MASTERARBEIT / MASTER´S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master`s Thesis
„Marriage Strategies in the Early Palaiologan Period“

verfasst von / submitted by
Konstantina Gerakini

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2018 / Vienna 2018

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt / degree programme code as it appears on the student record sheet:
A 066 869

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt / degree programme as it appears on the student record sheet:
Masterstudium Byzantinistik und Neogräzistik

Betreut von / Supervisor:
Univ.- Prof. Dr. Claudia Rapp
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been completed without all those who have supported me. I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Univ.-Prof. Dr. Claudia Rapp for giving me the opportunity to write this master thesis under her supervision and for her valuable comments, remarks and engagement through the writing process. I am also grateful for her time, which she has always gladly dedicated to me.

I would also like to thank Univ.-Prof. Dr. Maria Stassinopoulou and Univ.-Prof. Dr. Andreas Müller for their support and guidance during their Privatissimum courses, as well Dr. Ekaterini Mitsiou for her advice on bibliographical issues.

Finally, I would like to thank from my heart my parents and sister, who were always there for me and motivated me during the entire period of writing my master thesis. I cannot find enough words to express my gratitude that in spite of the financial crisis they supported me in this endeavour at the Department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies of the University of Vienna.

Vienna, May 2018
INTRODUCTION

The present study focuses on the marriage strategies of the Byzantine aristocracy in the early Palaiologan period. It aims at analysing the marriage policies of the aristocratic families in the entourage of the early Palaiologan emperors, as well as the reasons the marriages among aristocrats were either finalised or not and the degree of the imperial interference in them.

The Historical Frame

Social developments cannot be analysed outside their historical frame. The early Palaiologan period follows the Laskarid Dynasty (1204-1259), which ruled in Nicaea, and ends with the reign of Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282-1328). The choice of this specific period is not coincidental, since many changes took place not only on the political but also on a social level. A part of the aristocracy followed Theodore I Laskaris (1204-1221), the founder of the empire of Nicaea in Asia Minor. In Nicaea, a new court was established. The blinding of John IV Laskaris (1258-1261) signalised the rise of a new ruling dynasty, the Palaiologan (1261-1453). Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259-1282), the first emperor after the recapture of Constantinople in 1261-the New Constantine-, faced enormous difficulties in keeping the recently re-established empire under Byzantine control, since the Latin titular emperors never accepted the loss of the Latin empire. The latter, along with their powerful allies, the family of the king Louis’ IX of France brother, Charles d’Anjou, who had the suzerainty of the majority of the Frankish hegemonies in the Aegean were a constant threat, which was eliminated only in 1282 after the Sicilian Vespers. The State (later Despotate) of Epirus, the other Byzantine hegemony, established by members of the Komnenos and Doukas family, was an extremely antagonistic power on the political scene of the time.

These dangers lead Michael VIII to follow the path of diplomacy. The most controversial diplomatic move was the Union of the Churches in the Second Council

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of Lyon in 1274. The matter of the Union caused a social reaction even from the majority of the aristocracy, who had supported Michael in 1259 and had followed him in Constantinople after 1261⁴.

After the death of Michael VIII in 1282, the first act of his heir, Andronikos II Palaiologos was to renounce the Union of the Churches. His reigning years were also characterized by intensive diplomatic activity, in which the intermarriages between the imperial house and foreign rulers, as well as to the aristocracy, played an equally important role as during the reign of his father⁵. The expansion of the kingdom of Serbia, along with the new threat of the Catalan Company had also caused new diplomatic challenges for Byzantium, which despite the short-term successes of Alexios Philanthropenos and John Tarchaneiotes, was already facing the collapse of the Byzantine frontier in Asia Minor to the Turks. Michael VIII and his heir Andronikos II, were two quite different personalities; however, they were both interested in the intermarriage policies; during their reign the aristocracy followed a specific way of conducting them, which lasted with some changes until the fall of Constantinople (1453).

Finally, the first phase of the civil war between Andronikos II and his grandson Andronikos III had catastrophic results for the already burdened Empire⁶. The present study has as chronological limit the first phase of the civil wars between the two Andronikoi (1321-1328); after that date the structure of the aristocracy changes significantly in comparison to the early Palaiologan period. Amidst the civil war the aristocracy was divided into two groups which supported the one or the other Andronikos, who on their part used the aristocracy in order to prevail upon the other.

This study aims at analysing the aristocratic intermarriages and their importance for the Palaiologan society. Prior to such an investigation, it is also necessary to explain the notion of the aristocracy in the early Palaiologan period.

