzantine history*, 218 and M. Kaplan, *Les hommes et la terre à Byzance du VIe au XIe siècle* (Paris 1992) 415 – 416.

<sup>34</sup> See text and note 20.

<sup>35</sup> McGeer, *Land legislation*, 37, Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine state*, 273 and Svoronos, *Les nouvelles des Empereurs Macédoniens*, 49 – 53.

<sup>36</sup> C. Pharr, T.S. Davidson, and M.B. Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels, and the Sirmondian Constitutions* (New York 1952) 64 Book III Title 1.6. *Formerly the right had been granted to near kinsmen and to co-owners to exclude extraneous persons from a purchase, and men could not, in accordance with their own decision, sell any property which they had for sale.*

- 1) Co-owners.
  - a. Joint owners who are also kin.
  - b. Joint owners by previous association (for example earlier joint purchases).
  - c. Ordinary joint owners (for example previous purchases of shares in a property).
- 2) Those who are from the same tax-district (*homoteleis*).
- 3) Neighbours.<sup>37</sup>

This meant that *dynatoi* were banned from acquiring land in village communities were they did not yet possess land or family. They could only buy the land from the village community if they did not wish to purchase the land themselves and were not pressured by anyone outside of the community.<sup>38</sup> It seems that this provision was scarcely followed within the provinces since more legislation was needed and it is hard to imagine the *dynatoi* did not take advantage in parts of the empire where state control was absent or far away. The second version of the text adds to this that:

“If the estates being sold are farmlands belonging not to the *dynatoi* but to other persons, and if so-called klasmatic lands or other property in its possession are being sold by the public treasury, the same inhabitants are likewise to be given preference. If they decline of their own free will, then the *dynatoi* are also allowed to make transactions.”<sup>39</sup>

Klasmatic (*klasma*) land was land that was no longer in use because it had lost its tenant. It could generally be bought after a period of 30 years from the state. For the state it was necessary that this land would be sold as it then brought in rent or a lump sum for the sale. After the klasmatic land was settled tenants paid a reduced tax-rate of 1/12<sup>th</sup> or in some cases 1/24<sup>th</sup> for 15 years. This meant that it was a popular way to expand territory for those with the means to do so (both manpower that could be relocated and the means to acquire klasmatic lands).<sup>40</sup> This means the second version of the legislation was even stricter in what *dynatoi* could or could not buy. By being excluded from the right of pre-emption it would be very hard for them to encroach upon community lands. Here novel B adds that:

---

<sup>37</sup> E. Papagianni, ‘Protimesis (Preemption) in Byzantium’ in: *EHOB*, 1072 – 1073.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, 1076.

<sup>39</sup> McGeer, *Land legislation*, 47.

<sup>40</sup> M.C. Bartusis, "Klasma" *ODB*.

<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195046526.001.0001/acref-9780195046526-e-2863>.

“Should one of the *dynatoi* attempt this sort of intrigue, he will be deprived of the property and be compelled by the treasury to pay full price for it.”<sup>41</sup>

Version 2 further adds that this is only applicable for 10 years after which the land cannot be reclaimed. This leads me to agree with Ostrogorsky that version 2 was indeed written after version 1 and is a more advanced stage of this legislation.

The second novel (C) of Romanos I Lekapenos has been dated to September 934 and aims specifically to put a stop to the exploitation of farmers caused by the famine following the severe winter of 927/928. This novel is a great example of imperial rhetoric where the emperor is portrayed along the lines of the Old Testament kings, chosen by God and protecting the poor. This also made it a reference point for future legislation and novel C is often used as an example. The text clearly points towards the famine and its consequences. It makes clear that land acquired after the first indiction (right after the famine, starting in August 928) would have to be returned to its original owners. Compensation would be given for those that acted in good conscience but *dynatoi* that took advantage of the misery of the farmers as a consequence of the famine would not be reimbursed. The *dynatoi* are further specified from novel B (I have included the text in the introduction, the Greek version can be found in the conclusion) and this legislation is clearly pointed at them, alluding to them as persons that go against God. This rhetoric is powerful as even the *dynatoi* were subject to the leading belief in the Byzantine Empire that the emperor was chosen by God and ruled with absolute authority.<sup>42</sup> Romanos is presented as the champion of the poor saying:

“If God, our Creator and Saviour, Who made us emperor, rises in retribution, how will the poor man, who awaits only the eyes of the emperor for intercession, be neglected and altogether forgotten by us?”

And later:

“And if we have striven, with the help of God, to provide our subjects with such great freedom from enemy attack, setting this as the goal of our prayers and exertions, how will we, after accomplishing so much against the onslaught of external enemies, not rid ourselves of our enemies within, enemies of the natural order, of the Creation, and of justice, by reviling and repressing insatiety, by excising the greedy disposition, and

---

<sup>41</sup> McGeer, *Land legislation*, 46 – 47.

<sup>42</sup> J. Howard-Johnston, ‘Crown Lands and the Defence of Imperial Authority in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries’ in: *Byzantinische Forschungen (BF)* XXI (1995) 83.

by liberating our subjects from the yoke of the tyrannical, oppressive mind and hand of the righteous intention to free them with cutting sword of the present legislation?”<sup>43</sup>

The last reference is clearly to the re-conquest of Melitene in May 934, an episode that marked one of the most successful military campaigns in the East. Melitene was captured and the population was given the choice of converting to Christianity or leaving the city. The majority stayed but this still meant that fertile, arable land became available for rent with a large workforce intact. Rather than selling or renting these lands Romanos decided to make them crown lands and established a *kouratoreia*. This act denied access to the Eastern magnates upon the newly conquered land and meant that the state coffers would be filled and the authority of the emperor expanded.<sup>44</sup> This phenomenon was rather new and one could argue that part of the reason for such strict rhetoric regarding the virtues of the emperor and the vices of the *dynatoi* was to legitimize this move and create a precedent for future conquests.

#### **Novels (D, E and G) of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos 947 - 959**

The first novel of Constantine VII was written in March 947 by the *quaestor* and *patrikios* Theophilos who had been eparch of Constantinople under Romanos I. There are two versions in existence, one written to the Thrakesian theme and the other to Anatolikon theme. In both forms novel D reinforces the previous novels of Romanos I Lekapenos, especially novel C. The prologue describes how it is of great concern to the imperial legislators that even though they are not allowed too, powerful people still infiltrate village communities, going so far as to say: “oppressing the miserable poor”. Furthermore it is clear that provincial judges had not been enforcing the previous legislation consistently, pointing towards favouritism. More interesting is the fact that novel D further divides the *dynatoi* into, essentially, two groups. Those owning less and those owning in excess of 50 nomismata, even if this person is an official of the central government. Everyone owning in excess of 50 nomismata was obliged to return the lands they bought to the original owner without compensation from both the time of the famine (928) and from Constantine’s proclamation as emperor (945). Anyone owning less than 50 nomismata, for example monasteries of modest means, *protospatharioi* and lower ranks of the officialdom, would be compensated for the amount they paid. In addition any improvements to the land (for example the planting of vineyards or the construction of a water-mill) would have to be compensated as well. If the original seller could not pay for this, the buyer was allowed to remove the material used for the construction as long as it did not damage the land.<sup>45</sup>

The second novel of Constantine VII, consisting of three parts, deals with military lands (*stratitotika ktemata*) and can be dated shortly after the exchanges of prisoners with the Arabs in

---

<sup>43</sup> McGeer, *Land legislation*, 53, 60.

<sup>44</sup> Howard-Johnston, ‘Crownlands’ in: *BF*, 86 – 87.

<sup>45</sup> McGeer, *Land legislation*, 61 - 67.

October 947/948. The first part deals with the minimum inalienable land (4 pounds for cavalry, 4 pounds for sailors and 2 pounds for sailors that are on the imperial payroll). The second part deals with land that has been alienated without cause and therefore has to be returned to the original owner or anyone taking over the military obligations. For the current research the third section is the most interesting as it deals with land that has been sold by *stratiotai* to (we may presume) *dynatoi* after which the soldiers enlist into the private service of these *dynatoi*.<sup>46</sup> In this decree we see a reflection of the growing power of the Byzantine army and its effectiveness, soldiers were becoming more and more important and they, and their land, had to be protected.

The third novel has traditionally been dated to March 962 which meant it was drafted during the reign of Romanos II. Recently it has been commented that the more likely date would be March 959 during the last year of Constantine VII's reign. Evidence is given by reference to a military campaign, which was certainly not undertaken in 962 but in 959. This is also the reason novel G is attributed to Constantine rather than Romanos, as it traditionally was (explaining why novel F is treated under Romanos).<sup>47</sup> The military campaign referred to is described by Skylitzes as a campaign to Mount Olympos where Constantine would pray for his upcoming campaign against the Arabs in Syria. In fact it was to consult Theodore, bishop of Kyzikos, on the disposition of Polyeuktos.<sup>48</sup>

Novel G was most likely written by Theodore Dekapolites and is a reminder to the Thrakesion theme of the rules concerning the buying and selling of military lands. Like novel E it consists of three parts that clarify what was set out in earlier legislation (as with novel E). When land was bought or inherited in good faith no penalty would have to be paid (described in the first and second part), only when forced from their land a penalty would have to be paid (described in the third part).<sup>49</sup>

The *dynatoi* were certainly on the rise in the early tenth century. This can be seen through their growing power being challenged by the Emperors and the legislation they wrote. Novel B first names the *dynatoi* in rather vague terms while novel C expands who were considered to be *dynatoi*. Finally novel D divides them into two groups to make sure the legislation affected those it was aimed at rather than *dynatoi* who were themselves not very powerful or a challenge to the state, like *higoumenoi* of small monasteries. Novel D and G seem concerned about a specific area being targeted by the *dynatoi*, the coastal plains and river valleys. Perhaps this the main aim of the land legislation, to protect fertile lands from *dynatoi*. Novel C regards about a very similar encroachment even though it is not specified. It is however logical that most independent, small land owning peasants lived in the fertile areas rather than the inhospitable Anatolian plateau. To some extent the same can be said of the *stratiotai*, who

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem, 68 – 76.

<sup>47</sup> McGeer, *Land legislation*, 82 - 83.

<sup>48</sup> Skylitzes, *A synopsis of Byzantine history*, 237 – 238. Theodore of Kyzikos was a confidant of Constantine VII and both opposed the patriarch Polyeuktos who had written against the marriage of Constantine's parents. Though it is not specified in Skylitzes Theodore must have been visiting a monastery on mount Olympos.

<sup>49</sup> McGeer, *Land legislation*, 82 – 85.

owned small tracts of land they could work, presumably in fertile areas. For the early tenth century (up to 959) this certainly seems to have been the case. The policy of Romanos I Lekapenos after the capture of Melitene in 934 is in line with this. By taking the newly conquered land as a *kouratoria* rather than selling it he made sure the concentration of *dynatoi* was kept on the Anatolian plateau where there economic significance was much lower than it would be if they expanded into fertile regions.

## Church

In the year 843 the period of iconoclasm was over. The icons were restored by the empress Theodora in name of her young son Michael III. One class in particular emerged as the heroes of the icons and the most steadfast supporters of iconodulism; the monks of Constantinople but surely also those in the provinces.<sup>50</sup> Theodore of Stoudios<sup>51</sup> had died in 826 but he held special importance as a staunch opponent of iconoclasm. This meant that his views on monastic life gained influence after the restoration of the icons in 843. The monks who lived in the Stoudios monastery took many of his views and tried to ensure more freedom for their monastery, both from imperial but also patriarchal interference. This led to an increase of monastic prestige and power since the monastic communities tried to appoint their own bishops and seriously opposed certain patriarchs.<sup>52</sup>

One can see this growing confidence and power of the monastic institutions during the tenth and eleventh century. As a privileged group, the monasteries had always held a special place for the emperor, something which went back to the Justinian legislation where the well being of all ecclesiastical lands was ascribed to the imperial office.<sup>53</sup> A document called ‘the fiscal treatise’ describes significant gifts from the emperor in order to provide for these monasteries.<sup>54</sup> The imperial favours are described as *logisima* (λογία) and this was a complete or partial tax exemption. This in contrast to the *solemnion* which was a straight forward donation from the imperial treasury. They had come into existence “in former times at the hands of long-deceased emperors and up to the reign of the

---

<sup>50</sup> J.M. Hussey, A. Louth, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford 2010) 62 – 65.

<sup>51</sup> Abbot of the Stoudios monastery in Constantinople, monastic reformer and devout iconophile that lived from 759 – 826.

<sup>52</sup> Hussey, *The Orthodox Church*, 66 – 72.

<sup>53</sup> R. Morris, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium, 843-1118* (Cambridge 2003) 146.

<sup>54</sup> Full text in: W. Ashburner, ‘A Byzantine Treatise on Taxation’, *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 35 (1915) an English translation can be found in: C.M. Brand, ‘Two Byzantine treatises on taxation’, *Traditio* 25 (1967) 48 – 57.

Different authors have given a different dating of the fiscal treatise, certainly after Leo VI’s reign since he is said to be deceased. But perhaps later in the eleventh or even the twelfth century. Lemerle has pointed out that none of fiscal terms used are inconsistent with those of the (early) tenth century the document also does not reflect the land legislation which points to an earlier dating. For this research I will follow the dating proposed by Lemerle. Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 75.

wise Lord Leo".<sup>55</sup> This was a tax exemption allocated to a specific person or institution (most likely a church or monastery) and was called *prokatespasmena logisima* (προκατεσπασμένα λογίσιμα). Leo VI had inventories made and appears to have ended this practise. The *solemnia logisma* (σολέμνια λογίσιμα) was thereafter the usual tax exemption. Here the regular *solemnion* was replaced by the *solemnia logisma*, taking on a more fiscal aspect rather than a straight donation. The *solemnia logisma* came in three basic forms, one where the *solemnion* was deducted from the total amount of tax due by the institution to the fisc. If the sum of the tax was greater than that of the *solemnion* the remaining tax still had to be paid. In the second form taxes from the provinces were directly paid to the beneficiary (again to the extent of the original *solemnion*) by tax-collectors. The last form was the most sought after by monasteries and other institutions where payment from a certain *chorion* (village) was directly paid to the beneficent institution (once again nearly always a monastery or church).<sup>56</sup>

It is also right before the time of Leo VI that the first known chrysobull was given to the monastery of Protaton which is part of the Athonite monasteries. It is dated to the first of June 883 during the reign of Basil I, it is followed by an act of Leo VI from 908.<sup>57</sup> Both documents are hard to interpret since they are not precise in their descriptions. What is known is that at the core both acts deal with certain "vexations" from officials or laymen. What is meant seems to be a tax-exemption from the taxes *epereia*, *angareia* and *zemia*<sup>58</sup>, which are for the first time clearly stated in yet another chrysobull by Romanos Lekapenos in August 934.<sup>59</sup> Though both *angaraia* and *zemia* are certainly secondary taxes there is some difficulty in knowing what is meant by *epereia*, perhaps it refers to an exemption from land-tax. If so this meant that the Athonite monastery was already extremely privileged as of the late 9<sup>th</sup> and early 10<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>60</sup>

Another mode by which the emperor granted special privileges to monasteries was through *exkousseia*. *Exkousseia* was a greatly sought after privilege, which gave the receiver of this privilege freedom from certain taxes (of the secondary taxes and corvées) and limited access to their property by fiscal and judicial officials. Though these properties were not immune from central authority they had a greatly privileged position, by which they could attract local peasants as *paroikoi*.<sup>61</sup> From the monastic archives we have practical examples of the *exkousseia* and they show why this privilege was

---

<sup>55</sup> R. Morris, 'Monastic exemptions in tenth- and eleventh-century Byzantium' in: P. Fouracre ed., W. Davies ed., *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages (PPEM)* (Cambridge 1995) (Published online in 2010) 204.

<sup>56</sup> Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 83 – 85 and R. Morris, 'Monastic exemptions' in: *PPEM*, 204 – 205.

<sup>57</sup> D. Papachryssanthou, *Actes du Prôtaton (Archives de l'Athos VII)* (Paris 1975) nr. 1 and 2, 177 – 181, 181 – 185.

<sup>58</sup> "Special taxes", "corvées" and "exactions". Definitions taken from the *ODB*.

<sup>59</sup> Papachryssanthou, *Actes de Prôtaton*, nr. 3, 185 – 187.

<sup>60</sup> R. Morris discusses the meaning of *epereia* in this specific context. Her conclusion must be the same as anyone else who tried to find a meaning, it is simply not known since tax records are lacking. R. Morris, 'Monastic exemptions' in: *PPEM*, 207.

<sup>61</sup> A.P. Kazhdan, A.W. Epstein, *Change in Byzantine culture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries* (Los Angeles 1985) 62.

so sought after. Though these examples are all from monastic institutions there can be no doubt that *exkousseia* was also granted to the secular landowners, even if we lack certainly from archives. Constantine VII granted, somewhere between 945 and 959, a chrysobull to the convent of Saint Andrew which was part of the Lavra of Thessalonica. This chrysobull was later confirmed by Constantine X in 1060, where one finds a summary of the earlier chrysobull.<sup>62</sup> It states that *exkousseia* has been granted to one hundred untaxed *paroikoi* and *douloparoikoi* settled on their estate.<sup>63</sup>

What is clear is that by the early tenth century the monastic element in society was gaining more strength and power, which was being translated into privileges and land. What made these privileges even more valuable for the monasteries was that they would never be the object of inheritance like they were for the lay aristocracy nor could they easily be revoked without angering the church and the people, something that was also easier to do with lay aristocracy.