⁵ NICOL, Last Centuries, 93-106.
⁶ A. LAIOU, Constantinople and the Latins: The Foreign Policy of Andronicus II, 1281-1328. Cambridge 1972; NICOL, Last Centuries 122-140.
Late Byzantine Aristocracy: Definition and State of Research

Several studies (monographs, volumes and articles) have as main subject the aristocracy and its function in the Byzantine society. The studies included in the volume ‘The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries’, along with those of Jean-Claude Cheynet, Alexander Kazhdan and George Ostrogorsky for the Byzantine aristocracy and society of the same period are of great importance also for the present study. Of paramount significance is also the book edited by John Haldon on the social history of Byzantium. The PhD of Demetrios Kyritses is dedicated to the aristocracy until the early fourteenth century, whereas Angeliki Laiou has written on the aristocracy in the early and later Palaiologan period. Finally, the monograph by Klaus-Peter Matschke and Franz Tinnefeld is dedicated to the Byzantine society of Late Byzantium, including also the aristocracy.

Prosopography plays also a significant role in the research of marriage strategies and the formation of clans. Therefore, the intensive use of prosopographical works is fundamental. The Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit (PLP) is extremely helpful and a ‘key’ in the prosopography of the Palaiologan period; it includes all individuals, who lived in this period and are mentioned in the Greek sources. On the other hand, many aristocratic families of this period have been the subject of specific prosopographical research such as the works of Donald Nicol for the family of Kantakouzenos, Averkios Papadopoulos for the Palaiologoi, and of Demetrios Polemis for the Doukai. Abundant information is also offered in the prosopographical studies of Ioannes Leontiades for the Tarchaneiotes family and the articles by Athenagoras, Gudrun Schmalzbauer, Erich Trapp as well as by Christian

Hannick and Gudrun Schmalzbauer for the families of Philanthropenoi, Asan and Synadenoi respectively\textsuperscript{12}.

Methodological Approach

The focus of the present master thesis lies on the marriage strategies of the aristocracy in the early Palaiologan period and does not examine other aspects of aristocratic conduct.

Modern scholarship dedicated numerous studies to the prosopography of the period, either in works about an entire family or by focusing on one or more prominent representatives of those families. Preliminary research, though, showed that despite the references to the marriages of those aristocrats included in the prosographical works, the strategies and patterns of marital action lacked an extensive analysis. Since a study about the interaction of aristocratic families through marriage is still missing, the present analysis aims at filling in this gap: after collecting the marriages and marriage proposals, emphasis will be given to the ways by which the families of high aristocracy engaged in a great social challenge, i.e. marriage.

This research focuses firstly on tracing the members of the aristocratic families that participated in the marriage strategies of the early Palaiologan period and secondly on the analysis of the reasons for the success or failure of those marriages, as well as the impact that they had on the families of the aristocracy. Whenever the sources are allowing it, the background stories of those marriages will be mentioned.

Since some members of the high aristocracy were also part of the entourage of the emperors and his immediate family, the emperors interfered in their marriage strategies. This interference should be also analysed since it reflects on the importance emperors laid on kinship ties with powerful aristocrats to the ruling dynasty as well as the degree of kinship proximity they allowed. Finally, the role of women in the marriage strategies of family members will be also analysed, as well as how the aristocratic family names demonstrate the understanding of the aristocrats of their own kin and their position in a dense web of ties between subgroups of the elite.

For composing the thesis, I started by studying the general historical background. Then, I continued with the creation of excel lists based on PLP and primary sources, selecting a number of individuals—more specifically 126 aristocrats—belonging to different aristocratic clans and families of the Early Palaiologan period. I also listed the marriage proposals and marriages that actually took place among those aristocrats. After recording all those information, I proceeded to the writing of the thesis, observing the marriage strategies that the families of high aristocracy and the emperor followed. Finally, the design of tables that show the intermarriages of the aristocratic families and their genealogy, based on the evidence selected, is also of great importance for the thesis for the remarks of the research to be now presented.

The Structure of the Thesis

At first, this study presents the historical frame and a detailed analysis of the sources. The first chapter offers a definition of the aristocracy and its function within the Byzantine social structures. The same chapter also includes a list of the families of the early Palaiologan aristocracy with a presentation of their backgrounds and history before the period under consideration.