However, one should be careful not to overstate the economic significance of these early privileges. First of all the monastic form that gained great popularity during the tenth century was that of the lavriote monastic ideal.<sup>64</sup> Generally a *lavra* was formed in a remote rural area which meant that even if they were exempted from the land tax (which we do not know for sure) this held little economic difference for the fisc since the *demosios* was based on quality of land. Another risk was that of incursions, which was greater in remote rural areas, we find an example of the monastery of Prodromos who were granted *exkousseia* for thirty-six *ateleis paroikoi* by Constantine VII in 945 – 946, they could not be found anymore in 975 due to Barbarian invasions and thus the monastery was allowed to search for thirty-six new *paroikoi*.<sup>65</sup> One can conclude that even though the monasteries were already greatly privileged during the early tenth century they were not such an economic threat to have been the main target of the land legislation.

---

<sup>62</sup> Lemerle has divided the different types of *paroikoi* based on these documents. There are those that held military obligation and therefore military land (*stratiotes*) and those that worked for the postal service (*dromos*) and most likely held similar plots of land. The third category is formed by the *demosiaries* who owned their own land. These could, technically, not be *paroikoi* as they held obligations to the state and there are even examples of the emperor John I Tzimiskes sending out an official to “reclaim” *stratiotes* and *demosiaries* found on the land of Lavra. It should however also be noted that the state could relinquish the claim to an individual and leave them with the Lavra. The last categories are the real *paroikoi* who we find as *ateleis* (untaxed) or *douloparoikoi* (of which nothing is known). These held no land or obligation to the state and could therefore work the lands of others (in these cases great monasteries).

<sup>63</sup> P. Lemerle, A. Guillou, N. Svoronos, D. Papachryssantou eds., *Actes de Lavra première partie des origines a 1204 (Archives de l’Athos V)* (Paris 1970) nr. 33, 195 – 199. Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 165 -166.

<sup>64</sup> A *lavra* consisted of several individual monks living in monastic cells (*kellia*), they would meet during the weekend within central structures for prayer and to acquire goods needed during their weekly solitude like food. They also led by an abbot (*hegoumenos*). This meant a compromise between the solitary monastic ideal of eremitic and the community ideal of cenobitic.

<sup>65</sup> Morris remarks that by 975 the meaning of an *ateleis paroikoi* was no longer that of an individual but rather household (*oikos*). R. Morris, ‘Monastic exemptions’ in: *PPEM*, 209.

## Aristocracy

During the 8<sup>th</sup> century a process began where certain families acquired increasing wealth and power. Military commanders had gained increasing power thanks to the theme system of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. These commanders translated the power given to them by the government in wealth by accumulating large tracts of lands, which often became available due to the instability in the empire, and in high government positions that held a high amount of prestige but also a *roga*.<sup>66</sup> One of the first examples of such a wealthy high official was the widow Danielis who seems to have been *archontissa* of the Peloponnese and gave Basil I gifts and land before he became emperor. Basil I later repaid her kindness when he was emperor by promoting her son.<sup>67</sup> These families began to form an elite within the empire, or what could be called an aristocracy and they certainly became more prominent during the tenth century. The term aristocracy or aristocrat was not one used by the Byzantines themselves since it was an archaic term that did not fit with their new monarchy. An exception is Michael Attaleiates who used it in his eleventh century history to describe himself as: “a member of the senate and to be numbered among the best councillors or aristocrats (*αριστοκρατικούς*) as they were called of old”.<sup>68</sup> More generally though they were called *archontes* (*ἄρχων*) and this basically meant anyone who possessed power within the bureaucracy, therefore one could say that *archontes* was a close equivalent of lay *dynatos*. One of the ways we can see their increasing prominence (at court) is through lead seals that government officials used. At the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century only about 20% used a family name on their seals, this number had increased to 80% by 1200.<sup>69</sup>

Though Danielis was an example of an aristocrat that settled in the Balkans this was not the part of the empire where there were great concentrations of aristocrats, at least not until the 1100's. Mostly they held their lands on the Anatolian plateau, an area generally unsuited for agriculture but lending itself to pastoralism. The three themes of *Anatolikon*, *Kommata* and *Kappadokia* had the highest concentration of magnates that owned vast tracts of land there. Justinian had already reformed this area in the sixth century because of the excesses of the local magnates and their agents, who illegally acquired lands and were involved in local banditry.<sup>70</sup> It is from the ninth century that one finds more and more references to these specific families. By the time of Leo VI one finds a conflicting view of these aristocrats. In his *taktika* (a military handbook) we find when appointing a

---

<sup>66</sup> Harvey, *Economic expansion*, 30 – 31.

<sup>67</sup> Skylitzes, *A synopsis of Byzantine history*, 123 – 124 and 154.

<sup>68</sup> P. Gautier, 'La Diataxis de Michel Attaliate' In: *Revue des études byzantines* 39 (1981) 21.

<sup>69</sup> P. Stephenson, 'Rise of the middle Byzantine aristocracy' in: P. Stephenson, ed., *The Byzantine world* (London and New York 2010) 22.

<sup>70</sup> Hendy, *Studies*, 100 – 104.

general one should consider: “Let a good, noble and rich man be named *strategos*”.<sup>71</sup> However in the same *taktika* we find the advice: “to consider the nobility of men, not according to their birth, but according to their deeds”. By Leo’s time these families like the, Phokai, Doukai, Argyroi, Skleroi and Maleinoi were firmly entrenched on the Anatolian plateau. Their power had come from commanding, military positions in the thematic army of the *Anatolikon* theme.<sup>72</sup> The aristocracy of the Anatolian plateau was greatly militarised and remained so in an increasingly militarised society. The most famous example is the Phokas clan who were military commanders since Nikephoros Phokas “the Elder” had been general in the late ninth century and continued to be the most important generals in the East until the reign of Basil II.

The power they had is reflected in the novels, not only because it seems to be aimed directly at them but also because of the need for novel D, from which it is clear that local judges were strongly favouring *dynatoi*.<sup>73</sup> They had every reason to do so, in the provinces the military had monopolised local administration, meaning these judges were either part of the Anatolian families or else very dependent upon them.<sup>74</sup> From the *peira* of the eleventh century one learns that the Byzantine legal system had considerable flexibility and judges enjoyed freedom in interpreting the law.<sup>75</sup> This must have created favourable positions in the provinces for the *dynatoi*. Whether the lay *dynatoi* were a greatly privileged group along the lines of the monasteries described above is unclear. Unfortunately there are no lay archives available, however from the wording of the fiscal treatise it is implied that *solemnia logisma* were indeed also granted to others apart from ecclesiastical institutions. The fiscal treatise states on how *logisma* was formed: ‘such and such an emperor ordered that the public revenues of a properties belonging to such and such a hostel or old people’s home or monastery or church or *someone else* not be collected’.<sup>76</sup> Indeed during the reign of Alexios I Komnenos in the eleventh century tax-exemptions were being granted to secular landowners.<sup>77</sup> Once again the lack of sources does not allow further research; tax exemptions and privileges must have been granted to the lay aristocracy but to what extent remains unclear.

By the early tenth century and certainly during the mid tenth century it becomes clear that large landowners were becoming more wide-spread. Apart from the great Anatolian families more and more people seem to have invested in land, perhaps as a reaction to newly created capital which is linked to demographic growth and the increase of commerce during the tenth century. It is hard to

---

<sup>71</sup> Ostrogorsky, ‘Observations on the Aristocracy’, 4.

<sup>72</sup> M. Angold, *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII Centuries (TBA)* (B.A.R. S221 1984) 1 – 4.

<sup>73</sup> McGeer, *Land legislation*, 61 - 67.

<sup>74</sup> Hendy, *Studies*, 107.

<sup>75</sup> I will return to the *Peira* in more detail in chapter 2. M. Angold, *The Byzantine empire 1025 – 1204, a political history* (London and New York 1984) 64.

<sup>76</sup> Brand, ‘Two Byzantine treatises on taxation’, 50.

<sup>77</sup> R. Morris, ‘Monastic exemptions’ in: *PPEM*, 205.

know for sure since there are no lay-archives available such as the monastic archives.<sup>78</sup> From what little evidence we have it appears that these properties were mostly being established on the Balkans rather than the Eastern part of the empire perhaps more importantly in contrast to Anatolia most of these properties were near cities and on land suitable for agriculture.<sup>79</sup> It is an alluring conclusion that these properties were being bought by the *nouveaux riches*, who were wealthy merchants or artisans, or owned their wealth to employment in Constantinople which they invested in land. Indeed the widow Danielis was said to have a flourishing carpet and textile industry. But unlike their Anatolian counterparts their properties must have remained (at least during the tenth century) fairly small with only a few exceptions (once again the widow Danielis if the sources are to be believed). Whatever may be the case it seems unlikely the land legislation was aimed at this newer group of land-owners, but rather those *dynatoi* of the Anatolian plateau.

The state seems to have been unable to dislodge the *dynatoi* on the Anatolian plateau, only when they threatened to expand their property into fertile areas was the state able to act and restrain them from such moves, as was the case following the famine of 928. Therefore one could say that the early legislation was primarily an economic measure. There was also a social aspect which can be seen when looking at the career of John Kourkouas.

John Kourkouas had been Romanos closest ally and general for 22 years, he was the general that successfully led the siege of Melitene adding it to the empire in 934. In 944 he led the siege of Edessa and received the *mandylion* (a holy relic of great significance for the Orthodox faith), sending it to Constantinople. The Kourkouas family was a typical Anatolian military family, they owed land there and were closely related to the other great families of Anatolia, the Phokai and Skleroi.<sup>80</sup> John Kourkouas career shows how the great families of Anatolia became so important for the military in the East, something that foreshadows the emperors Nikephoros II Phokas and John I Tzimiskes. At the same time it shows the power of the state and in particular that of the ruling emperor. While Romanos I Lekapenos was in power John Kourkouas was his chosen general, which reaped great rewards for the empire and for the Kourkouas family. Just before Romanos I Lekapenos was disposed by his sons Stephen and Constantine they made sure their father dismissed John Kourkouas since he certainly had the prestige and the loyalty of the army.<sup>81</sup> This move showed how easily anyone, no matter how popular, could be removed from office, and it highlights the power the Byzantine emperors had.

---

<sup>78</sup> Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 190 – 191.

<sup>79</sup> Hendy, *Studies*, 85 – 90.

<sup>80</sup> L. Andriollo, 'Les Kourkouas (IXe-XIe siècle)' in: J.C. Cheynet, C. Sode, *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* 11 (Berlin 2012) 57–88.

<sup>81</sup> Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, 276 – 278. Howard-Johnston, 'Crownlands' in: *BF*, 86 – 87.

## Conclusion

In this chapter the true beginnings of the struggle between the state and the *dynatoi*, represented by two groups, the church and the lay aristocracy have become clear, through the sources of the land legislation of the Macedonian emperors. Though some doubt may be cast on the authenticity of the first novel written during the time of Leo VI it is beyond doubt that novel B and C written during the time of Romanos I Lekapenos dealt with a real problem in Byzantine society. They are also the first to name the *dynatoi* and explain who these people were and what seemed to be at stake. Novel B describes them basically as anyone who can exercise influence and intimidate sellers, novel C explains in some more detail that those who hold a position with the central government, civil, military or ecclesiastical are to be considered *dynatoi*. This group had real power as part of the government but they also gained power through the *rogai* system which made sure they received a salary of gold and the various other gifts that came with official positions in Constantinople.

The main reason behind the legislation seems to have been the great famine of 927 and 928 when small farmers were being coerced into selling their property below their value to richer landowners. However on closer inspection there seems to have been more in play than just the fate of small land owning farmers. The *dynatoi* were mostly located on the Anatolian plateau which was in fiscal terms one of the least important areas in the empire. It was not suited for agriculture and Arab raids were a constant threat. Any privileges given to this group would have meant little in economic terms since land was taxed based on its quality (which was low on the Anatolian plateau). It is unfortunate that lay archives cannot be researched and therefore, it is unclear how frequent privileges were granted to lay land owners. However there seems little doubt from the wording of the fiscal treatise and proof from the late eleventh century that *logisma* was also granted to these lay land owners, even if ecclesiastical institutions were the more frequent recipients of these privileges.

The struggle between the state and the *dynatoi* was beginning to take shape when *dynatoi* began to encroach upon more fertile land near the river valleys and coastal plains of, mostly, Asia minor. This situation was obviously aggravated by the famine of 927/928 and seems to have spurred Romanos I Lekapenos into action. Apart from the legislation that was meant to keep the *dynatoi* on the Anatolian plateau Romanos I Lekapenos developed a policy to make sure newly conquered lands did not fall into the hands of *dynatoi* but rather were transformed in a *kouratoreia*. This policy had the added benefit that this state land generated revenue for the emperor and could be given to certain chosen servants as a reward. This gave the state great flexibility, since new aristocratic families could be settled near the old families and act as a counter balance.

The monastic archives give a better view on both privileges and land ownership than the lay archives. After the defeat of iconoclasm in 843 monasteries became greatly privileged. The protection

and the welfare of monasteries had always been a prerogative of the imperial office. The system of privileges and donations seems to have changed during the reign of Leo VI and taking on a more fiscal aspect. Monasteries no longer gained direct donations from the treasury but rather tax-exemptions or tax-revenues from villages. In terms of economic power this meant little as most monasteries were, or were being established, on low quality, inhospitable land. Even if they were exempted from the land tax (which is not certain) this would not have greatly affected the fisc.

A similar development can be seen with the lay aristocracy. Both church and the lay aristocracy *dynatoi* held limited economic significant land, during the early and mid tenth century, but great social significance as important parts of society. The state needed *dynatoi* to run its government effectively, certainly the military that was firmly in the hands of the Anatolian *dynatoi*. The centrality of the Orthodox faith in Byzantine society meant that ecclesiastical institutions would always have an important social role. The real danger came when the *dynatoi*, both lay and ecclesiastical, could expand their properties into fertile areas which would make them an economic threat since they were a privileged group. An added danger came from individual *dynatoi* who gained too great a prestige, much like John Kourkouas. These individual *dynatoi* were hard to counter since their power came from military conquest rather than wealth from land ownership. It took a strong emperor to restrain these military men, something that Romanos I Lekapenos certainly was.

## CHAPTER 2

### Land ownership in the period of the warrior emperors 959 - 1025

---

The second period corresponds with the rule of Romanos II, Nikephoros II Phokas, John I Tzimiskes and Basil II. These last three emperors are commonly known as the warrior emperors. Both Nikephoros II and John I were generals before becoming emperor, and therefore not strictly speaking part of the Macedonian dynasty.<sup>82</sup> All three emperors led successful campaigns both in the East and West, and their combined rule could be taken as the apogee of power for Byzantium, certainly on a militarily level. This period has been chosen as a separate period for this reason but also because this was the most active period in terms of land legislation. Between 959 and 996 eight novels were written (of which one is disputed) which is half of the total legislation in about thirty years. Novel O written by Basil II has attracted most attention by modern scholars, it goes beyond any of the legislation written prior to it and shows how powerful this emperor was. Apart from the land legislation we also possess an interesting source called the Peira. It was written by a follower of Eustathios Rhomaios who was a successful judge from 975 to 1034. It gives insight into the working of Byzantine legislation, what makes it especially interesting is that Eustathios had several cases where a *dynatos* tried to encroach upon the land of his neighbors. Of particular interest is to see what developments described in chapter 1 are being continued and how some of the most powerful emperors dealt with the growing problem posed by *dynatoi*.

In the year 1025 the empire was larger and more secure than ever before. With the newly conquered areas in Asia Minor, this larger area can be split up into three distinct economic areas. Firstly there was Western Asia Minor that had always been the richest part. It comprised of the fertile themes of Thrakesion and Bithynia and included port cities such as Smyrna, Strobilos and more distant Trebizond.<sup>83</sup> Secondly, the Anatolian plateau which, as mentioned earlier, was unsuited for arable agriculture and most of the economic activity revolved around herd raising and grazing. The few cities that did exist, like Caesarea or Ikonion, served either military functions or were inhabited by the local elite. Lastly the newly conquered cities of the East and those in Northern Syria. This land was fertile

---

<sup>82</sup> Nikephoros II and John I were generals before becoming emperor and therefore they were not strictly speaking part of the Macedonian dynasty. Both became guardians of the young Basil II and Constantine VIII. Nikephoros did so by marrying their mother Theophano, while John had a similar plan but was obstructed by the patriarch Polyeuktos who refused to coronate John unless he rid himself of those guilty in the murder of Nikephoros (who's place he had usurped). Skylitzes, *A synopsis of Byzantine history*, 250 – 251 and 272.

<sup>83</sup> Trebizond is said to have generated 72,000 nomismata annually in *kommerkion* during the tenth century (which was a 10% tax on trade), even though there is no way to verify the truth of this claim it still indicates great commercial activity around the city of Trebizond. Henty, *Studies*, 174.

and held many great (commercial) cities such as Antioch, Melitene and Tarsos. During the eleventh century the Armenian city of Ani and the Eastern city of Edessa were added.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> J.C. Cheynet, 'Basil II and Asia minor' in: P. Magdalino eds., *Byzantium in the year 1000 (BIY)* (Leiden and Boston 2003) 75.

I have included maps 2 through 5 for a more detailed picture of the East.

## State

Once again the land legislation written during this period will be analysed to see what conclusions can be drawn from them.

### **Novel (F) of Romanos II 959 – 963.**

Novel F of Romanos II was written by the *magistros* Theodore Dekapolites and has been dated to 960/961. In this novel Theodore writes to a thematic judge who has questions regarding the repayment of returned lands. There is a direct reference to novel D by Constantine VII and much of this novel is actual practical application of this novel. There is one major difference, the initial three years to reimburse the purchasing price has been extended to five years. This also applies to anyone selling with means below 50 nomismata (who were exempted in novel D). Unfortunately this novel does not survive; however there is a reference to it in novel F.<sup>85</sup>

### **Novels (H, J, K, L and M) of Nikephoros II Phokas 963 – 969.**

Nikephoros II Phokas came to the throne in 963 as a member of the most powerful family of Anatolia, the Phokai. He had been a successful general under his father Bardas Phokas whom he replaced after it became clear Bardas was not the man to lead the Byzantine armies in 954. Nikephoros led the Byzantine armies with great success and determination on campaigns in the East and retook the island of Crete after the failed attempts of 911 and 949. Hereby gaining the loyalty of the army and the love of the people.<sup>86</sup> Though it seemed unlikely Nikephoros would be the most active legislator in regard to the land legislation here under review, he was. As a member of the aristocracy it would have seemed more logical for him to expand its power and leading role in society. As it turned out by his many novels he restricted the power of *dynatoi*, religious foundations and expanded the legislation regarding the soldiers.