The second and main chapter is divided in four subchapters. The first subchapter presents the marriage strategies of the aristocracy as a social group already from the tenth century with the appearance of the great Anatolian aristocratic families until the great evolution of the Komnenian system, when an extended family network of the Komnenoi-Doukai was formed. Then follow the marriage policies before and after the Fourth Crusade. This is an important introduction to the world of the marriage policies of the aristocracy, since it demonstrates the continuity of patterns of action by the aristocrats from the tenth century. The second subchapter focuses on the marriage strategies of the aristocracy until 1259, with the rise of the Palaiologoi to the throne. The study then turns to the marriage policies in the reigns of Michael VIII Palaiologos and his son and heir, Andronikos II, which demonstrate high rates of intermarriage activity among aristocratic families. The material is analysed in the subchapters three and four, whereas at the end of every subchapter some conclusions about the marriage strategies of every period are included.

In the conclusion, several aspects of the marriage strategies of the aristocracy are analysed. Finally, in an appendix all the aristocrats who participated in the
intermarriages are listed, as well as genealogical tables, in order to make more obvious the evolution of the marriage policies.

The Sources

The sources that provide information on the aristocracy in the early Palaiologan period are many and of different typology. In regard of the historiography, many and significant historical works cover the period 1259 until the first phase of the war of the two Andronikoi, grandfather and grandson.

George Akropolites is the main source for the empire of Nicaea and the rise of Michael Palaiologos. He writes his history as a continuation of the work of Niketas Choniates and describes the years 1203-1261. He has been characterized as a praiser of the reign of Michael VIII, avoiding to provide information on the blinding of John IV Laskaris. However, he gives an important account of the aristocracy of this period.13 The historiographical work of George Pachymeres is also a significant source describing the reigns of Michael VIII Palaiologos and his heir, Andronikos II; he criticizes, though, strongly their policies. His history continues the history of Akropolites. Pachymeres gives a more detailed account on the events of his time and abundant information on the marriage strategies of the aristocracy.14

The “Roman History” of Nikephoros Gregoras is another major source for this study, especially the first part of his work which covers the period 1204-1341. In his history he shows his positive feelings for emperor Andronikos II and his advisor, Theodore Metochites.15 By contrast, John Kantakouzenos writes his history in a form of memoirs. He is the major source for the events of the period 1320-1356 and although he offers us abundant information about it, he is not always objective.16

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15 Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή Ἱστορία (ed. L. SCHOPEN – I. BEKKER, Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina Historia [CSHF]. Bonn 1829-1855); KARPOZELOS, Βυζαντινοί Ιστορικοί 140-166.

Another historiographical work, belonging to the category of chronicles is the Chronicle of Morea. It is written in verse and found in four different versions in Greek, French, Aragonese and Italian. As a source it is unique, since it gives us information that does not exist in other works of that time, but one must be aware of inaccuracies considering names and chronologies. The *Istoria di Romania* of Marino Sanudo Torcello, Venetian statesman and geographer, also presents important information about the relations of the Byzantine Empire to the Latin hegemonies in Greece.

Manuel Philes was a court poet under Andronikos II. He wrote *epitaphioi* for members of the imperial family and the nobility, and for this reason his poems are a good source for the Byzantine prosopography.

Another type of sources that are used in this study are the Monastic Foundation Documents (Typika). This source type offers extensive information of the aristocratic families of Byzantium, since in the Palaiologan period many aristocrats founded monasteries. An example of these documents is the Typikon of the monastery of the Virgin of Bebaia Elpis (Lincoln College Typikon). It is a unique document for the Palaiologan aristocracy, since it includes the names as well as the portraits of the foundress and most of the members of her family, who in a majority held prominent positions in the administration and army and were members of the most important families of the Byzantine aristocracy.

Other important sources are the letters of scholars, and members of the clergy. The Letters of Gregory II of Cyprus, Patriarch of Constantinople (1283-1289) are essential. Constantine Akropolites, statesman during the reign of emperor Andronikos

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II, corresponded among others with Gregory of Cyprus and Nikephoros Choumnos, a prominent aristocrat related to the emperor by marriage, whose letter collection is also significant. Finally, Maximos Planoudes was an important scholar of the early Palaiologan period who wrote letters with a detailed account of the activities of the ecclesiastical and civil officials, and intellectual elite. The letters that provide us with information about the marriage strategies of the period are those of Athanasius I, Patriarch of Constantinople to the emperor Andronikos II addressed to members of the imperial family.

Interesting is also the well-known autobiography of emperor Michael VIII, since it offers information about the period and the policies of the founder of the Palaiologan dynasty.

Moreover, substantial information about the offices and the Constantinopolitan court is given in the anonymous work of Pseudo-Kodinos, which is a unique source for the court of this period.

The ranks, titles and offices held by the aristocrats referred in the thesis are based on the information given by the historiographical sources and the PLP, since there is a very limited sigillographical evidence for this period in comparison to the preceding one.

Finally, works of art offer abundant information for the aristocracy of the period. Dedicatory inscriptions, portraits of donors and epigrams reveal aspects of the

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patronage of aristocratic families, while they are visual testimonies of their own perception of social status.\textsuperscript{27}

CHAPTER ONE
THE ARISTOCRACY IN THE EARLY PALAIOLOGAN PERIOD

1. The Byzantine aristocracy: definition and terminology.

Aristocracy played a significant role in the structure of Byzantine society throughout its long-term history. However, every study on Byzantine aristocracy faces significant problems, when it comes to its definition. Questions could be raised about the actual character of aristocracy, the group of people that could be defined as such, its characteristics and its differentiation from other social groups, as well as the subgroups in which it could be divided. Other queries could also include the evolution of the aristocracy and the changes it might have undergone in various periods.

Several studies have undertaken the task to define and specify the term aristocracy, not only in the early and middle Byzantine period, but also in the Palaiologan era. The last centuries of Byzantium are extremely crucial, since the Empire transformed into a small state and faced an enduring period of decline, mirrored also on several aspects of social life. The aristocracy and its function under the Palaiologans is one of those aspects.

In order to describe and define the Palaiologan aristocracy, one should take into consideration the previous and current research. The existence of an aristocracy whose social, political and economic role increased as the power and influence of the imperial court and the capital declined, is according to Angeliki Laiou one of the most important characteristics of the Palaiologan period. At the same period, the Byzantine aristocracy also started to demonstrate similarities in some aspects to the feudal nobilities of Western Europe. Laiou defined aristocracy as a group of laymen, who formed the ruling elite having as distinguishing characteristics the possession of land in full or in the form of pronoia and could be identified by the term dynatoi. The land-based character of the Byzantine economy combined with the growing weakness of the central state made the landowners who already possessed economic strength politically

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30 LAIOU, The Byzantine Aristocracy 132.
more independent, since members of this group played an active role in the army and the administration\textsuperscript{31}.

On the main role of land as source of wealth for Byzantine society and particularly of the aristocracy, based his approach Georg Ostrogorsky, who in the evolution of the aristocracy observed the development of feudal phenomena\textsuperscript{32}. This conclusion was based on the properties that could be granted either in full possession or in the form of pronoia, but nowadays Ostrogorsky’s opinion about the existence of Byzantine feudalism is no longer accepted by scholars. In the case of pronoia, the land was given to be held for a lifetime in return for military service. Mark Bartusis in his study about the institution of pronoia observed that in Late Byzantium pronoia was land-property frequently granted to people of elevated status and its contents could be identical to the content of grant to a monastery or a simple grant to an aristocrat, always accompanied with service requirement\textsuperscript{33}. Michael VIII changed the nature of pronoia by making it hereditary\textsuperscript{34}; a policy followed also by his son and successor Andronikos II, although it seems that there were several degrees of ownership, as Laiou emphasises\textsuperscript{35}.

On the other hand, Demetrios Kyritses takes distance not only from the definition of Laiou of the late Byzantine aristocracy, but also from any evidence of feudalism in Byzantine society. He argues that the economic power of the aristocracy, although connected to the land, depended also on several other aspects such as position at court, in the administration and in the army\textsuperscript{36}. Kyritses objected also to Laiou’s term dynatoi for the Palaiologan aristocracy, since it could only be used for the local notables in provincial cities by that time\textsuperscript{37}.

Klaus Peter Matschke and Franz Tinnefeld observed that the early Palaiologan period was a period of construction for the Byzantine aristocracy. According to them, the aristocrats were not only landowners, but they could combine positions in the civil administration, attested already in the Nicaean Empire and continued in the period

\textsuperscript{31} LAI OU, The Byzantine Aristocracy 132.
\textsuperscript{32} OST ROGR O SKY, Observations 1-32.
\textsuperscript{34} BARTUSIS, Land and Privilege, 281.
\textsuperscript{35} LAI OU, The Byzantine Aristocracy 144-145.
\textsuperscript{36} KYRITSES, Byzantine Aristocracy 7-8.
\textsuperscript{37} KYRITSES, Byzantine Aristocracy 9.
under examination. The Byzantine historian Nikephoros Gregoras referred to these aristocrats as a group of landowners, powerful and socially prominent people, who were known as magnates (μεγιστάνες). This latter term is widely used by Matschke and Tinnefeld about this specific group of people in their study along with dynatoi. The two scholars accepted also the warlike and athletic model of Byzantine aristocracy expressed by Günter Weiss, because this could be also valid for the upper class of the first Palaiologans.