The first novel ascribed to Nikephoros II is novel H which is unique in the sense that it deals directly with the frontier zone. The frontier was much harder to control from Constantinople than the interior themes that had been Byzantine for many centuries. One of the most important frontier zones was in Armenia where the population was Christian, the local aristocracy esteemed and the population warlike. The subject of the importance of Armenia will be mentioned in the conclusion of this chapter. The first part of this novel aims to keep the Armenian soldiers in the Armenian theme. When Armenian *stratiotai* either desert or flee the Byzantine army they can only reclaim their land for three years instead of the thirty years decreed in earlier legislation (klastmatic land). If they do not return

---

<sup>85</sup> McGeer, *Land legislation*, 77 – 81.

<sup>86</sup> Treadgold, *A history of Byzantine state*, 487 – 498.

within three years the land will; “or to give them as a reward to valorous *stratiotai*”. It is also remarked that:

“For the instability and wandering of the Armenians will not be corrected unless by such legislation; were it in their power to go off to parts elsewhere and change dwelling, and come back once more to acquire properties without hindrance, all the Armenian theme would disappear”.<sup>87</sup>

However it is added that this law does not apply when the land has been:

“donated to the imperial monastery of Lakape, as you have written, or assigned to any curatories of any kind, or bestowed to one of the *dynatoi*, not because of public service but as a favour only”.<sup>88</sup>

As here the previously mentioned thirty years does apply, this means that this land is treated as klasmatic land rather than alienable military land described in novel E. This clearly indicates that in the frontier zone and the Armenian theme in particular, corruption was widespread and local officials could not be trusted. When these abandoned lands were given to the *dynatoi* by local officials and chrysobulls or certificates formulated, this gave it an air of legality. Nikephoros ruled that even with official documents the land has to be returned. Deserters to Syria were punished even harder as they would not receive their lands back even after one year, however it is also ruled that they would receive other lands. Here a contradiction can be seen between firm legislation and the need for soldiers in the frontier zone.

The last part of novel H deals with cases of homicide in the Armenian theme and rules that land (owned by *stratiotai*) cannot be given in compensation to the family of the murdered. It had to be settled before the law and immovable property has to be supplied.<sup>89</sup>

Nikephoros’s second novel (J) will be discussed in the sub chapter “church” down below since it directly deals with monasteries and charitable institutions.

The third novel K, seems to reverse the right of pre-emption by which the “poor” or “weak” had first rights on land that was for sale. It seems to come from complaints by the *dynatoi* that they were being discriminated against. Though there was no law strictly enforcing this division (novel B and C point in this direction but don’t codify this right) it would have meant that *dynatoi* had to give

---

<sup>87</sup> McGeer, *Land legislation*, 88.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibidem*, 88.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibidem*, 86 – 89.

rights of pre-emption to the neighbouring poor, which was not something they would agree with easily. At first Nikephoros led a sympathetic ear referring to himself (and referring to novel C) as:

“A just father who tends to all his children in equal measure, a scale of justice, a straight line and an accurate measuring rod, the Lord our God, unbiased, honoured not for inequity but for the care He exercises for all alike, created heaven and earth and the things contained therein for the sake of all.”

Even though Nikephoros' novel has traditionally been interpreted as a concession to the *dynatoi* Lemerle has pointed in the opposite direction. Its language may point towards equality for all, but in fact novel K divides the *dynatoi* and the weak/poor into two groups that were not allowed to buy land from one another. This would have been in the favour of the latter and punishment for any illegal or unjust seizures by *dynatoi* would remain very harsh.<sup>90</sup>

Nikephoros's fourth novel L is relatively short and has therefore often been explained as either an epitome or a clause upon the previous novel K. It tries to correct a wrong that relates to novel C where *dynatoi* are entitled to remove building materials from small parcels of land. It seems that many had indeed bought small parcels of land in village communities and build “at great expense for their construction, they have put up costly mansions of enormous size”.<sup>91</sup> As *dynatoi* were not allowed to expand their property these had to be returned to the original owners. Novel C had ruled that improvements upon land could either be sold or could be torn down. The first was not really an option as the returning villagers were very likely poor or had insufficient wealth to buy and maintain these mansions. This left *dynatoi* with little choice but to tear down these mansions. Nikephoros II deemed this unnecessary and ruled that *dynatoi* could keep these lands if they offered twice the purchase price or land double the value and size of the properties sold.<sup>92</sup> Lemerle has remarked that even if this seemed a concession to the *dynatoi* it was one at a very steep price and likely had a deterrent effect on future acquisitions of this sort.<sup>93</sup>

The last novel attributed to Nikephoros is a follow up on novel E of Constantine VII. Novel M also deals with the minimum inalienable land but revises the policy of novel E. The minimum set at 4 pounds of gold was to be kept in place but any surplus land could be sold and could not be reclaimed without reimbursing the buyer. This meant that land sold in good faith could not so easily be reclaimed and that military lands that were not in use could also be sold. Furthermore the minimum inalienable value of land was set at twelve rather than four pounds. This increase did not mean that the value of military lands was tripled; it is much more likely that the value was raised to prevent *stratiotai* from

---

<sup>90</sup> McGeer, *Land legislation*, 97 – 101 and Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 101 – 103.

<sup>91</sup> McGeer, *Land legislation*, 102 – 103.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibidem*, 102 – 103.

<sup>93</sup> Lemerle, *Agrarian history*, 135 – 136.

leaving their lands and make sure that military obligations were kept. Another factor was the increased use of heavy cavalry during the reign of Nikephoros. These were notoriously expensive to maintain and therefore required an increased minimum value of land.<sup>94</sup>

### **Novels (N and O) of Basil II 988 – 996**

The final stage of the land legislation of the Macedonian dynasty came during the reign of Basil II, often nicknamed “*Voulgartoktonos*” or Bulgarslayer, perhaps the most famous of Byzantine Emperors. For most Byzantinists his reign corresponds with the apogee of power for the Byzantine Empire. Indeed his legislation goes further than any we have seen so far but his rule has recently attracted much attention and has largely been rewritten.<sup>95</sup>

Novel N has attracted quite a lot of attention as being a forgery from the time of Isaac Komnenos (1057 – 1059) according to Svoronos, or not attributed to anyone in particular.<sup>96</sup> Its text seems very odd indeed compared to earlier legislation but mostly when compared to novel O that has never been questioned as authentic. The text is not only extremely short it is also vague and rather un-descriptive. We do find a reference to the abolishment of novel J of Nikephoros II in Skylitzes work, according to him it was John Tzimiskes who abolished the novel under direction of the patriarch Polyeuktos.

“On hearing this the patriarch ordered her to be ejected from the palace and sent to some island, Nikephoros’ murderers to be banished, and the bill by which Nikephoros sought to throw church affairs into disarray to be torn up.”<sup>97</sup>

It is however doubtful that John actually abolished the law as Skylitzes was notoriously negative towards the reign of Nikephoros. The issue has been taken up by John Philip Thomas who shows in his article that it is difficult to find evidence for either authenticity or forgery.<sup>98</sup> Whether authentic or not, in terms of contents novel N simply reverses novel J and now makes it legal again to endow monasteries and other religious houses.<sup>99</sup>

Novel O was written in 996 and its authenticity has never been doubted. It has often been seen as a response to the defeat of Bardas Skleros and Bardas Phokas, whose rebellions were put down in 989. Therefore this novel was meant to curb the power of aristocrats like Skleros and Phokas. Skylitzes provides some more background to this reading, as Basil was travelling through Cappadocia

---

<sup>94</sup>McGeer, *Land legislation*, 104 – 108.

<sup>95</sup> Especially thanks to two recent works that brought new insight: P. Stephenson, *The legend of Basil the Bulgar-Slayer* (Cambridge 2003) and C. Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976 – 1025)* (Oxford 2006).

<sup>96</sup>McGeer, *Land legislation*, 109.

<sup>97</sup>Skylitzes, *A synopsis of Byzantine history*, 272.

<sup>98</sup>J.P. Thomas, ‘A disputed Novel of Emperor Basil II’ in: *GRBS* 23 (1983) 273 – 283.

<sup>99</sup>McGeer, *Land legislation*, 109 – 110.

after a successful campaign in the East he and his army stop at the property of his magister Eustathios Maleinos. They were entertained there and received whatever they pleased. This vast richness provoked Basil to hold Eustathios captive in Constantinople and upon his death seizing his property. Basil then wrote the following decree:

“The emperor promulgated a law which restrained the powerful from augmenting their lands by the agglomeration of villages”.<sup>100</sup>

In terms of legislation novel O indeed goes beyond any of the novels previously written. Novel O recalls the tone of novel C by Romanos Lekapenos and in many ways resembles this novel written in 934. Whereas Romanos saw himself as a champion of the poor Basil goes one step further. Not only is he protecting the poor he is also protecting the imperial supremacy itself. Basil revokes the previously common 40 years rule during which time land could be reclaimed by the poor and extends it back to the time of famine in accordance with his great-grandfathers novel of 934 (which meant a period of nearly 70 years). To this he adds that chrysobulls held by *dynatoi*, with regard to boundaries, are not valid since they are often not observed by a government official (*asekretai*). Only when written up by the financial bureau or other confirmative legal documents can a chrysobull be used as evidence with regard to borders. In cases where state land is involved the treasury has the right to reclaim land stretching back to the time of Caesar Augustus (which would make this claim limitless). Apart from the harsh measures taken against *dynatoi* and their property novel O also deals with monastic and ecclesiastical properties as well as murder cases and market fairs. The tone and wording of this novel can be seen as a reflection of the bitterness and strict personality ascribed to Basil II. We can also see why Basil II is often seen as the apogee of Byzantine imperial power, both on and outside of the battlefield.<sup>101</sup>

The corruption of *dynatoi* can be seen in some cases in the Peira of Eustathios Rhomaios, which was written by one of his admiring pupils. There are two cases made against the *protospatharios* Romanos Skleros, one by a group of villagers and one by a group of monks. Both charged him with illegal acquisition of land. The villagers complained that they were forced to sell their land to Romanos Skleros who was aided by the local judge. Eustathios demanded proof from the villagers that this was indeed the case and, if so, Romanos had to return the lands.<sup>102</sup> Another case involved the church of Claudiopolis that tried to regain the land given to a local *patrikios* who was now deceased. Eustathios tried to protect the villagers, who were the successors of the *patrikios*, but in the end ruled in favor of the church which had to pay compensation. This case is later referred to in

---

<sup>100</sup> Skylitzes, *A synopsis of Byzantine history*, 322 -333.

<sup>101</sup> McGeer, *Land legislation*, 111 – 132.

<sup>102</sup> Kazhdan, *Change in Byzantine culture*, 147.

novel O because Eustathios tried to protect the villagers from a *dynatos* (in this case the church of Claudiopolis).<sup>103</sup>

The large bulk of written material shows that the policy first started by Romanos I Lekapenos was not abandoned towards the end of the tenth century. Not even by Nikephoros II who himself came from the greatest land owning family of the Anatolian plateau and was certainly a *dynatos* himself. Starting during the reign of Romanos II and continuing until 1025 the Byzantines greatly enhanced their empire. It was no longer an empire that was on the defense but rather one that was the predominant military force in the Eastern Mediterranean. Among newly conquered areas were those in Northern Syria with the great cities of Tarsos and Antioch. This area was fertile and rich and subsequently it was, much like Melitene in 934, converted to state land rather than becoming *klasmatic* land and being sold off.<sup>104</sup> Catharina Holmes calls attention to the fact that in the East the governmental structures were nowhere nearly as well developed as in the Byzantine heartland. Often cities and their surrounding area became “tribute states” where Constantinopolitan officials were intermediates between the state and the conquered area. These intermediates were often (Christian) locals such as Kouleïb and Oubeïdallah until Basil II was more secure in his reign and they were replaced by trusted officials from Constantinople like Nikephoros Ouranos who became “the one who rules the East”.<sup>105</sup> Even if some of these lands had a more tributary relationship with Constantinople it still meant that they were kept out of the hands of *dynatoi* since the land was not sold and benefited the state directly in the form of tribute or otherwise in taxes and produce. During Basil II’s rule the state itself actually began to compete for more and more land. These lands were then converted into estates owned by the state and worked by *paroikoi*, much like the monasteries and the lay aristocracy did.<sup>106</sup> This meant an obvious weakening of the independent farmer and the community as the backbone of the Byzantine taxation system. The process where *paroikoi* were settled on estates, whether in the hands of the state or others, must have been greatly assisted by the demographic growth during the tenth, eleventh and twelfth century.<sup>107</sup>

The policy of establishing estates in the East had another added benefit; this land could be handed out to loyal servants. In this case from the mid tenth to the mid eleventh century it was mostly royal houses of Armenia who came into the empire and were settled on the Eastern fringes of the Anatolian plateau. There they could act as a buffer and counterweight to the Anatolian magnates. Certainly the Armenian princes held great prestige and lineages that went back for centuries or longer. Because they were settled by the emperor they were also generally more loyal to him than to the local

---

<sup>103</sup> N. Oikonomides, ‘The Peira of Eustathios Romaïos, an abortive attempt to innovate in Byzantine law’, *FM VII* (Frankfurt 1986) 181.

<sup>104</sup> N. Oikonomides ‘The role of the state in the Byzantine economy’ in: *EHOB*, 1007.

<sup>105</sup> Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire*, 368 – 391.

<sup>106</sup> J. Lefort ‘The rural economy, Seventh-Twelfth centuries’ in: *EHOB*, 285 - 288.

<sup>107</sup> A.E. Laiou, C. Morrisson, *The economic history of Byzantium* (Cambridge 2007) 45 – 46.

aristocracy and were therefore not likely to form great alliances with the local aristocracy.<sup>108</sup> The case of the Armenian king Senek'erim/Seneqerim of Vaspurakan is well documented as he resolved to leave Vaspurakan in 1019 due to the appearance of the Seljuk Turks in the East. He gave his lands to Basil II. However, in return he wanted lands in the theme of Sebasteia, which were given to him. According to Matthew of Edessa he went there with "his whole household and people" which according to Artsruni the historian was around 14,000 people.<sup>109</sup> The only way such a vast amount of people could be settled anywhere was when state land or estates were relinquished to them. That this was a rather effective policy can be seen from the revolt of Nikephoros Phokas and Nikephoros Xiphias (1022). When David Artsruni played a role in their defeat, he was rewarded with additional land that was confiscated from the rebels.<sup>110</sup>

Much was done to strengthen the state during the period 959 – 1025 and indeed imperial authority had never been as high. Due to the security of their reign the emperors Nikephoros II, John I and Basil II could introduce unpopular taxation policies to cover the expenses of their campaigns. Nikephoros II introduced a new light weight coin later known as the *tertartera/tertarteron*. A coin that was only 4,13g. rather than the normal 4,5g.<sup>111</sup> In general one could say that the *tertarteron* was issued by the government as payment but it demanded its taxes in the heavier *histamenon*. That this system worked in the first place is remarkable as one would expect the *histamenon* to disappear once a smaller golden coin was introduced and used. This was however not the case and shows us the strength of the central government and the faith people had in it (voluntary or not).<sup>112</sup> Basil II introduced a new tax to pay for his Bulgarian campaigns, which Skylitzes calls *allelengyon*. It meant that *dynatoi* were to pay the taxes of those in their community who could not or had left the tax district.<sup>113</sup> The main goal of this tax was to prevent *dynatoi* from establishing autonomous tax-districts and thus escape the collective tax that was imposed on villages (*chorion*). Basil returned them within the existing tax-districts which led to widespread unhappiness among the *dynatoi* and especially the church.<sup>114</sup>

It is thus that during this period and especially during the reign of Basil II the emperors brought their full arsenal to the struggle. We have seen that the state legislated heavily and the land legislation was by itself both a weapon against the *dynatoi* and propaganda against them, in favour of the imperial office. At the same time the state made sure that *dynatoi* could not expand into newly

---

<sup>108</sup> Howard-Johnston, 'Crownlands' in: *BF*, 95 - 97.

<sup>109</sup> E.D. Dostourian, *Armenia and the Crusades tenth to twelfth century, The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa* (New York 1993) 45 – 46 and 296.

<sup>110</sup> W. Seibt, 'Die Eingliederung von Vaspurakan in das byzantinische Reich', *Handes Amsorya* 92 (1978) 59 – 60.

<sup>111</sup> P. Grierson, *Byzantine coins* (London 1982) 196.

<sup>112</sup> Hendy, *Studies*, 507.

<sup>113</sup> Skylitzes, *A synopsis of Byzantine history*, 329.

<sup>114</sup> Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 79.

conquered areas that were generally wealthy and fertile. This was done in two ways, the first was to turn land into state land and run it directly or through intermediates much like the *dynatoi* did themselves, the second was to establish a counterbalance in the form of Armenian royalty on the fringes of the Anatolian plateau. Lastly the emperors established certain fiscal laws that were to the benefit of the state and the detriment of the *dynatoi* which they could do because they put the weight of the imperial office behind them and the prestige of the Macedonian dynasty that was by then well established.