However, this model combined with the land-property, does not suggest any relation to the Western feudal style and the ideals of chivalry. Knighthood and feudal institutions, as they were developed in the Frankish hegemonies, such as the principality of Achaea, were certainly not to be found in the aristocracy of the Palaiologan period, although Pachymeres thought that the Western knights of Achaea (καβαλλάριοι) corresponded to the Byzantine magnates.

Related to the discussion about the aristocracy in Late Byzantium is also the term ‘nobility’. This term is usually interwoven with that of aristocracy, as in the Byzantine sources the adjective ‘noble’ (εὐγενής) is widely used when describing a member of the aristocracy. In his entry on aristocracy in the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, Alexander Kazhdan argued that the Byzantines tended to avoid the words aristoi (ἄριστοι) and aristokratia (ἀριστοκρατία) in favour of eugenes (εὐγενής), literally "well-born," emphasizing the concepts of honourable ancestry and high-minded spiritual and moral qualities. In modern scholarship the concept of nobility does not refer simply to someone who is well-born. According to Laiou nobility consists of a hereditary caste, whose rights and privileges are safeguarded by law. In Western Europe nobles were known for their hereditary titles, which were connected also to possession of land, at least after the thirteenth century. In Byzantium, though, offices and titles were never hereditary, and no rights or privileges were attached to a class. Therefore, Laiou concluded that an aristocracy existed in Byzantium, but not a nobility. Kazhdan connected nobility to the feudal aristocracy and aristocracy to

39 Nikephoros Gregoras, Ῥωμαϊκή Ιστορία I (205 Schopen-Bekker).
40 Matschke - Tinnefeld, Die Gesellschaft 28.
42 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὴ Ἱστορία I (119 Failler-Laurent); Matschke - Tinnefeld, Die Gesellschaft 19-20.
43 M. Bartusis, ‘Aristocracy’ ODB 1, 169.
44 More specifically on ranks, offices and titles see below.
45 Laiou, The Byzantine Aristocracy, 132-133.
bureaucracy. According to Jean-Claude Cheynet, this separation is difficult to be supported, due to the appearance of the same families in both groups. Aristocracy on the other hand, can be distinguished by birth, wealth and responsibilities in the state.

As already mentioned, several terms could describe the members of high aristocracy such as *dynatoi*, magnates, aristocrats, nobles, upper strata. However, regardless of the terminology it should be stressed that they were the social elite of their time. Being a part of an elite or dominant class depended upon a set of variables, according to John Haldon, which included the relationship of a person to members of other families of the same status, imperial office and title, closeness to the emperor and access to sources of wealth and land.

According to Haldon “Elites usually comprise a number of separable elements, distinguished by family and clan ties, by geographical location or origin, by political affiliation, by functional positioning the state of which they are a part. They are ally layers or levels of elite status and identity. All these elements have different values at different moments, so there is a constantly fluctuating overlap of vested interests, identities, alliances, networks of patronage and influence and so forth”.

The lack of hereditary aristocracy, at least in parallel with the concept of the western feudal society or the Roman aristocracy, is observed also by Donald Nicol. Nobility may neither have had a legal definition nor being hereditary, since the titles did not pass from father to child, but the existence of the *eugeneis*, the ‘golden line of noble birth’ as Pachymeres calls it, cannot be ignored. This fact is also emphasized by the adoption of family names after the ninth century, mostly of the great aristocratic families and clans such as Phokas, Skleros, Maleinos, Doukas, which introduced a new aristocratic ideal.

According to Laiou, the late Byzantine aristocracy could also be divided into subgroups. The most active and visible part of the aristocracy consisted of families at

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46 Kazhdan (Ronchey), L’aristocrazia 61-66.
49 Haldon, Social Elites 171.
50 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικα Ιστορία, Η (91-93 Failler–Laurent): μεγαλογενής σειρά και χρυσή συγκεκρότητα.
the highest social level; their names can be found in narrative sources and documents. The other, lower one, consisted of small pronoia-holders, whose pronoiai the emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos made hereditary\textsuperscript{52}. Nevertheless, Kyritses opposed to the use of the term ‘provincial aristocracy’ denouncing it as a problematic notion, because also members of high aristocracy should be included, since they possessed lands in various provinces and often resided in provincial cities. These aristocrats appeared to coexist with members of local families, who wanted to strengthen their position on a local basis and sometimes achieved aristocratic status as individuals, but not as families\textsuperscript{53}. Kyritses suggested also that the aristocracy could be divided into two subgroups, the aristocracy of high birth (the extended family/ clan of the emperor) and those whose social ascent came through public service or the army\textsuperscript{54}.

The triumph of Michael VIII Palaiologos in 1261 has been characterized by several scholars as the triumph of aristocracy, either civil or military\textsuperscript{55}. The recapture of Constantinople and the transfer of the imperial court from Nicaea to its former capital, had as a result the formation of a new aristocratic group consisting of two subgroups, the aristocracy of the Nicene Empire and the aristocracy of the western provinces and the Despotate of Epirus\textsuperscript{56}. The names of the families that constituted this upper class, the high aristocracy of this period, are registered by George Pachymeres in his historical work. Among them, one can find some of the most prominent families of the late Byzantine history, such as Kantakouzenos, Nestongos, Raoul, Tarchaneiotes, Tornikes, Philanthropenos and others\textsuperscript{57}. Those families are often described by historians and modern scholars with the terms dynatoi, magnates, aristocrats, nobles, upper strata and other.

Laiou classified the aristocracy in two groups; the one consisted not only of the known few families, the provincial aristocracy and some individuals with considerable fortunes, but also of the small pronoia holders and men with modest property, who may held minor offices. As a consequence, it could be assumed that with the loss of Asia Minor, many of them lost also their membership in the Byzantine aristocracy\textsuperscript{58}.

\textsuperscript{52} LAIOU, The Byzantine Aristocracy 133 and 135.
\textsuperscript{53} KYRITSES, Byzantine Aristocracy 10.
\textsuperscript{56} KYRITSES, Byzantine Aristocracy 1.
\textsuperscript{57} George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι II (91-93 FAILLER–LAURENT).
\textsuperscript{58} LAIOU, The Byzantine Aristocracy 141.
On the other hand, families such as the Kantakouzenoi or the Synadenoi, who followed Michael Palaiologos to the capital and received significant positions in the administration, possessed vast properties largely concentrated around a specific territorial base\textsuperscript{59}, mostly in Asia Minor. Exactly this area was neglected by the imperial authority and despite the efforts of Michael’s successor, Andronikos II, was lost at the end. Since the location of their properties could influence the behaviour of the aristocracy in various ways, it is not surprising that the higher aristocrats struggled to expand their connections to specific geographical areas\textsuperscript{60}. Properties in the western provinces, some of them in the form of promoia, had been granted to prominent families such as the Philanthropenoi in Thrace, Synadenoi around Vizye (also in Thrace) and Tornikioi in Macedonia\textsuperscript{61}.

**Ranks and Offices in the Early Palaiologan Period**

However, not only the possession of land property enabled a membership in the aristocracy -especially in the higher aristocracy, which was closer to the emperor. Of great importance were also distinctions of public and official character such as titles, ranks and offices. In the middle Byzantine period there were titles of honours denoting either rank or offices. Ranks divided the dignitaries into hierarchical groups according to their precedence in the ceremonies and determined the yearly allowance (ῥόγα) given to each dignitary by the emperor. On the other hand, offices had a specific task attached to them and they were not permanent\textsuperscript{62}.

In the eleventh century, many titles lost their significance and new titles replaced the older ones. Particular titles corresponded to the degree of relationship to the emperor in the family centred system of the Komnenoi; the hierarchical position of a family was directly related to the closeness of its kinship alliance to the imperial family. After 1204, there were differences to the titles given in the Byzantine states, the Empire of Nicæa and the Despotate of Epirus. The Lascarids of Nicæa were innovative, since they applied a pattern of dignities that lasted into the late Byzantine period. They decided to create a single court hierarchy and simplify ranks and offices,

\textsuperscript{59} LAIOU, The Byzantine Aristocracy 143.
\textsuperscript{60} On geography and aristocracy see CHEYNET, Pouvoir et contestations; KYRITSES, Byzantine Aristocracy 3.
\textsuperscript{61} LAIOU, The Byzantine Aristocracy 143.
\textsuperscript{62} KYRITSES, Byzantine Aristocracy 20-21.
which had similar hierarchy in the court. Titles that had appeared in the Komnenian era such as sevastohypertatos, novelissimos or protosebastos either disappeared or became attached to specific offices.