## Church

Chapter 1 showed that the church and especially the monasteries were becoming a greatly privileged group. This development did not stop during 959 – 1025, as a matter of fact the monasteries seem to have expanded their holdings greatly during this period. The areas in the Balkans and especially Macedonia had been unstable during the mid tenth century and during this period much land was sold as klasmatic land. This was a cheap way for monasteries to greatly enhance their holdings as klasmatic land was sold generally at a low rate. For example the sale of klasmatic land around Thessaloniki in 941, fifty *modioi* cost only 1 *nomismata*. The monastery of St. Andrews enlarged its property in the region of Kassandra by 1,800 *modioi* for which they only paid 36 *nomismata*.<sup>115</sup> Additionally the tax on klasmatic land once it had been bought was reduced to 1/12 of the original tax or in some exceptional cases to 1/24 for 15 years (after which it was raised to 1/12 permanently). The relative ease at which some monasteries expanded their land points out that they held great reserves of cash to buy these lands or could easily acquire them. Much of this cash came from the state itself through donations or the *rogai* system.

Even the legislation of Nikephoros II and Basil II could not stop this territorial growth as ecclesiastical institutions were notoriously difficult to restrain without angering the church and with that the populace and popular opinion. Their extensive privileges also gave them an edge over their lay counterparts.

The before mentioned novel J, which is quite famous as it deals with charitable institutes and monasteries, is the first novel of the land legislation to be directed against monastic expansion. Even during its time it was not a popular decision and it was most likely one of the reasons Skylitzes portrays Nikephoros II in a rather negative light. On the formation of this law he says:

“He even promulgated a law that churches were not to increase their real estate holdings, for (he wickedly alleged) the bishops were disposing of income which should be going to the poor and the soldiers were in need.”<sup>116</sup>

The portrayal and reasoning given by Skylitzes stand in contrast to what other sources say about Nikephoros. Leo the Deacon comments on his piety and his great respect for monks.<sup>117</sup> Novel J should be seen as a way to check the nearly limitless growth of some monasteries and ecclesiastical lands and the near ruin of many smaller monastic foundations. In addition the larger monasteries had great tracts of land and limited means to cultivate all of it. This meant losses in revenue for the fisc and the risk of

---

<sup>115</sup> Harvey, *Economic expansion*, 57 – 59.

<sup>116</sup> Skylitzes, *A synopsis of Byzantine history*, 263.

<sup>117</sup> Leo the Deacon, *The History of Leo the Deacon, Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century* (translated by: Alice-Mary Talbot and Denis F. Sullivan) (Washington D.C. 2005) 99.

encroachment upon this land. He adds that whenever someone wishes to maintain or support convents, monasteries or other charitable institutions they should do so not by providing them with land but rather with workers or livestock. This would help these religious institutions more since much of their land seemed to lay fallow and adding land would not help the situation.<sup>118</sup> Novel J also helped the favorite ideal of monastic life which was greatly preferred by the emperor and his spiritual mentor Athanasios.<sup>119</sup>

We also find in novel O an attempt to restrain the church in the form of bishops and metropolitans, the aim is not however to restrain the growth of monasteries. It seems that *dynatoi* could gain excess to local villages through bishops that granted them *charistike/charistikion* over small churches, chapels or monasteries.<sup>120</sup> These small monasteries came into possession of the bishops because a lay person would form, sometimes alone sometimes, in small groups, a communal monastery with a small church and live out their days there. Once they died the land would come under the authority of the local bishop or metropolitan, who could then grant it through *charistike* to another *dynatos*. Basil II ignored novel J of Nikephoros II Phokas, which was most likely the case with all emperors following Nikephoros II. Basil II simply establishes that these small churches were not monasteries but rather village chapels, over whom the bishop had no authority other than spiritual. Basil II makes no attempt to restrain the growth of monasteries, he simply does not want lay *dynatoi* to gain a foothold in the village community.<sup>121</sup> Another fact this clause in novel O highlights is the close relation between lay *archontes* and church *archontes*, who were both counted as *dynatoi*, especially bishops and metropolitans who were mostly from the same milieu as their lay counterparts.

The growth of monasteries in land and privileges can be seen in certain illuminating examples; Romanos II gave the convent of Kolobou a grant of forty *ateleis paroikoi* to compensate the monastery for the loss of lands at the hands of the Bulgar Slavs in Hierissos.<sup>122</sup> Basil II granted the Georgian general and monk Tornikios the monastery of Kolobou in 979/980. The monastery of Kolobou was moved to two other monasteries (one in Constantiople and one in Trebizond). Tornikios subsequently founded a monastery at Mount Athos which was known as “of the Iberians or Iveron”. The land it owned was vast – 80,000 modioi (10,000ha), they were also granted the right to settle 200 *paroikoi* on this land.<sup>123</sup> Apart from imperial grants the Lavra of Mount Athos also received new lands from

---

<sup>118</sup> Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 108 – 109. On the cultivation of monastic lands see: Morris, *Monks and laymen*, chapter 8 and Harvey, *Economic expansion*, chapter 4.

<sup>119</sup> P. Charanis, ‘The Monastic Properties and the State in the Byzantine Empire’ in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 4 (1948) 51 and 53 -118 there: 55 – 61. The text is also printed in McGeer, *Land legislation*, 90 – 96.

<sup>120</sup> *Charistike/charistikion* was an arrangement where a lay person gained the management and financial exploitation of ecclesiastical land.

<sup>121</sup> McGeer, *Land legislation*, 122 – 126.

<sup>122</sup> Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 166 – 167.

<sup>123</sup> J. Lefort ‘The rural economy, Seventh-Twelfth centuries’ in: *EHOB*, 287.

secular land owners. Constantine and Maria Lagoudes endowed the lavra with their possessions in 1014. In 1016 the Lavra received the island of Skiros from the widow of John the Koubouklesios.<sup>124</sup>

However at the same time it should be noted that the growth of the monasteries (both in property and privileges) was in a way limited to a few, already highly privileged and rich houses of which the lavra of Mount Athos is the most well-known example. We can see this reflected in novel J of Nikephoros II Phokas who tried to protect smaller monasteries from the few very large monasteries. This meant a distinct parallel between the ecclesiastical and lay *dynatoi*, the problem for the state was not the smaller land owners (even if they were technically *dynatoi*) but rather the very large and very rich. The trend amongst these great monasteries was much the same as with the lay *dynatoi* or the state, they increasingly tried to extend their holdings and turn them into estates worked by *paroikoi*. We can see this reflected in some documents from Mount Athos that show that both in 974 and 975 high officials tried to reclaim any *stratiotes* and *demosiary prosodiaris* who had fled to monastic or lay property. They would have to be restored to the service of John I Tzimiskes, those that were exempted (*ateleis*) would remain with the convent and all of them were drawn up once again by the officials.<sup>125</sup> This shows that monasteries were free to form these estates as long as they did not entice those owing service to the state, most importantly soldiers.

---

<sup>124</sup> Kazhdan, *Change in Byzantine culture*, 57.

<sup>125</sup> Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 167 – 168.

## Aristocracy

In chapter 1 it became clear who these lay *dynatoi* families were and where their powerbase was located. During the great conquests of the tenth century we see these families in a very prominent role since they were mostly military men. Two scions of *dynatoi* families became emperors themselves, Nikephoros II Phokas and his cousin John I Tzimiskes. However we have also seen in this chapter that the power of the state increased during this period, helped by prestige gained from military conquest and the loyalty people felt to the Macedonian dynasty. Basil II has often been seen as the mortal enemy of the Anatolian *dynatoi* families and as the one who broke their power for the coming decades. Here the continuing relation between the state and the lay aristocracy and the effects, if any, of much of the policies will be discussed.

During this period we find a very clear reference to the wealth that employment in the state could bring and how someone might use that to acquire vast amounts of land. The first example should not be taken as a typical example since the man in question, the eunuch Basil the *Parakoimomenos*, had an exceptional position within the workings of government.<sup>126</sup> Though his case is most likely an exception it nevertheless shows the increased interest in acquiring lands and getting privileges to reduce the tax upon these lands. It is said in Skylitzes that John I Tzimiskes returned from a military campaign and came through the region around Anazarbos (a city near Northern Syria which was on the way back to Constantinople). There he saw affluent estates and learnt that all this land belonged to Basil the *Parakoimomenos*. Most of this land was conquered by Nikephoros II and John I themselves; it was however not turned into state estates but rather into estates owned privately by Basil the *Parakoimomenos*.<sup>127</sup> This was not done by acquiring klasmatic land but rather through corruption. In the end Basil the *Parakoimomenos* was exiled by Basil II in 985 and his property confiscated. Another example comes from the reign of Basil II when one Philokales became *hebdomadarios*, then *koitonites* and finally *prôtovestiaros*<sup>128</sup> and used his new position (and the *roga* that came with it) to acquire his native village, which he turned into his own private estate. This caught the eye of Basil II and he was deprived of his illegal acquisitions, his dwelling and, one can assume, from his fine position.<sup>129</sup> This

---

<sup>126</sup> Basil the Parakoimomenos or Basil the Nothos was the illegitimate offspring of Romanos I Lekapenos and a woman of Slavic origin; he had been a eunuch since childhood and held important governmental positions through the reign of most emperors from Constantine VII to Basil II. His real rise to power came when he administered the empire for the young Basil II.

A. Kazhdan, A. Cutler, "Basil the Nothos" in: *ODB*.

<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195046526.001.0001/acref-9780195046526-e-0683>.

<sup>127</sup> Skylitzes, *A synopsis of Byzantine history*, 295 – 296.

<sup>128</sup> *Hebdomadarios* (attendant at imperial banquets), *koitonites* (courtier serving in the emperor's bedchamber) and *prôtovestiaros* (keeper of the imperial wardrobe and one of the highest functionaries at court).

<sup>129</sup> McGeer, *Land legislation*, 118 – 199.

example again shows someone who climbed the social ladder from small origins and once employed to a high position (which *prôtovestiaros* and *parakoimomenos* were) used the power, influence and money that came with the office to acquire land, mostly in ways prohibited by the land legislation. The last example is of a typical Anatolian magnate, Eustathios Maleinos. The Maleinos family was a military family with close relations to the Phokas family; they held considerable land in Cappadocia and were counted among the richest magnate families within the empire. When Basil II was travelling through Cappadocia with his army he, and his army, were entertained by Eustathios Maleinos. They received: “whatever they needed without counting the cost”, which is extraordinary taking into account that this was an imperial procession with an army. This spurred Basil II into action; the fact that Eustathios Maleinos had supported Bardas Phokas in his rebellion did not help his case.<sup>130</sup> Basil II put Eustathios under house arrest in Constantinople until he died. His estates were confiscated by the state after his death. Skylitzes gives this particular episode as the reason for formulating novel O of the land legislation.<sup>131</sup>

Some conclusions can be drawn from these three examples that deal with different types of lay *dynatoi*, a eunuch of imperial descent, a newly promoted high dignitary and a wealthy Anatolian magnate. In the end all three were deprived of their estates, their wealth and their position, not coincidentally all by Basil II. That an emperor could do so tells us something of the great power the state and the emperor had well until the end of the tenth century. These examples also show a great interest in acquiring land, even if that meant doing it illegally. On the other hand there was also a risk which can be seen from Philokales who went too far in acquiring his native village in clear violation of the land legislation. It was then quiet easy for the emperor to step in; this process was greatly facilitated by novel O which gave the emperor and the fisc nearly limitless power to research any privilege or any acquisition. As Catherine Holmes argues, novel O should not be seen as a measure to purely restrict the *dynatoi* of the Anatolian plateau, but rather as a specific weapon which enabled Basil II to secure his own rule and his holding on imperial power.<sup>132</sup>

It is essential to take a look at important events that took place during the period 959 – 1025, and particularly the two rebellions during the reign of Basil II. These have often been seen as the climax in the struggle between the *dynatoi* and the state.

The period of 969 (when John I Tzimiskes became emperor) to 1000 was marked by three rebellions, two by Bardas Phokas and one by Bardas Skleros. Bardas Phokas first revolt was a reaction against the murder of his uncle Nikephoros as well as the blinding of his father, Leo Phokas (brother

---

<sup>130</sup> More details on this rebellion are given below.

<sup>131</sup> Skylitzes, *A synopsis of Byzantine history*, 322 – 323.

<sup>132</sup> Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire*, 461 – 475. She specifically mentions the effort of Basil II to rid the government of the influence of Basil the *Parakoimomenos*, which was a prime reason for drafting novel O. It should be noted that even if this was the cause the effect was a great strengthening of imperial power overall.

to Nikephoros) and his own brother by John I Tzimiskes. His rebellion gained great support in the East where the Phokas family was powerful and popular. Tzimiskes realised that this was a serious and dangerous rebellion and sent Bardas Skleros with an army to persuade Bardas Phokas to halt his rebellion. This was accomplished quite easily as most of the leaders deserted Phokas overnight, lured by promises of position and gold. In the end Bardas Phokas fled and surrendered, he was then tonsured and sent to Chios in exile.<sup>133</sup> This rebellion once again shows the allure of central employment or high positions in Constantinople and the prestige and income that would generate.

The rebellion of Bardas Skleros and later Bardas Phokas (again) were during the reign of Basil II. Bardas Skleros was the first to rebel and after some success in the East Basil II appointed Bardas Phokas (released from his vows at Chios) to lead an army against Skleros.<sup>134</sup> They met in single combat (24<sup>th</sup> of March 979 at a site called Pancalia) Skleros was defeated, shamed and fled to Baghdad. At first Bardas Phokas returned triumphant to Constantinople and remained within the inner circle of Basil II. He felt neglected which is most likely true and he did not receive the honours that were promised him. He therefore started a new revolt and attracted an army bigger than anything Basil II could muster. Bardas Skleros joined Phokas and they divided the rule of the empire in a Western and Eastern half (Phokas was not to honour their agreement and eventually imprisoned Skleros). Basil II was then faced with an even bigger rebellious army and engaged the help of Vladimir of Kiev who agreed to supply 6000 soldiers (the later Varangian guard) in exchange for the hand of Anna (Basil's sister) in marriage. Vladimir was baptised and the Rus would remain under heavy influence from Constantinople ever after. The imperial and rebellious army met in 989 at Abydos where the emperor was victorious (Bardas Phokas was most likely poisoned and fell dead from his horse during battle his funeral is depicted on the cover page).<sup>135</sup>

It would have been a logical consequence that both the Phokas and Skleros families lost their fortune after these revolts and that their lands would be confiscated. This is not entirely the case. The Skleros family regained their estates after the rebellion, they also regained public offices Bardas Skleros even received the title of *kouropalates* himself. The Phokas family was punished more severely but they and their allies were not wiped out. Nikephoros (Bardas Phokas' son) was given new land once his father was defeated and eventually he rose to the position of *patrikios*. Other allies like Eustharios Maleinos kept their possessions for the time being, Leo Melissenos was given a military command.<sup>136</sup> Nowhere does it appear that Basil's goal was to crush the military aristocracy or deprive

---

<sup>133</sup> Leo the Deacon, *The History of Leo the Deacon*, 162 – 173.

<sup>134</sup> This shows a conscience policy by emperors to pit great military aristocrats against one another, first to use Bardas Skleros to oppose Bardas Phokas, then reversing their role when Bardas Skleros rebelled. It also shows the willingness of these same aristocrats to co-operate with the central government as long as they were promised positions or could regain imperial favour.

<sup>135</sup> M. Psellus, *Fourteen Byzantine rulers* (translated by: E.R.A. Sewter) (Penguin Classics 1966) 30 – 37.

<sup>136</sup> Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire*, 465 – 466.

them of their positions altogether. He promoted those he needed for their military expertise but, at the same time, made sure the military aristocracy was aware that they could be brought down as well.

## Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen the development of the relationship between the *dynatoi* and the state during the period of great expansion of the empire. This period has often been seen as the apex of imperial power, certainly by 1025 the empire was larger, richer and safer than it had been since Justinian's time in the sixth century. For many aristocratic families this was a period when they held a monopoly on certain positions, for example the Phokas family on military commands in the East. This meant a dependency upon one another; the state needed the aristocratic families to run state affairs while aristocratic families were dependent on the state for positions and the wealth these brought.

One can see this clearly in contested areas, especially around the border. These lands were far from Constantinople and the emperor had to rely on civil servants to administer them. Special interest went to these newly conquered areas and the state used three weapons to defend them from encroachment. Firstly they used the land legislation; Romanos I was the first to bar *dynatoi* from land directly. During his reign major offensives had been successful and Melitene, an important centre for the Arab Jihad, was conquered. Nikephoros II and Basil II went even further in their legislation and during their reign more land was conquered. From Basil II's time we learn how he used the land legislation to favour certain families and deprive (mostly temporally) some families from their land and position. Though source material lacks it is very likely the land legislation was used before the time of Basil II to bar *dynatoi* from certain areas. Secondly the emperors brought newly conquered land into their own sphere of influence by making it state or crown land and have an *episkeptitai* run it directly as an estate rather than selling the land. Thirdly the Armenian princely houses were used to form a buffer between the traditional *dynatoi* families and the state. They were granted land along the border which was meant to ensure their loyalty to the state. This strongly suggests that the land legislation was aimed at protecting newly conquered lands.

The fertile coastal strips of Asia Minor were never really infiltrated by the powerful families as they stayed mainly on the Anatolian plateau where population and villages were scarce. The nature of the plateau also meant that it was harder to gain enormous profits (unless large tracts of land were owned) as agriculture was nearly impossible and "ranching" was the only economically valid way of living. This meant that only a small group could secure a position of true (local) power and we see that reflected in some of the greatest families of the Macedonian period. For positions they were still dependent on the emperor which meant that the emperor could play out one family against the other and this is precisely what we see in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

The first novel to stand out in this regard is Novel C by Romanos I Lekapenos. He clearly invokes the image of the emperor as God's chosen to defend the poor, both from external as internal threats. Nikephoros II notes the role of the emperor on earth, to model his reign on that of God in

Heaven (novel K). Though his rhetoric is less striking than that of Romanos I it is still full of biblical quotations in order to legitimise his arguments, this is especially true for novel J where he restricts the growth of monasteries. Finally Basil II uses both imperial virtue but also the virtue of his grandfather Romanos I as reasoning behind his novel O. A special emphasis is placed upon the divine right by which he ruled.

“Whereas our Majesty, from the time he received imperial authority by the grace of God”.<sup>137</sup>

Something very similar can be said about monastic lands and other ecclesiastical institutions. Even though they were not as dependent upon the state for their positions as the lay aristocracy, their privileges and exemptions came solely from imperial benefaction. Much like the state or their lay counterparts; monasteries also strove to create estates that were guarded by privileges to exempt them from certain taxes and have *paroikoi* work the fields. As a whole they were harder to legislate since monasteries held such a high standing in Byzantine society. Until 1025 their properties certainly expanded as did their wealth, however one should be careful not to overestimate their economic prominence. Many of the sources available only deal with the few, very privileged, very wealthy monasteries like Mount Athos; they were certainly able to expand their territory and use their connections at court to gain far reaching privileges. Secular land owners also left considerable land to them as part of their wills. It is less certain how smaller monasteries with only a few monks fared, much less how great their privileges were. Novel O showed that many small monasteries were absorbed by local bishops or metropolitans and afterwards the management would be given to lay aristocrats through *charistikion*. This process was the least legislated against; only Nikephoros II tried something similar against monasteries. His novel J was infamous since it tried to protect smaller monasteries and prohibit larger monasteries from acquiring more land which they could not work. His novel was unsuccessful and it seems unlikely it was ever enforced by any of his successors.

---

<sup>137</sup> McGeer, *Land legislation*, 114.

## CHAPTER 3

### The changing State and the *Dynatoi* 1025 – 1071

---

The conquests made by the Byzantines during the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and especially by the last three emperors, would be the last conquests made for a long time. Haldon estimates the total number of soldiers during the 10<sup>th</sup> century to have been around 110,000.<sup>138</sup> This number would be brought down during the 11<sup>th</sup> century as emperors after Basil II preferred to use diplomacy, tribute and intimidation rather than military strength. During the reign of Basil II buffer states were created to stabilize the borders, which would be part of the policy followed by his successors. The army slowly moved away from the thematic organisation and became a local undertaking. This meant that larger threats could only be countered from Constantinople.<sup>139</sup> There was a realisation among the 11<sup>th</sup> century emperors that an army the size of Basil II's army was too expensive to maintain on a permanent basis and preference was given to mercenaries who could be maintained for shorter periods of time without the additional training cost. We get a glimpse of the state of the army just before the battle of Manzikert (1071) which was a decisive defeat for the Byzantines.<sup>140</sup> John Zonaras comments that: "It was not easy to give strength to the army, which had been neglected for such a long time". A few lines down he also writes that the Sultan was fearful of the Roman army, especially since it was led by the emperor in person, which gives the impression that the Roman army was not in such a deplorable state as has been assumed.<sup>141</sup>

A major economic theme during the eleventh century that affected the state and the aristocracy was certainly the debasement of the (golden) coinage and changes in the tax system. Both had great effects for the state economy however more importantly they were intertwined and had numerous side effects. The simple need for more money in order to pay expenses, both civil and military, was a problem seen before and debasement had not been the solution or preferred method then. The solution often preferred and used by emperors was to simply cut expenses of either the military or civil apparatus. This was done by Heraklios, Isaac I, Nikephoros III, Alexios I and Andronikos II. A more drastic alternative lay in confiscation, either from the populace or the Church, the latter being used by

---

<sup>138</sup> Haldon, *Warfare state and society in the Byzantine world 565 - 1204* (London and New York 1999) 103.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibidem*, 223.

<sup>140</sup> Even though the battle was lost it was not the great defeat many historians have made of it. Only a part of the army was lost and Romanos IV Diogenes who was leading the army was captured and soon released by the Sultan. For more details see: J. Haldon, *The Byzantine wars* (Tempus 2001) 168 – 181.

<sup>141</sup> Giovanni Zonara, 'La tragedia di Manzikert' in: U. Albin and E.V. Maltese, *Bisanzio nella sua letteratura* (Milan 2004) 406 – 407.

Isaac I and Michael VII in the period here discussed. Michael IV was the first emperor to debase his coinage (a 4% loss in gold content) and while he had the previously mentioned alternatives available he did not use them, but rather resorted to debasement. He might have been familiar with the practice through his profession as money-changer. The rapid debasement was stopped when Alexios I came to power in 1081 and had military successes on all fronts, reformed the coinage, restructured the financial administration and reformed the tax system.<sup>142</sup> This chapter will describe not only the debasement but also the combination with newer forms of taxation and how that effected the relation between the aristocracy and the state.

The empire was slowly changing, both socially and economically, with lineage and family name regaining importance from the year 1000.<sup>143</sup> The economy was also still expanding, a process that accelerated during the eleventh century when economic growth was coupled with demographic growth. Harvey has convincingly argued that the great benefactors of this demographic growth were the land owners.<sup>144</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> Hendy, *Studies*, 231 – 235.

<sup>143</sup> A. Kazhdan, 'State, Feudal, and Private Economy in Byzantium' in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993) 94.

<sup>144</sup> Harvey, *Economic expansion*.

## State

With the end of Basil II's reign there is also an end to land legislation as far as we know. It seems unlikely that stricter laws were written and enacted when looking at the policy of many of the eleventh century emperors. On the other hand it seems even more unlikely that legislation was not used when it suited the emperor or his administration. Some novels even have two (known) versions that were re-written during the eleventh century. This is true for Novels C and O in particular. Svoronos places both of these second editions to the end of the eleventh century. Among the differences are the names of certain families or individuals that serve as examples these being, the Phokai, Maleinoi and Mouselai.<sup>145</sup> Even though there is no certainty when the second versions were written one can say that the inclusion of these families as great offenders is remarkable as they had lost most, if not all, of their power by the mid eleventh century. This sent a message to other powerful families, if these families could be restrained yours could be as well. Even if the state no longer had the power it had during the reign of Basil II the land legislation was still a valuable piece of propaganda. However it should also be noted that the insertion of new text also included texts that actually helped magnates to gain more land. This is especially the case in novel C of Romanos I where the right of *protimesis* is expanded which reinserted the acquisition of kismatic lands through the ten-year prescription.<sup>146</sup> The notorious novel N which abolished novel J of Nikephoros II Phokas was probably a forgery from the same period (second half of the eleventh century). The abolishment of this novel gave monastic and charitable institutions a free hand in acquiring more land, something that was certainly happening in the later eleventh century.

Other traces of the land legislation can be found in the histories, like Psellos or Skylitzes, however most are favorable to the *dynatoi* rather than opposing them. Romanos III Argyros (1028 – 1034) abolished a law that was written by Basil II concerning something called *allelengyon* by Skylitzes. Its function was to return great landowners to existing fiscal units so that they could not escape the shared fiscal obligation active in village communities, rather than function autonomously and creating their own fiscal unit. That this measure was unpopular with the great landowners and perhaps more importantly, the church, is evident. Romanos lent them a sympathetic ear and abolished this law.<sup>147</sup>

Another measure connected with the land legislation was taken by Constantine IX Monomachos, the establishment of the *epi ton kriseon*, who was a legal functionary in the provinces. According to Attaleiates: 'He also founded a bureau for private legal cases, calling its overseer *epi ton*

---

<sup>145</sup> Svoronos, *Les nouvelles des Empereurs Macédoniens*, 190 – 198.

<sup>146</sup> Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 202 – 203.

<sup>147</sup> Skylitzes, *A synopsis of Byzantine history*, 354 and Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 79.

*kriseon*. Provincial judges were to set their verdicts down in writing and deposit copies of them with this bureau, in order to be free of all suspicion'.<sup>148</sup> The function of this bureau was to assist the local judges with their legal proceedings as their legal knowledge was likely very poor. This was especially needed since the role of the judge was becoming increasingly important in the provinces as they began to replace the military governor as the main civil administrators. In the provinces this meant that they had a great degree of freedom and independence since they were far removed from the central government in Constantinople. By establishing a bureau headed by the *epi ton kriseon* the central government gained a more direct control over the provincial judges and an increased influence over the administration of the provinces.<sup>149</sup>

As stated before Michael IV was the first emperor who debased his coinage, a process that continued until the Komnenian reform of 1091. During the reign of Constantine IX we see the first significant debasement, with coins of 18 carats from the latter part of his rule.<sup>150</sup> Modern day historians have two main explanations. The first being that of a fiscal disaster (mostly linked to military defeat) and subsequent emergency debasements to increase the state's ability to spend. The second is that of "expansionism" which states that debasement was an effect of the expanding economy, more coins were needed for use in the market.

Costas Kaplanis has recently argued that the debasement first started under Constantine IX and was a response to the Pecheneg invasion in 1046/1047. The general debasement up to that point was hardly noticeable and was conducted over a period of nearly a hundred years. The severity of the Pecheneg invasion has up to this point been underestimated; it left the empire bankrupt and vulnerable to invasions in the East (which indeed then happened under the Seljuk Turks).<sup>151</sup> Kaplanis' reasoning is a realistic explanation, one backed up by Hendy, Angold and to some extent Harvey.<sup>152</sup> One need not assume an advanced economical knowledge in the Byzantine Empire.

The expansionist explanation was first put forward by Morrison and is supported by Oikonomides and Lemerle.<sup>153</sup> It describes the debasement as a method of increasing coins in circulation (with a lower gold content so more coins can be struck) in order to meet economic growth. One of the key arguments is that the debasement was gradual and was not really noticed by

---

<sup>148</sup> M. Attaleiates, *The History* (translated by A. Kaldellis and D. Krallis) (Cambridge 2012) 36 – 37.

<sup>149</sup> Angold, *The Byzantine empire*, 39 – 40.

<sup>150</sup> Hendy, *Studies*, 509.

<sup>151</sup> C. Kaplanis, 'The Debasement of the "Dollar of the Middle Ages"' in: *The Journal of Economic History* 63 3 (2003) 768 – 801.

<sup>152</sup> Hendy, *Studies*, 233 – 237, Angold, *The Byzantine empire*, 80 -84 and Harvey, *Economic expansion*, 89 (specifically note 42).

<sup>153</sup> C. Morrisson, 'La dévaluation de la monnaie byzantine au XI siècle: Essai d'interprétation' in: *Travaux et mémoires* 6 (1976). ; N. Oikonomides, 'The role of the Byzantine state in the economy' in: *EHOB. Lemerle, Agrarian History*.

contemporaries. It is not until the 1070's that we see a rapid debasement that was certainly linked to crisis (following the loss of Bari in 1071, the defeat of Manzikert and the internal chaos that followed).<sup>154</sup> Though the expansionist view is rather sophisticated and for it to work a lot has to be assumed concerning demographics, increase in trade and economic expansion can be seen in a broader context, as Oikonomides has done.<sup>155</sup> He shows that the need for gold (mostly in coins) was not something that first started *after* 1046/1047, when we assume the first debasement was made in reaction to the Pecheneg wars. The *Peira* shows an increase in interest rates, certainly before 1045, from 6% to 8,33% which is an indication that money was in short supply. Though not necessarily linked with the increased interest rate, the return of investment on honorary titles decreased, due to a price increase. For example the title of *protospatharios* now cost 20 *litrai* of gold instead of 18.<sup>156</sup> Constantine IX Monomachos and Constantine X Doukas opened the doors of the senate for the “*nouveaux riches*”. Psellos notes during the reign of Constantine IX:

“The doors of the Senate were thrown open to nearly all the rascally vagabonds of the market, and the honor was bestowed not on two or three, nor on a mere handful, but the whole gang was elevated to the highest offices of state by a single decree, immediately after he became emperor.”<sup>157</sup>

And on the reign of Constantine X:

“The government officials, their deputies, the minor dignitaries, even the manual workers, all received something. In the case of the last-named, he actually raised their social status. Until his time there had been a sharp distinction between the class of ordinary citizens and the Senate, but Constantine did away with it. Henceforth no discrimination was made between worker and Senator, and they were merged in one body.”<sup>158</sup>

This new influx of senators generated revenue for the treasury as they indubitably had to buy their offices and high honors. It also shows that honors at court were still very much in demand and popular even if it was unlikely you would regain your investment. New capital was found as these new

---

<sup>154</sup> C. Morrisson, ‘Byzantine money’ in: *EHOB*, 944.

<sup>155</sup> Mainly in his; N. Oikonomides, ‘The role of the Byzantine state in the economy’ in: *EHOB*.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibidem*, 1020 – 1021.

<sup>157</sup> Psellus, *Fourteen Byzantine rulers*, 170 - 171.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibidem*, 338.

senators had been outside of the *rogai* system, but the social fabric of court was also affected.<sup>159</sup> The opening of the senate has mostly been explained in a fiscal sense, which was undoubtedly the main reason behind it, it can however also be seen in a political sense. By opening the senate to groups that had previously been banned from participation in the political elite both emperors created a new aristocracy of *nouveaux riches*. But perhaps more importantly these new senators were representatives of the increasingly richer people of Constantinople rather than cultured courtiers or provincial aristocracy. Michael V made the mistake of going against the wishes of the populace of Constantinople by banning Zoë and Theodora, the last living heirs of the Macedonian line and the nieces of Basil II. He even tried to ally himself with the people; his proclamation was read out loud at the forum of Constantine the Great to the citizens. He promised them: ‘as for you, my people, if you maintain your favorable disposition towards me, you will acquire great honours and benefits, living an untroubled life.’<sup>160</sup> The citizens were not impressed by these words and took offence that someone like Michael V (of relatively lowly birth) would oust the nieces of Basil II and last representatives of the Macedonian dynasty. They replied: ‘we don’t want a cross-trampling caulker for emperor, but the original and hereditary ruler: our mother Zoe!’<sup>161</sup> Constantine IX and X both gave out honors to the representatives of the people, mostly through the guilds, when they established their rule, no doubt in part to gain their support.<sup>162</sup>

We can also find other clues that gold had become scarce early on in the eleventh century and that the state had to devise ways of acquiring it. John the Orphanotrophos was a shrewd politician and devised several ways to increase taxation and state income. Skylitzes mentions John’s tax-regime on multiple occasions:

“He added this over and above the public taxes: that every village should pay an *aerikon* tax, each one according to its ability: one village four pieces of gold, another six and so on up to twenty, plus other shameful tolls to generate income which it would be a disgrace to mention.”

“John put the official’s appointment up for sale and gave everybody his head in wrongdoing, filling the world with ten thousand woes. Judges were levying taxes on the people with impunity and nobody cared a farthing for what was going on.”

---

<sup>159</sup> N. Oikonomides, ‘Title and income at the Byzantine court’ in: H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine court culture from 829 – 1204 (BCC)* (Washington D.C. 1997) 208. Lemerle has proposed that Constantine IX opened the senate to the administrators while Constantine X opened the senate to merchants and businessmen (P. Lemerle, *Cinq études sur le XIe siècle Byzantin* (Paris 1977) 287 ff.).

<sup>160</sup> Skylitzes, *A synopsis of Byzantine history*, 393.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibidem*, 393.

<sup>162</sup> Angold, *The Byzantine empire*, 73.

“...they rebelled and threw off the Roman yoke as on account of the Orphanotrophos’ greed and insatiate desire for riches.”<sup>163</sup>

The first mentioned *aerikon* tax was a tax that had existed during Justinian’s reign in the sixth century and was still in existence in the eleventh. It is unclear what it was a tax on, most likely cattle or other animals that were needed for the army (since it is mentioned in Leo VI’s *Taktika* as a tax paid by soldiers). This tax was not invented but increased by John the Orphanotrophos and is a prime example of the increase in secondary taxes.<sup>164</sup>

One of his most notorious measures was to start taxing Bulgaria in gold rather than in kind as had been the case since Basil II conquered Bulgaria (which the last quote alludes to). The belief that this caused the rebellion of Deljan has recently been refuted, however unpopular such changes may have been.<sup>165</sup> Other increases of secondary taxes were employed, especially through the possibility to buy out military service and other special *corvées*.<sup>166</sup> These special *corvées* were named *angareiai* and could be anything from road, bridge or fortification building right up to the cutting of wood and even ship building.<sup>167</sup> Constantine IX Monomachos even disbanded the 5,000 soldiers of the Iberian theme, which was the main defensive line against invasions from the East like Seljuk Turks. He made it mandatory for them to pay ‘heavy taxes’ instead of serving the army.<sup>168</sup>

Perhaps the most well known measure John the Orphanotrophos took is the increase in tax-farming (the second from the above quotes mentions tax farming). This was not in itself a new phenomenon; tax-farming was done until the seventh century. The Isaurian emperors put a hold to this practice (which is in line with their fiscal policy and other centralizing initiatives). It slowly returned during the 10<sup>th</sup> century, but it was still an exception, by the 11<sup>th</sup> century the practice had become quite common.<sup>169</sup> John the Orphanotrophos began selling offices on a larger scale during the reign of Michael IV when he was basically in command of the empire.

Though the accounts are biased against John the Orphanotrophos it is still clear that his regime added to the growing tax pressure in the provinces, where there was little to no control over the tax-farmers. In this case he sold the office of provincial judge but gave them the right to levy taxes, which was meant that it was also very hard to do anything in legal terms. One way or the other this increased

---

<sup>163</sup> Skylitzes, *A synopsis of Byzantine history*, 381, 384 and 387.

<sup>164</sup> A. Kazhdan, “Aerikon” in: *ODB*.

<http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/view/10.1093/acref/9780195046526.001.0001/acref-9780195046526-e-0080?rsk=y4oxh&result=1>.