Although many ranks disappeared from the court hierarchy, there are two exceptions, those of sebastos and megalodoxotatos, which survived into the Palaiologan period but only as titles granted to individuals. Some members of the high aristocracy, who could have been expected to acquire high offices, titles or ranks did not receive them from the emperor; those individuals in some cases refused any other title, since they did not receive the one they wanted.

Court offices could also be divided in two groups; the first one defined by the order of precedence and the other by its nature, which could be either civilian, military, functional or decorative. An important fact about the offices of the Palaiologan period but also at other times is that some of them remained almost totally ceremonial and they could be given only by the emperor; they were held for a lifetime unless the person was promoted or disgraced. Possessing a court office was of major significance for the personal career of an aristocrat. As Kyritses observes, there must have been great competition among the high aristocracy for the obtainment of an office. Individuals could hold only one position at a time with some exceptions such as the combination of two titles, one of military office and one purely honorary. One example is the case of Michael Tarchaneiotes, who was megas domestikos in 1272 and also protovestiarios after a successful command in 1281.

The highest offices were mostly occupied by persons who were either characterised as oikeioi or they were known relatives of the emperor, as a careful examination of family names also reveals. These offices were entrusted to persons bearing few illustrious family names, some of which can be traced back to the twelfth century or even earlier. Certain individuals could also hold high offices, if they had personal power or prestige and they were also closely related to the emperor.

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63 ANGOLD, Byzantine Government 60 -73.
64 KYRITSES, Byzantine Aristocracy 22.
66 KYRITSES, Byzantine Aristocracy 32.
68 KYRITSES, Byzantine Aristocracy 36-37; PLP 27505.
70 KYRITSES, Byzantine Aristocracy 38.
However, there were aristocrats who never received a title or office, although they fulfilled all the social prerequisites. Examples can be found among the younger brothers of emperors or their sons, such as the porphyrogennetos Constantine, son of Michael VIII. He did not have a title, but he was the son of an emperor, he acquired an immense property and was obviously a member of the high aristocracy71.

The titles of despotes and sevastokrator were bestowed by the emperor upon his closest relatives, such as his sons and brothers72. The title of despotes was also recognized by the empire for the rulers of Epirus. Caesar and panhypersevastos were among the honorific dignities given to close associates and relatives of the emperor. protovestiarios was also a title that could be bestowed both upon persons with military careers and bureaucrats of the administration73. On the contrary, megas dux, megas domestikos and protostrator were military offices. The office of megas logothetes was held primarily by bureaucrats with kinship ties to the emperor not by blood but mostly by marriage, after they had received their office, as the examples of George Akropolites and Theodore Metochites demonstrate. An interesting fact for this office is that the sons of the latter were also bestowed the same offices as their fathers, but the succession was not direct74.

The list of offices is long; however, the most common for high aristocrats’ offices should be presented here. Megas stratopedarches was a military office mostly held by members of families of the high aristocracy. High birth was also important for pinkernes, while kouropalatai were successful army commanders. Kyritses observed that aristocrats showed a preference for particular offices, especially if they were trained in the art of war and wanted to follow a military career, while others sought a career as fiscal entrepreneurs, although there were exceptions. Another interesting observation is that the offices would be limited to a specific group, according to the personal skills and family tradition75.

To the highest military offices belong megas dux and megas domestikos, while at the middle level were those of megas papias and megas hetaireiarches; the lowest

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71 KYRITSES, Byzantine Aristocracy 11; PLP 21492. Constantine refused any other title except that of the despot, which was not given to him by his brother, Andronikos II, see George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικα Ἱστορίαι II (155 FAILLER–LAURENT).
73 KYRITSES, Byzantine Aristocracy 40.
74 Op. cit. 41; PLP 518, 520, 17982, 17986.
75 KYRITSES, Byzantine Aristocracy 44-45.
were those of *stratopedarchai* and *protallagatores*\(^76\). This specific career model was accessible only for the high aristocracy and the emperor’s closest relatives. That means that only prominent persons could fill the highest military offices. Most of them began their career in the middle offices. However, successful officers could also originate from the lower aristocracy, the gentry of provincial cities. The children of these prominent people relied on the achievements of their parents and their social mobility could last over several generations\(^77\). On the other hand, aristocratic women did not have titles on their own, but bore those of their husbands. The existing examples are mostly of female aristocrats, wives and daughters of prominent men.