<sup>165</sup> P. Stephenson, *Byzantium’s Balkan frontier; a political study of the Northern Balkans, 900 – 1204* (Cambridge 2000) 136 – 137.

<sup>166</sup> N. Oikonomides ‘The role of the state in the Byzantine economy’ in: *EHOB*, 1022.

<sup>167</sup> Harvey, *Economic expansion*, 108.

<sup>168</sup> Skylitzes, *A synopsis of Byzantine history*, 444.

<sup>169</sup> N. Oikonomides, ‘Title and income at the Byzantine court’ in: *BCC*, 209.

the tax in the provinces as these judges strove to make a profit (legally or illegally). Being part of the financial administration of the empire could be lucrative as Kekaumenos tells us it was believed that by the eleventh century all major mansions in Constantinople were build by those who had ran the financial administration or worked for that department. He also adds a warning, one John Maios who was a strategos ended up with a deficit of 60 pounds of gold when he was responsible for the tax collection in the tax district of Arabissos.<sup>170</sup> Although this deficit was quiet large it was a rather limited tax-district meaning large profits could be made when administering larger tax-districts. This increase in tax-farming and the money that could be made by such an enterprise was slowly replacing the *rogai* system. We can see the first signs of this general decline during the reign of Michael IV when John the Orphanotrophos was looking for ways to increase income. Other signs that the *rogai* system was in decline come from the rule of Isaak Komnenos who cut “gifts” for the *offikion*.<sup>171</sup> Nikephoros III Botaneiates stopped paying his administration altogether because he had been too lavish in his gifts and honors (which he gave out for free). Alexios I Komnenos later abolished the *rogai* system altogether.<sup>172</sup>

This general increase in taxes can be seen in a very clear example in 1082, when the monastery of Vatopedi was obliged to pay 19 *nomismata* in land tax. The secondary tax which was called *kaniskion* was also collected. It was usually paid in kind directly to fiscal officials (since it was meant as upkeep for the tax officials) since it seems to refer to a round loaf of bread, a half measure of wine, a *modios* of barley and a chicken.<sup>173</sup> This *kaniskion* was set a total of 20 *nomismata* meaning this supplementary tax could also be bought out. The secondary tax that had to be paid was now greater than the primary, land tax.<sup>174</sup> One of the effects of this increase, mainly in secondary tax that taxes became increasingly hard to predict especially in combination with tax farming. Hoarding was still a popular practice in the eleventh century and we have two examples of hoards created by high officials. During the reign of Michael IV the archbishop of Thessalonica had hoarded 3,300 lb of gold (237,600 *nomismata*) which was to be distributed to the poor and the clergy of Thessalonica. In 1043 we learn that on his death the Patriarch Alexios Stoudites had left 2,500 lb of gold (180,000 *nomismata*) in his monastery (which the Emperor confiscated).<sup>175</sup> For large landowners with hoarded gold the unpredictability of the tax was unpleasant but at least bearable. For the small landowning peasants, however, the increasing tax pressure and its unpredictability became a real problem. This more or less forced them to seek protection of greater landowners who could offer reductions in secondary taxes

---

<sup>170</sup> H.G. Beck, *Vademecum des byzantinischen Aristokraten: das sogenannte Strategikon des Kekaumenos* (Graz 1964) 76 – 77.

<sup>171</sup> Michael Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB (1853 Bonn) 61.

<sup>172</sup> Oikomenos, title and income at the Byzantine court, 208.

<sup>173</sup> Harvey, *Economic expansion*, 105.

<sup>174</sup> N. Oikonomides, ‘Title and income at the Byzantine court’ in: *BCC*, 1025.

<sup>175</sup> Angold, *The Byzantine empire*, 62 – 63.

through privileges such as *exkoussieia*. This meant that it became increasingly attractive to work as a *paroikos* for an ecclesiastical institution or lay magnate that had the power to acquire *exkoussieia* or other privilege rights. An example of a village community searching for the protection of a lord, is Michael Psellos. In 1060 the villagers of Atzikome asked Michael Psellos to become their lord so he could protect them and intercede on their behalf with the *krites/praitor* of the Opsikion theme whom the villagers did not know.<sup>176</sup> Because Psellos was influential at court and knew the system he was much more likely to acquire tax relief for the villagers than they could acquire by themselves.<sup>177</sup> This is not to say that the independent farmers disappeared during the eleventh century. The coastal plains and themes close to Constantinople and the conquered themes of the tenth century were still either in imperial hands or at least not in the hands of magnates.<sup>178</sup> However we do see a line that would become clearer during the Komnenian period, *paroikoi* working the land of great institutions that had developed during the tenth and eleventh century.

Toward the end of the eleventh century (after 1071) we can see the financial crisis deepen. The purity started to deteriorate quickly, 1071 was a year of crisis in the empire as a large army was defeated by the Turks at Manzikert and the emperor captured in battle.<sup>179</sup> What followed was a period of rebellions and general hardship. Gold content in golden coinage fell to 58.1% under Michael VII Doukas (r. 1071 – 1078), 35.8% under Nikephoros III Botaneiates (r. 1078 – 1081) and finally to 10.6% under Alexios I pre-reform.<sup>180</sup> Though many historians have blamed this sharp reduction of gold content in the coinage to the battle of Manzikert this is probably not the case. Byzantium had been defeated in many battles before Manzikert without this drastic action. The difference lies in the ensuing internal unrest, Michael VII was not a strong ruler who was led by his bureaucrats (like Psellos). The rebellions during his reign aimed at re-establishing some sense of order which was finally achieved by Alexios I Komnenos. By that time the Byzantine Empire had changed radically yet again. Power was divided by those who were of the Komnenos clan and their close allies, while the church gained more power yet again and held vast tracts of land that were worked by *paroikoi*. Anatolia was never really recovered which meant that the Eastern magnates disappeared, they either came to Constantinople to form the elite around the Komnenian dynasty or they settled in the Balkans where they never acquired quite as much land as they had had in Anatolia.

---

<sup>176</sup> A *krites* or *praitor* was a judge of and local civil administrator.

<sup>177</sup> Text found in the letters of Psellos: Psellos Letters (K - D) 99, 127.17-128.7. Published online: <http://db.pbw.kcl.ac.uk/jsp/narrativeunit.jsp?NarrativeUnitID=22548#157857>. (accessed on 29-05-2014).

<sup>178</sup> Hendy, *Studies*, 100 – 108.

<sup>179</sup> Haldon, *The Byzantine wars*, 179 – 181.

<sup>180</sup> C. Morrisson, 'Byzantine money' in: *EHOB*, 931.

## Church

When looking at the eleventh century relations between state and aristocracy we get a sense that it was much more complex than during the tenth century. In an economical sense we can see a society that was getting richer as a whole but a state that had trouble to capitalise on this economic growth as its main revenue was tax on land, which did not expand but rather shrunk. It is also clear that during the tenth century the power and the wealth of the church was growing as is shown by the *exkoussiea* and *solemnia* it received.<sup>181</sup> The development of the Athonite monasteries started during the reign of the tenth century emperors like Constantine VII and Nikephoros II Phokas continued during the eleventh century. Charitable institutes and monasteries were by that time among the greatest landowners. They became increasingly wealthy and it was near impossible to cut their income or apprehend their holdings, as that would provoke dissension among the populace. Eleventh century emperors added to this wealth by increasing, or establishing *solemnia* for the different monasteries. In 1057 Michael VI added an additional ten pounds of gold (for other convents on Mount Athos) showing that imperial favoritism was very much alive in the second part of the eleventh century. The total amount of the *solemnia* for the Lavra of Mount Athos was fixed at eight pounds and twenty *nomismata* to which he added an additional three pounds.<sup>182</sup> Other monasteries also benefitted greatly from imperial *solemnion*. Iviron received eight pounds and sixteen *nomismata* which was cut down by four pounds and later completely, it was restored to four pounds and sixteen *nomismata* by Nikephoros III Botaneiates in 1079 in addition they received *exkoussiea* for their holdings and lands.<sup>183</sup> Vatopedi received 80 *nomismata* since the time of Constantine IX and Michael VI. This was brought back greatly during the reforms of Isaak Komnenos and later the monks traded the *solemnion* they received for fiscal privileges.<sup>184</sup> However, the larger monasteries from the eleventh century onwards began to aspire after one particular privilege above all others, that of judicial independence, especially from lay judges but also from other ecclesiastical interference. Their success in this regard can be contributed to their popularity with emperors, who in the end were the only one who could grant them this sort of privilege. Monasteries increasingly sought to be judged by the emperor or patriarch alone, something the monks of Chios managed to do successfully. What all of these privileges show is imperial strength rather than weakness, since these privileges were only granted by imperial largess. This relation between church and state continued well into the eleventh century and was still in place during the Komnenian period.<sup>185</sup>

---

<sup>181</sup> Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 165- 173.

<sup>182</sup> Papachryssantou eds., *Actes de Lavra*, nr. 32, 192 – 194.

<sup>183</sup> F. Dölger, *Aus den Schatzkammern des Heiligen Berges* (München 1948) nr. 35, 99 – 103.

<sup>184</sup> Harvey, *Economic expansion*, 82 -83.

<sup>185</sup> R. Morris, 'Monastic exemptions' in: *PPEM*, 217 – 220.

It is also from the late eleventh century that we can fully see what taxes monasteries could be exempted from. Even though it is often believed that *exkousseia* also meant a remission in land tax (*demosios kanon*) it seems this was not the case, some monasteries were exempted from paying the land tax but different mechanisms were at work. We find a clear example from 1084 when the monks of the Lavra on Athos were instructed to pay their tax (*telos*) to Adrian Komnenos even though they had received complete exemption. This clearly did not include the land tax.<sup>186</sup> It does not seem to have been the goal of monasteries to gain complete tax exemptions, they were more worried by the extra levies and special corvées that had been increasing during the eleventh century. In addition they sought protection from the interference of tax-officials, all of these could be granted in *exkousseia* or other privileges coming from the emperor. After all the land tax was fixed for thirty years and with the rapid devaluation of coinage during the later eleventh century tax could be paid in debased coinage meaning an overall decrease in tax-burden. This would have been harder for the additional taxes that were claimed by officials directly either in kind or in cash.<sup>187</sup>

The wealth of certain church officials can be seen from a few examples which have been touched upon earlier. These high ecclesiastical functionaries had the ability to gather such vast amounts of wealth as they were, after all, *dynatoi* that benefited greatly from imperial donations, favors and salaries. Imperial favor was probably increased during the eleventh century. Firstly, the eleventh century emperors were in need of political backing from (among others) the church, their rules were not as secure as those of their tenth century predecessors. There are also other signs that the power of the church (and not just monasteries) both as a landowner and as a political player was greatly increasing during the eleventh century. This started under the patriarch Alexios Stoudites (patriarch from 1025 to 1043) who was reforming the church from within by reinforcing its financial position and protecting clergy from secular trials. He also tried to prevent the increasing grant of *charistike* to lay aristocrats. He gave his backing to the popular uprising against the emperor Michael V “the Caulker” when he tried to banish the empress Zoë from the capital. He even became the de facto leader of the uprising by declaring Michael V unfit to rule. We can see that Constantine IX Monomachos was aware of the new found power of the patriarch and vowed generous donations to the church of St. Sophia so that mass could be celebrated daily instead of on Saturdays, Sundays and feast days only.<sup>188</sup> He was succeeded by Michael Keroularios who was from a Constantinopolitan family and was a friend of Constantine IX. Much like his predecessor, Michael I Keroularios supported a regime change during the rule of Michael VI Stratiotikos, who was opposed by Isaak I Komnenos and other military leaders who had been wronged by Michael VI. The patriarch made sure that Isaak I Komnenos knew that he owned his crown to the support of the patriarch and his role in the abdication

---

<sup>186</sup> Ibidem, 212.

<sup>187</sup> Ibidem, 212 – 214.

<sup>188</sup> M. Angold, *Church and society in Byzantium under the Comneni 1081 – 1261* (Cambridge 1995) 21 - 22.

of Michael VI. It is said that Michael I Keroularios made demands of Isaak I Komnenos, going so far as to say: “I built you oven, I can therefore destroy you”.<sup>189</sup> For his support the patriarch was granted the right to promote the *oikonomos* and the *skévophylax* who are functionaries within the patriarchal administration. This had traditionally been the right of the emperor and is a clear sign of the growing power of the patriarch at court.<sup>190</sup> Isaak tried hard to resist the power of Michael Keroularios and to this end he promoted Michael Psellos to the post of chief-minister of the empire (who was an opponent of Keroularios).

The confrontation between the emperor and the patriarch was aggravated by the reforms Isaak pushed through, he certainly cut many donations to monasteries, churches and other charitable institutions to replenish the state coffers.<sup>191</sup> Psellos goes to some length to describe the reforms of Isaak I Komnenos, firstly they seem to have been aimed at restoring military matters. Isaak had himself portrayed a soldier (with drawn sword) on his coinage and seals rather than with the *laborum* (the imperial standard).<sup>192</sup> He would rule the empire like his tenth century predecessors, Nikephoros II, John I and Basil II. In order to acquire the money needed for military reforms he revoked many privileges, was tireless in his tax collection but most importantly seem to have cut the holding of land by monasteries. His efforts were in vain, because they provoked the anger of the populace, the army and the church as their privileges were limited and wealth confiscated.<sup>193</sup> Even though these reforms were certainly needed at the time it was most likely too much too soon. Isaak I Komnenos was soon replaced by Constantine X Doukas who turned back many of the reforms made by his predecessor, one of the great benefactors of this move were the monasteries and the church. For example Constantine X Doukas confirms the previously held right (which was granted to them by Constantine VII and expanded by Constantine IX) by the convent of Saint Andrew at Thessalonica for *exkousseia* for one hundred untaxed *paroikoi*.<sup>194</sup>

While the granting of privileges to monasteries and charitable institutions continued during the eleventh century we also find increasing evidence that lay aristocracy left land, gold and other luxury items to monasteries or churches. In 1059 the protospatharios Boilas, who was a military man from the East, left an expensive collection of books and liturgical objects to a church he had founded. He also

---

<sup>189</sup> Michaelis Glycae, *Annales*, ed. I. Bekker C.S.H.B. (Bonn 1836) 601.

“τῆς παλαιᾶς ἱερωσύνης φάσκων εἶναι τὸ τοιοῦτον ἔθος”.

<sup>190</sup> Angold, *The Byzantine empire*, 34.

<sup>191</sup> Angold theorizes that Isaak I Komnenos reinstated novel J of Nikephoros II Phokas. There is no real evidence for this claim and even though monastic land was limited and some wealth confiscated it seems to me that this would have been a step too far. See Angold, *The Byzantine empire*, 51.

<sup>192</sup> For an example see: <http://www.doaks.org/resources/seals/gods-regents-on-earth-a-thousand-years-of-byzantine-imperial-seals/rulers-of-byzantium/isaac-i-komnenos-1057-59>.

<sup>193</sup> Psellus, *Fourteen Byzantine rulers*, 312 – 313.

<sup>194</sup> Papachryssantou eds., *Actes de Lavra*, nr. 33, 195 – 199. Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 165 – 166.

stipulated that his family and heirs had an obligation to maintain both the church and its priests.<sup>195</sup> But while monasteries and churches benefitted from land and gold as part of inheritances it was also a great investment as is shown by Michael Attaleiates who laid down in his *Diataxis* that his heirs were entitled to two-thirds of the surplus cash revenues along with surpluses in rent.<sup>196</sup> It was not only the lay aristocracy that founded or supported religious houses and made use of their surplus revenues. The state did so too, *euagies oikoi* were formed and these religious houses paid their surplus directly to the state as well. This is in line with the policy of Basil II to bring land under direct state control but at the same time showed imperial largess.<sup>197</sup> This also worked the other way around through *charistike*, a *charistikarios* would become a lay manager of a monastic estate. Many monasteries had trouble to produce enough produce for their own sustenance and lacked the funds to improve their estates. By bringing in lay aristocrats with the funds to improve their estates the monks of the smaller monasteries could focus on their spiritual tasks rather than the economic side of their monasteries.<sup>198</sup> An increasing number of small monasteries looked for a patron to act on their behalf, especially courtiers like Michael Psellos or Michael Attaleiates whom had connections at court and could gain much needed privileges. This practise had most likely started during the ninth or tenth century but was gaining popularity in the eleventh century. For the *charistikarios* it also had an economic benefit, mainly surplus revenue and produce and a spiritual benefit as protector of a certain monastery. Rosemary Morris notes that the relation between *charistikarios* and smaller monastery was much the same as the emperor and the larger monasteries.<sup>199</sup>

---

<sup>195</sup> P. Magdalino, 'The Byzantine aristocratic *Oikos*', in: *TBA* 98.

<sup>196</sup> Lemerle, *Cinq études*, 99 – 111.

<sup>197</sup> Harvey, *Economic expansion*, 67 – 68.

<sup>198</sup> J. Lefort 'The rural economy, Seventh-Twelfth centuries' in: *EHOB*, 298.

<sup>199</sup> Morris, *Monks and laymen*, 263 – 267.

## Aristocracy

As previously seen it is sometimes hard to separate church and lay aristocracy since they often had the same goals and interests. While the power of the church and the large monasteries was still rising through the eleventh century it was also checked by the power of the state who in the end still held the right to grant privileges. Where does that leave the lay aristocracy?

During the eleventh century the group of *dynatoi* as they were called during the tenth century became more diverse. The state increased the number of functionaries that were employed in Constantinople. It is said that by the time of Nikephoros III Botaneiates those that found employment in the central government reached tens of thousands.<sup>200</sup> This means that in fact the number of *dynatoi* increased greatly during the eleventh century. However, we should be careful to compare them to *dynatoi* of the tenth century that were part of influential families who owned vast tracts of land. This diversification has found its way into many modern works on eleventh century Byzantium and is most often identified with two different (types of) groups of aristocrats.

Those that are often labeled “the military aristocracy” were the old families from the provinces, for example the Skleroi but also newer families like the Komnenian, that had been in sharp competition with Basil II. By the eleventh century they began pulling more and more towards Constantinople because there they could find real power in the government. This meant that they brought prestige with them for anyone allying themselves with them through marriage or cliental relations. Another reason for their increasing move to Constantinople must have been the drastic cuts on military as military affairs were mostly ignored until the reign of Isaak I Komnenos. This meant that the century old prestige of generals was being reduced while at the same time learned men saw their prestige increase. This can clearly be seen during the reign of Constantine IX Monomachos when his greatest general, George Maniakes, was being ignored and abused which in turn led to his rebellion.<sup>201</sup> It was for the same reasons that Isaak I Komnenos headed his rebellion with the help of other capable military men. This led to even greater distrust of generals and it became a policy to put eunuchs or inner circle courtiers at the head of an army.<sup>202</sup>

The “civil aristocracy” would be a harder group to define as they included many groups within, the bureaucrats of Constantinople, the *nouveaux riches* of the capital, learned men, the representatives of the guilds (and therefore the people of Constantinople) and to some extent the patriarch.<sup>203</sup> Though this division seems quite artificial, for example the Doukas family is considered a representation of the civil aristocracy rather than the military aristocracy, this division has some merit

---

<sup>200</sup> Angold, *The Byzantine empire*, 72.

<sup>201</sup> Psellus, *Fourteen Byzantine rulers*, 192 – 199.

<sup>202</sup> Angold, *The Byzantine empire*, 37.

<sup>203</sup> Angold, *The Byzantine empire*, 38 – 39.

to it. Especially the term civil aristocracy since they represent those that gained increasing wealth in an increasingly wealthy society. Men like Michael Psellos and Michael Attaleiates could be seen as prominent representatives of a civil aristocracy or perhaps it would be better to call them Constantinopolitan aristocracy in contrast to the provincial aristocracy.<sup>204</sup>

### **Land register of Thebes**

There is a source of importance that shows what the effects of the land legislation drafted during the tenth century were, while at the same time shedding light on land ownership during the eleventh century. This source is known as the land-register of Thebes.<sup>205</sup> It is a document that describes the fiscal obligations within the fiscal district of Thebes that ran from Chalkis in the north to the Aegean Sea in the south and from the valley of Ismenos in the west to the Aegean Sea in the East. The register describes 23 villages (*choria*) in which 45 fiscal units (*stichoi*) are located. Svoronos has dated the land-register to the second half of the eleventh century and there is no reason to doubt this assertion. Because the land-register was compiled for fiscal reasons we find no social relations listed, no mention is made of independent peasants (apart from one man that is called *ptochos*), *paroikoi*, wage earners or even slaves. What we do find is a list of the people owning the land. These were men of high social standing and included 8 *archons*, 12 *spatharokandidatoi*, 43 *protospatharioi*, 8 *spatharioi*, 11 *kouratoi*, 6 *protokankellarioi*, 7 *droungarioi* and 4 *proedroi*.<sup>206</sup> Though these men were not necessarily the great magnates or strictly speaking the *dynatoi* at whom the land legislation of the tenth century was aimed there can be no doubt that they belonged to an elite that extended to office holders in Constantinople. Lemerle names them bourgeois rather than aristocratic, which is indeed the impression one gets from the titles they bore.<sup>207</sup> It has to be kept in mind that during the eleventh century there was an increase in the sale of official titles. What limits the land-register of Thebes is the fact that its void of social relations meaning it is hard to know if these land owners had large groups of *paroikoi* working for them like monastic lands. It also makes no mention of fiscal privileges owned by these land owners, which in turn makes it hard to know how privileged this particular group of “new aristocrats” were. In addition it is limited to one area of the empire, which is not necessarily representative for the whole empire for example it does not tell us anything about the situation on the Anatolian plateau or the newly conquered lands.

---

<sup>204</sup> Ostrogorsky was the first to view the eleventh century as a struggle between the civil aristocracy (by which he meant the aristocrats that found employment in the bureaucracy in Constantinople) and the military aristocracy (by which he meant the Anatolian aristocrats). He viewed the period 1025 – 1081 as ruled by the civil aristocracy and the Komnenian period as ruled by the military aristocracy. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, 316 -351.

<sup>205</sup> The land register of Thebes was first studied and an edition was made by Svoronos, ‘Recherches sur le cadastre byzantin et la fiscalité aux XIe et XIIe siècles: le cadastre de Thèbes’, in: *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 83 1 (1959) 1 - 145.

<sup>206</sup> Kazhdan, *Change in Byzantine culture*, 56 – 57.

<sup>207</sup> Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 193 – 200.

Other sources also left hints. A few wills are left from the later eleventh century of which the will of Eustathios Boilas (dated to 1059) has previously been mentioned. From 1090 and 1094 the wills of the *kouropalates* Symbatos Pakourianos and his wife have survived.<sup>208</sup> Pakourianos had held a high position at court while Boilas had been in the service of a *doux* in the east called Michael. Boilas possessed nine domains and another piece of land. As previously mentioned he had built a church there and left most of his landed property to his daughters. They were given the task to maintain the church and its priests. Other lands and possessions were given to his slaves and servants as well as to two brothers and their cousins, who were not related to Boilas. Lastly, two of his properties were given back to his master. Symbatos Pakourianos did not possess nearly as much land as Boilas but owned much more gold and coinage. He left two of his domains to his wife and one to his brother, one of these domains had been a gift from the emperor. When his wife died in 1094 she left their remaining possessions to their slaves (who were freed), freemen working for them and the poor. They received money (anywhere from 1/31lb to 21lb of *trachea nomismata*), the women clothing and the men animals for working the fields.<sup>209</sup> Much like Boilas the great benefactor in her will was the church, in this case the monastery of Iviron.<sup>210</sup>

Both wills show a few important points that correspond with much of the conclusions that can be drawn from the land-register of Thebes. Working for the state still brought wealth, which could be converted to land (like Boilas) or could be kept in cash. We should also note that Parkourianos was more likely to have ready gold at hand since he held a higher position at court. It is also likely that he kept the gold rather than invest it since he lived during a period of great debasement. Both owed some of their land to benefaction either from the emperor (Parkourianos) or from his master (Boilas). This corresponds with Magdalino's observation that the emperor held a 'pool' of estates that were being given out under imperial patronage and returned to him, thus being recycled over the decades.<sup>211</sup> Apart from the continuing importance of imperial patronage and favor we can also see that monasteries and churches greatly benefitted from lands and wealth given to them by lay patrons. Which is not really surprising for a medieval state where religion was a daily and important part of life. Once again one cannot develop a clear picture from the Anatolian aristocracy and how they developed. Boilas seemed to be employed by a *doux* who was most likely a great landowner however it remains unclear to what extent he owed land. The dearth of sources in this regard is painful. What can be said is that certain great magnate families from the tenth century survived into the eleventh such as the Skleroi, Komnenian and Doukai. They must have been the greatest lay landowners in the empire and from the

---

<sup>208</sup> Both are included in Lemerle, *Cinq études*, chapter 1 and 3.

<sup>209</sup> The *trachea nomismata* or *aspron trachy* was an electrum coin which was introduced during the coinage reforms of Alexios I Komnenos in 1092.

<sup>210</sup> P. Magdalino, 'The Byzantine aristocratic *Oikos*', in: *TBA* 98 – 99.

<sup>211</sup> P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos 1143 – 1180* (Cambridge 1993) 168.

histories of Psellos, Skylitzes and Attaleiates an image emerges that they still owned most of their land on the Anatolian plateau.

In the end it was the family of Komnenos with the help of the Doukas family that gained power in 1081 through Alexios I Komnenos. His answer to the struggle between certain *dynatoi* and the state was very different from that of previous emperors. Alexios reasserted the central position of the imperial office that was somewhat diluted during the crisis years of 1071 – 1081. With his family and those chosen by him forming the governmental elite which limited the social openness of the previous centuries. During his rule the church certainly retained its position as the second largest landowner after the state, forming great estates that were very privileged and protected by the emperor or his immediate associates. Another important development is that of the *pronoia* by which a piece of land was granted to an imperial subject for life. This meant that the state retained direct control over the land as it could be taken away or redistributed. It was mostly used for the army and cut away salaries altogether.<sup>212</sup>

---

<sup>212</sup> Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 201 – 241. For a recent publication on *pronoia* see: M.C. Bartusis, *Land and privilege in Byzantium, the institution of Pronoia* (Cambridge 2012).

## Conclusion

The eleventh century was one of a changing society. As a whole, Byzantium became richer as the economy expanded. One of the reasons for the economic growth was the reemergence of towns and cities with consumers capable and willing to buy (luxury) products. This coupled with demographic growth meant an expansion of the economy as a whole. It also brought with it certain social changes, education become more readily available, a wealthier group of merchants and craftsmen developed and the aristocracy of the empire became more and more prominent and self-aware, something we see reflected in the increasing use of family names.

Since the state economy was built upon the ownership of land and the tax that was paid on that land it had trouble profiting from economic expansion. The increasing secondary taxes may have been an attempt to reap some reward. The state had to devise other ways to increase its income, in the end this led to increased tax farming that slowly began to replace the *roga* system. These tax farmers must have been wealthy to begin with; the profits they made one way or the other were added to this wealth. The state did not exact its taxes directly but through middle men. It would have been difficult for independents farmers to predict the total tax they had to pay since secondary taxes were rising and did not seem to follow a system such as the land tax had done during the tenth century. Those that held privileges to protect themselves from these secondary taxes and perhaps more importantly the random visitations made by tax officials held a more secure position. To gain these privileges you needed connections at court since in the end all privileges came from the emperor. While the great monasteries and other charitable institutions seem to have been very successful in acquiring these privileges, we simply do not know to what extent lay aristocrats held privileges. That both groups managed to gain these privileges is, however, beyond doubt.

In turn, those that held these privileges could extend them to *paroikoi* working for them. They would be taxed heavily by their protector and still had to pay taxes to the state but these would remain stable and predictable. It therefore became increasingly attractive to become a *paroikos* for wealthy monasteries or lay aristocrats. From all sources it is clear that many groups were neither wealthy nor poor, neither powerful nor weak. Among them were those government officials that held low to mid ranking positions. They could surely acquire some land and attract workers or slaves. However they would not be in an easy position to acquire extensive privileges or bar entry to tax officials. The same can be said for the many small monasteries or churches that held small tracts of land but could not afford improvements to their lands. Both these groups, small lay and ecclesiastical land owners, could search protection from those that did held sway in Constantinople. We have seen the example of both Michael Psellos who was asked to become lord of Atzikome and Michael Attaleiates who became

*charistikarios* of a small monastery. These men did have connections at court and enough wealth to improve these lands they held.

Even though society was changing in the eleventh century this was not the period in which a civil or military aristocracy took over the government, nor did the state lose its struggle with the *dynatoi*, lay or ecclesiastical. The emperors did lose some of their prestige and government as a whole was less centralised than during the tenth century. They also had to contend with new power groups in Constantinople; people who that showed their willingness to depose an emperor, in this case Michael V, and were represented by the guilds and the patriarch. The *nouveaux riches* such as merchants and artisans eventually gained access to the senatorial office when emperors needed the support of the people. The expansion of government was both a necessary step since it had become increasingly hard to govern an empire the size of Basil II's empire, and one that made sense to gain the support that emperors needed. Even if these factors seem to have diminished it is still apparent that the state retained many of its powers. Privileges still came from the emperor and this meant that lay aristocrats and monasteries were still very much dependent on him. High positions within the government were also still dependent upon the emperor and his most inner circle as can be seen by Michael Psellos career. These high positions still brought wealth which could be enhanced by gaining privileges. Furthermore the state also kept many of its estates that were worked by *paroikoi*. In the eleventh century it was still the largest landowner, while the establishment of *euagies oikoi* helped the finances and the spiritual need of the empire. These estates could be donated to chosen servants but could just as easily been taken away. All these facts point toward a remarkably strong state.

## Conclusion

---

“Μηδεὶς οὖν μηκέτι μήτε τῶν περιφανῶν μαγιστρῶν ἢ πατρικίων, μήτε τῶν ἀρχαῖς ἢ στρατηγίαις ἢ πολιτικοῖς ἢ στρατωτικοῖς ἀξιώμασι τετιμημένων, μήτε μὴν ὅλως τῶν εἰς συγκλήτου βουλὴν ἀπηριθμημένον, μήτε τῶν θεματικῶν ἀρχόντων ἢ ἀπαρχόντων, μήτε τῶν θεοφιλεστάτων μητροπολιτῶν ἢ ἀρχιεπισκόπων ἢ ἐπισκόπων ἢ ἡγουμένων ἢ ἐκκλησιαστικῶν ἀρχόντων ἢ τῶν τὴν προστασίαν καὶ ἐπικράτειαν τῶν εὐαγῶν ἢ βασιλικῶν οἴκων ἐχόντων.”<sup>213</sup>

In 934 Romanos I Lekapenos was the first emperor to describe those that he considered *dynatoi* with the above words. As a result of the severe winter of 927/928 it had become necessary to protect independent farmers from the predatory tendencies of this group. As we have seen in chapter one this was not the only reason for drafting this particular novel. The Macedonian emperors began to rule during a period when education, economy and the military began expanding. This was largely thanks to the ninth century emperors Nikephoros I and Theophilos who had started much needed financial and military reforms. Their legacy was put to use by the first emperor of the Macedonian dynasty, Basil I. Basil I began renewed military campaigns and gained some success against the Paulicians in the East thereby strengthening the eastern frontier. It was during the reign of Basil I's predecessor (Michael III) that the dividing force of iconoclasm was put to rest, which did much to promote the faith of the monks that had so valiantly championed iconodulism. It was also during the ninth century that we see the first signs of a growing group of landowners on the Anatolian plateau. They had become increasingly prominent as military commanders of the thematic system. They used their positions and the unrest that was caused by annual Arab raids to extend their land holding on the Anatolian plateau. Such was the situation in 867 and this has formed the background to this research.

The elite within the church and those lay aristocrats that held high positions within the bureaucracy (many of whom were from land owning families of the Anatolian plateau) were called the *dynatoi* by Romanos I. It was against them that the state tried to protect its independent peasants but also itself. One of the most important aspects was the struggle for control of two of the most important economic commodities of the Byzantine economy; ownership of land and ownership of gold. Where the second was collected as tax based on the first. Gold was important since it sustained the state economy of Byzantium through the system of *rogai*, gifts and imperial benefits that helped maintain

---

<sup>213</sup> Svoronos, *Les nouvelles des Empereurs Macédoniens*, 84 - 85.

the strong state that Byzantium was. Gold coinage was a sign of the prestige of Byzantium and the individual emperors. It had remained an impressive 24 carats for centuries, a greatly stabilising factor for the economy. Land was perhaps more important since it formed the accounting unit on which the tax system was based. Traditionally this land was worked by small independent peasants that formed the backbone of the tax-system. Their lands were situated on the fertile coastal plains and near the river valleys where a range of agricultural products could be cultivated. During the tenth century expansion brought newly conquered lands within the Byzantine Empire. The first major success was the city of Melitene, which was conquered in 934. During the reigns of Nikephoros II Phokas, John I Tzimiskes and finally Basil II vast areas in eastern Anatolia, Northern Syria, Armenia and the Balkans were conquered. These lands represented new, fertile areas with populations to work them. What was to be done with these lands?

During the tenth century there was a tendency by larger landowners to acquire lands from the smaller peasants, this brought forth the first two novels (assuming novel A was indeed authentic). They mainly dealt with the right of pre-emption by which the village community had the first right to buy land that was being sold in their fiscal unit. The main goal seems to have been to keep fiscal units intact. This situation changed after 927/928 when the empire was struck by famine. Peasants were being coerced into selling their land below their actual value, with the larger landowners profiting greatly. This was a much more pressing issue because it meant that large landowners gained land in the fertile areas of the empire where much of the fiscal revenue was coming from. To this end Romanos I Lekapenos drafted novel C and spelled out who these great landowners were, those that were then called *dynatoi*. He also took steps to prevent them from entering the newly conquered area around Melitene by making it an imperial *kouratoriea*. This was a highly successful policy which added income to fisc and made sure *dynatoi* could not encroach upon fertile lands. The wording in novel C served both as law and rhetoric; the wording was powerful and Romanos was presented as a new Solomon or David, protector of the poor. This policy was followed by his successors and most novels were meant to keep the *dynatoi* from the fertile areas, whether they were newly conquered or had been part of the empire for centuries.

At the same time *dynatoi* tried to gain certain favours. For the monasteries those were privileges to exempt them from secondary taxes. It is highly doubtful that many, if indeed any, ever gained exemption from the land tax. These privileges came in two forms, *exkousseia* and the different forms of *logisma*. *Exkousseia* arranged the exemption from taxes for the monasteries and their *paroikoi*; it also established how many *paroikoi* would remain untaxed. Perhaps the most important privilege that was sought after was juridical freedom. Monasteries tried to ban government officials entering their land and wanted to judge themselves, failing that by either the emperor or patriarch. *Logisma* arranged imperial donations to certain monasteries. This system slowly replaced that of

*solemnion* which was a straight donation from the treasury. *Logisma* had a more fiscal nature; either tax payable was subtracted from the total amount of *solemnion* that a monastery would receive, or taxes from the provinces were directly paid to them to extent of the *solemnion*. A final form was probably the most popular; a monastery would receive all taxes from a certain village. During the tenth century many monasteries were being founded but since the most popular form (the Lavorite monastery) was usually founded in rural areas their economic significance could not have been very high as Byzantine land tax was based on quality of land. Some monasteries became extremely privileged during the tenth century, such as the Lavra on Mount Athos, but these should be viewed as exceptions rather than the rule. The greatest monasteries were certainly *dynatoi* but they were not the ones specifically targeted by the land legislation. The only novel that specially deals with the great monasteries was novel J, which was most likely never enacted.

The real danger for the state were the lay aristocrats that formed the elite within the army and owned their land on the Anatolian plateau. Certain families nearly monopolised military commands in the East. These were very lucrative posts as is shown by Liutprand of Cremona's vivid description of a *roga* ceremony where the commander of the army had to drag his gold because it was too heavy to carry. Well known examples are the Phokai, Doukai, Maleïnoi and Skleroi. They owned land and great wealth which is attested by Eustathios Maleinos who entertained Basil II and his army on his estates. During the tenth century they gained great prominence at court and the state also needed them to successfully run the government. For their part the *dynatoi* of the Anatolian plateau were dependent upon the emperor and the state for positions that brought prestige and wealth. Becoming too popular brought risks even for the greatest military commander, John Kourkouas lost his position as commander of the Eastern armies because of court intrigue. He had conquered Melitene and was the first successful aristocrat in Eastern campaigns. Two other greatly successful military commanders became emperor, Nikephoros II Phokas and John I Tzimiskes, but all this was done under the veil of legitimacy since they were made protector of the young Basil II and Constantine VIII. Both served the state first and foremost and even though they were *dynatoi* themselves they did not greatly promote their interest or eased up the land legislation. When Basil II became emperor in his own right a policy to keep the *dynatoi* in check was already in place, Basil took these policies further than any of his predecessors when he was secure in his reign after the deposition of his great uncle Basil the *Parakoimomenos*.

Firstly there was the land legislation itself. This powerful weapon could be used more or less at random as can be seen during the reign of Basil II who used it to deprive certain families of their fortunes but also promoted newer families. Secondly it became policy to incorporate newly acquired land into state land rather than auction it off. Not only did this fill the coffers it also gave emperors the chance to allot some of this land to certain newer families to promote a degree of counterbalance. This

can be seen in the third part of this policy: to position Armenian royalty on newly acquired land. Even if many these policies were aimed at asserting the power of the emperor they were not meant to ruin the *dynatoi*. After the rebellions of Bardas Phokas and Bardas Skleros Basil II showed great restraint and though he curbed the power of the Phokai they were not ruined. Many rebels remained within imperial favour or were eventually re-promoted to them. The Skleroi family was still prominent at court in the eleventh century.

Such was the situation in 1025. The empire was larger, richer and more secure and imperial power rested firmly in the hands of the Macedonian dynasty. Basil II had however not appointed a serious successor and his elderly brother Constantine, who also had no male heir became Constantine VIII. This was perhaps the greatest failure in Basil's rule, as an arranged marriage for one of his nieces Zoë or Theodora would have secured the dynasty. In the end it was left to Zoë to choose a husband and emperor (Theodora was sent to a nunnery). However she was beyond child bearing years when Constantine VIII died. Her second husband became Michael IV and with his rise so did John the Orphanotrophos rise. John was a eunuch and had been a faithful servant of Basil II; he was a shrewd man that protected his family interests. He instigated a series of new financial practises, the increased selling of offices (for which there was clearly a market) and the farming of taxes. Secondary taxes were also increased.

The farming of taxes and the increase of secondary taxes meant that it was increasingly difficult for independents peasants to predict and pay their taxes. For them it made sense to seek protection from the increasing tax burden with large landowners, either monasteries or lay aristocrats. In turn the *dynatoi* could offer them protection through their contacts at court and privileges they had or could get. We have seen the example of Michael Psellos who was asked to become lord of Atzikome so he could offer the villagers legal protection from the local judge. In a very similar way small monasteries sought the protection and patronage from lay aristocrats through *charistike* much against the will of the patriarch. The church however could no longer care for the many small monasteries that had developed during the tenth and eleventh century. In turn many aristocrats left money or land to churches or monasteries they had founded or had a particular affiliation with in their wills. The state also increasingly exploited land directly and settled *paroikoi* there, this being the policy during the later tenth century and continuing on into the eleventh when the state was still the largest landowner. The impression we get is that the monasteries were the second largest landowner but this image may be distorted since we do not possess any lay archives. What sources we do have on monasteries tend to come from the very great and very privileged monasteries such as the Lavra of Mount Athos. These certainly held vast tracts of land and privileges to protect their *paroikoi*. Their fortune was also hardly affected by the turmoil of 1071 – 1081 and during the Komnenian period their privileged status not only remained but expanded.

This situation did nothing to diminish the strength of the state, for both lay aristocrats and the church were still dependent upon the emperor to gain the necessary privileges to make their estates profitable undertakings and be able to attract *paroikoi*. Furthermore the few wills we have and the land-register of Thebes point toward an expansion of the aristocracy. Economic growth during the tenth and eleventh century created newly available markets that would attract trade. Money was to be made and surely merchants and artisans profited from this situation. With these newly acquired funds they could purchase honorary titles that were increasingly being sold by the state that was in search of gold. They also became a more prominent group in Constantinople and were represented by the guilds, their new power is reflected in the deposition of Michael V. The people and the *nouveaux riches* had to be managed and to this end emperors tried to ply them for support. Constantine IX and Constantine X both granted senatorial positions to new groups (administrators and later merchants and artisans). This enlargement of the central bureaucracy meant that more people could technically be counted as *dynatoi*, however these new groups were hardly the Anatolian magnates of the tenth or eleventh century. We have seen that many lower and middle class bureaucrats owned land around Thebes but none could be considered real magnates. Of the Anatolian magnates we know little from the eleventh century, they certainly still existed but no new legislation was drafted nor do we know how privileged they were or how extensive their holdings were. What we do know is that certain families retained influence at court and they created patronage networks with the new bureaucrats. Psellos was under the protection of the Skleros family and later the Doukas family. Their struggle with the state ended after 1071 when the Byzantine Empire suffered from internal unrest and the golden coinage that by that time was debased to 18 carats deteriorated quickly to only about 3 carats before the coinage reforms of 1092. After their victory at Manzikert the Seljuk Turks used the internal unrest to conquer most of Anatolia thereby dislodging the aristocracy from their traditional homes.

What can be seen is that even during the eleventh century powerful elements within society were depended upon the emperor for much of their favours, in this light the eleventh century should not be seen as a state losing power to different forces but rather one entrenching what it had and trying to hold on to that tradition. That the power of central government was not disappearing completely can be seen in the authority that the Komnenian dynasty had. Surely they needed to reform the systems that were bankrupt by 1081, mainly coinage and taxation, but Alexios I did both quite easily. He recreated the system on a more modern footing; coinage was made to suit the needs of the day. Imperial favouritism moved away from the *rogai* to imperial donations, tax exemptions and gifts became increasingly important.

In short it can be concluded that the struggle between the *dynatoi* and the state was a struggle that took on several successive forms. Although it may have started as a conflict over land and the protection of fiscal revenue, it evolved to include questions of prestige and favouritism. In the end

those *dynatoi* that held the highest imperial esteem remained in their privileged position the longest. The Lavra of Mount Athos is an ecclesiastical example while the Doukas family is an example of a *dynatos* family that remained within the highest echelons of power. For in the end, favoured positions, wealth and privileges came from the emperor and the emperor could take them away as was shown during the tenth century. This remarkable strength was still in place during much of the eleventh century even when the empire fell on increasingly hard times. What limited the state's power mainly during the eleventh century was that there was no heir to the Macedonian dynasty and emperors struggled to remain in control of an increasingly complex state. To this end many new ways to assert power and keep in control of finances were made, some successful others unsuccessful. With the ascension of Isaak I Komnenos we see the first signs of a reimagining of the imperial ideal, where the imperial family and few selected families had a greater role in the rule of the empire. His nephew Alexios would learn from the mistakes made by his uncle, and while his reforms were even more drastic he made sure that popular opinion was on his side.

## APPENDIX I

### Byzantine emperors 867 – 1081

---

EMPEROR	REIGN
Basil I	867 – 886
Leo VI	886 – 912
Alexander	912 – 913
Constantine VII (regency)	913 – 920
Romanos I Lekapenos	920 – 944
Constantine VII (sole rule)	945 – 959
Romanos II	959 – 963
Nikephoros II Phokas	963 – 969
John Tzimiskes	969 – 976
Basil II	976 – 1025
Constantine VIII	1025 – 1028
Romanos III Argyros	1028 – 1034
Michael IV “the Paphlagonian”	1034 – 1041
Michael V “the Caulker”	1041 – 1042
Zoë and Theodora	1042
Constantine IX Monomachos	1042 – 1055
Theodora	1055
Michael VI	1055 – 1057
Isaak I Komnenos	1057 – 1059
Constantine X Doukas	1059 – 1067
Romanos IV Diogenos	1068 – 1071
Michael VII Doukas	1071 – 1078
Nikephoros III Botaneiates	1078 – 1081
Alexios I Komnenos	1081 – 1118

# APPENDIX II

## Maps



Map 1: <http://awmc.unc.edu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/connorConstLbl.pdf>.



Map 2: The Byzantine Empire in 1025. [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/a7/Map\\_Byzantine\\_Empire\\_1025-en.svg/800px-Map\\_Byzantine\\_Empire\\_1025-en.svg.png](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/a7/Map_Byzantine_Empire_1025-en.svg/800px-Map_Byzantine_Empire_1025-en.svg.png).



Map 3: The cities and provinces of the East. Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire*, 305.



Map 4: The Byzantine empire in 1050. [http://4.bp.blogspot.com/\\_vj1Fxt5Dny0/S9gSJE\\_ArBI/AAAAAAAAAaA/1ttjajlpgEQ/s1600/Map+of+the+Byzantine+Empire+c+1050+CE.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_vj1Fxt5Dny0/S9gSJE_ArBI/AAAAAAAAAaA/1ttjajlpgEQ/s1600/Map+of+the+Byzantine+Empire+c+1050+CE.jpg)



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

### Primary sources:

- Albini, U., and Maltese, E., V., *Bisanzio nella sua letteratura* (Milan 2004)
- Ashburner, W., 'A Byzantine Treatise on Taxation', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 35 (1915) 76 - 84
- Attaleiates, M., *Historia*, ed. I. Bekker, *C.S.H.B.* (1853 Bonn)
- Attaleiates, M., *The History* (translated by A. Kaldellis and D. Krallis) (Cambridge 2012)
- Beck, H., G., *Vademecum des byzantinischen Aristokraten: das sogenannte Strategikon des Kekaumenos* (Graz 1964)
- Becker, J. (ed.), 'Die Werke Liudprands von Cremona; The Work of Liudprand of Cremona' in: *Usur Scholarum Separatim Editi* 41 (1915)
- Brand, C., M., 'Two Byzantine treatises on taxation', *Traditio* 25 (1967) 35 - 60
- Deacon, Leo the, *The History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine military expansion in the tenth century* (translated by Alice-Mary Talbot and Denis F. Sullivan) (Washington DC 2005)
- Dölger, F., *Aus den Schatzkammern des Heiligen Berges* (München 1948)
- Dostourian, E., D., *Armenia and the Crusades tenth to twelfth century, The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa* (New York 1993)
- Glycae, M., *Annales*, ed. I. Bekker *C.S.H.B.* (Bonn 1836)
- McGeer, E., *The land legislation of the Macedonian Emperors* (Mediaeval Sources in Translation, 38.) (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies 2000)
- Papachryssantou D. (eds.), Lemerle, P., Guillou, A., Svoronos, N., *Actes de Lavra première partie des origines a 1204 (Archives de l'Athos V)* (Paris 1970)
- Papachryssanthou, D., *Actes du Prôtaton (Archives de l'Athos VII)* (Paris 1975)
- Pharr, C., Davidson, T., S., and Pharr, M., B., *The Theodosian Code and Novels, and the Sirmondian Constitutions* (New York 1952)
- Psellos, M., *Letters (K - D) 99, 127.17-128.7*. Published online:  
<http://db.pbw.kcl.ac.uk/jsp/narrativeunit.jsp?NarrativeUnitID=22548#157857>
- Psellus, M., *Fourteen Byzantine rulers: The Chronographia of Michael Psellus* (translated by E.R.A. Sewter) (Penguin edition reprint 2011)
- Skylitzes, J., *A synopsis of Byzantine history 811 – 1057* (translated by John Wortley) (Cambridge 2010)

Svoronos, N., *Les Nouvelles des empereurs Macédonniens* (Athens 1994)

Svoronos, N., 'Recherches sur le cadastre byzantin et la fiscalité aux XIe et XIIe siècles: le cadastre de Thèbes', in: *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 83 1 (1959) 1 - 145

Secondary sources:

Angold, M., *Church and society in Byzantium under the Comneni 1081 – 1261* (Cambridge 1995)

Angold, M., *The Byzantine aristocracy, IX to XIII centuries* (Oxford 1984)

Angold, M., *The Byzantine Empire 1025 – 1204: A political history* (Longman 1997)

Bartusis, M., C., *Land and privilege in Byzantium, the institution of Pronoia* (Cambridge 2012)

Charanis, P., 'The Monastic Properties and the State in the Byzantine Empire' in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 4 (1948)

Cheyne, J., C., Sode, C., *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* 11 (Berlin 2012)

Fouracre, P. (ed.), Davies W. (ed.), *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge 1995)

Gautier, P., 'La Diataxis de Michel Attaliat' In: *Revue des études byzantines* 39 (1981) 5 - 143

Grierson, P., *Byzantine coins* (London 1982)

Haldon, J., *The Byzantine wars* (Tempus 2001)

Haldon, J., *Warfare, state and society in the Byzantine world 565 – 1204* (London 1999)

Harvey, A., *Economic expansion in the Byzantine Empire 900 - 1200* (Cambridge 1989)

Hendy, M., F., *Studies in the Byzantine monetary economy c. 300 – 1450* (Cambridge 2008)

Hendy, M., F., *The economy, fiscal administration and coinage of Byzantium* (Collected studies series; CS305) (Northampton 1989)

Holmes, C., *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976 – 1025)* (Oxford 2006)

Hussey, J., M., Louth, A., *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford 2010)

Howard-Johnston, J., 'Crown Lands and the Defence of Imperial Authority in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries' in: *Byzantinische Forschungen* XXI (1995) 75 – 100

Jenkins, R., J., H., 'The 'Flight' of Samonas' in: *Speculum* 23 2 (1948) 217 – 235

Kaplan, M., *Les hommes et la terre à Byzance du VIe au XIe siècle* (Paris 1992)

Kaplanis, C., 'The Debasement of the "Dollar of the Middle Ages"' in: *The Journal of Economic History* 63 3 (2003) 768 - 801

Kazhdan, A., P., Epstein, A., W., *Change in Byzantine culture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries* (Los Angeles 1985)

- Kazhdan, A., P. (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford University Press 1991) (available online:  
<http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/view/10.1093/acref/9780195046526.001.0001/acref-9780195046526>) all references checked and available: 22-05-2014
- Kazhdan, A., P., 'State, Feudal, and Private Economy in Byzantium' in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993) 83 – 100
- Laiou, A., E., Morriison, C., *The economic history of Byzantium* (Cambridge 2007)
- Laiou, A., E. (eds.), *The economic history of Byzantium, from the seventh to the fifteenth century* (Washington DC 2002)
- Lemerle, P., *Cinq études sur le XIe siècle Byzantin* (Paris 1977)
- Lemerle, P., 'Esquisse pour une histoire agraire de Byzance' in: *Revue historique* ccxix (1958) 32 – 74
- Lemerle, P., *The Agrarian History of Byzantium from the Origins to the Twelfth Century: the Sources and Problems* (Galway 1979)
- Magdalino, P. (eds.), *Byzantium in the year 1000* (Leiden and Boston 2003)
- Magdalino, P., *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos 1143 – 1180* (Cambridge 1993)
- Maguire, H. (ed.), *Byzantine court culture from 829 – 1204* (Washington D.C. 1997)
- Mango, C. (eds.), *The Oxford history of Byzantium* (Oxford 2002)
- Morris, R., *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium, 843-1118* (Cambridge 2003)
- Morris, R., 'The Powerful and the Poor in Tenth-Century Byzantium: Law and Reality' in: *Past & Present* 73 (1976) 3 – 27
- Morriison, C., 'La devaluation de la monnaie byzantine au XI siecle: Essai d'interpretation' in: *Travaux et mémoires* 6 (1976) 3 - 48
- Oikonomides, N., 'The Peira of Eustathios Romaïos, an abortive attempt to innovate in Byzantine law', in: *FM VII* (Frankfurt 1986) 169 - 192
- Ostrogorksy, G., *History of the Byzantine state* (New Jersey 1969)
- Ostrogorsky, G., 'Observations on the Aristocracy in Byzantium' in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 25 (1971) 1 – 32
- Schminck, A., 'Novellae extravagantes Leons VI', in: *Subcesiva Groningana* 4 (1990) 195 – 209
- Seibt, W., 'Die Eingliederung von Vaspurakan in das byzantinische Reich', *Handes Amsorya* 92 (1978) 49 - 66
- Stephenson, P., *Byzantium's Balkan frontier: A political study of the Northern Balkans, 900 - 1204* (Cambridge 2000)
- Stepheson, P. (ed.), *The Byzantine world* (London and New York 2010)
- Stephenson, P., *The legend of Basil the Bulgar-slayer* (Cambridge 2003)

Thomas, J., P., 'A disputed Novel of Emperor Basil II' in: *GRBS* 23 (1983) 273 - 283

Treadgold, W., *A history of Byzantine state and society* (Stanford 1997)

Treadgold, W., *The Byzantine revival* (Stanford 1988)

Treadgold, W., T., 'The Revival of Byzantine Learning and the Revival of the Byzantine State' in: *The American Historical Review* 84 5 (1979) 1245 - 1266