**The Self-Consciousness of the Aristocracy**

Equally important is another characteristic of the aristocracy, its self-consciousness. Byzantine aristocrats were proud and conscious of their social position as it is revealed in the sources. Many families of the high aristocracy could at least claim an imperial ancestor and they were proud of their role in the Byzantine army, but also of their blood lines\(^78\). The long string of family names that were used by the aristocrats in the early Palaiologan period, involving all their blood relations, a trend started by the emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos, could be regarded as a proof of their self-description as a social group\(^79\). Sources such as Akropolites, Pachymeres and Kantakouzenos always mention them in relation to their nobility of line and their illustrious ancestry\(^80\).

Significant evidence of their consciousness as a social class is their depiction in the illuminated manuscripts, in fresco and mosaics in churches in the entire empire and in donor inscriptions. An excellent example is the *Typikon* of Bebaia Elpis Monastery, which attests the names and portraits of nine of the greatest families of Late Byzantium such as Branades, Synadenoi and Palaiologoi\(^81\). This specific document demonstrates

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\(^{76}\) MACRIDES–MUNITIZ–ANGELOV, Pseudo-Kodinos 26-33.

\(^{77}\) KYRITSES, Byzantine Aristocracy 45.

\(^{78}\) LAROU, The Byzantine Aristocracy 137-138.

\(^{79}\) NICOL, The Prosopography 82.

\(^{80}\) George Akropolites, Χρονική Συγγραφή I (165 HEISENBERG–WIRTH); John Kantakouzenos, Ιεροπίτε 1, II (213, 166 SCHOPEN); Pachymeres’ passage has already been mentioned above.

not only the significance of the family names, but also how the families wanted to keep their noble bloodlines and names by accomplishing intermarriages with members of their class. The depiction of the aristocrats is deliberately careful, revealing their social position; they are covered in gold and fine coloured clothes in imperial red (porphyron) or similar colours which couldn’t be found in the attire of persons of lower classes. They also wear jewellery such as crowns (diademata) or headcovers decorated with gold. The women wear also beautiful big earrings of gold and precious gems.

Interesting depictions of aristocrats provides also the Chora Monastery (today Kariye Camii) in Constantinople. The well-known donor portrait of Theodore Metochites, Megas Logothetes of Andronikos II, demonstrates clearly his social self-awareness, who is dressed in fine clothes wearing an extravagant hat, probably in the latest fashion of his class. The inscription on his left reveals his name and office. In the same monastery Maria Palaiologina is depicted as nun Melania. Maria was the illegitimate daughter of Michael VIII Palaiologos, known as the Lady of the Mongols, after her marriage with Khan Abaqa.

In my opinion, the upper class of the Byzantine society, being known as aristocracy, was self-conscious of its position. They projected it through patronage of art, their dress code or even the attitudes of authors belonging to the aristocracy. High aristocrats, the members of aristocratic families and individuals, who were closer to the emperor either through kinship or office, were proud of their blood and family alliances, which were mostly accomplished by intermarriages inside their social group. Apart from their families’ connections, kinship and alliances, their inclusion in the aristocracy depended heavily on their financial strength. Their wealth and income derived mostly from their land properties, their position in the administration, the possession of offices and titles, and sometimes from other activities. A career in the military or civil service depended either on their family tradition or their skills. Although many offices were held by those families closer to the emperor, social mobility in Byzantium was always

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82 NICOL, The Prosopography 83.
83 See for example the depictions of Constantine Komnenos Palaiologos, his wife Eirene Komnene Branaina Palaiologina and their descendants in HUTTER, Oxford Libraries, folios 6-16.
84 PLP 21395, PLP 1141.
86 One of these activities of the aristocrats was trade, especially in the late fourteenth to fifteenth centuries.
possible. Prominent individuals could succeed in receiving a high office and then built up their own connections that could bring them closer to the emperor through marriage.

As we are about to see below, the members of high aristocracy were well linked to each other for many decades, and an important role in that played the family alliances.

2. THE PALAIOLOGAN HIGH ARISTOCRACY

In 1258, emperor Theodore II Lascaris died and his successor to the throne was his underage son, John IV Laskaris. According to his father’s wishes, George Mouzalon was assigned as regent. However, in the very same year, a conspiracy of the aristocracy led to the murder of Mouzalon and the designation of Michael Palaiologos as regent; Palaiologos was *megas konostaulos*\(^{87}\), a military official in charge of the foreign troops. Certain families of the high aristocracy were involved in the selection of the new regent; their majority followed Michael Palaiologos back in Constantinople, and most of their names lasted until the fall of Byzantium\(^ {88}\).

Also, Akropolites recorded these specific families, which Pachymeres calls μεγάλογενής σειρά και χρυσή, the golden chain\(^ {89}\). Pachymeres lists the families Angelos, Aprenos, Batatzes, Kamytzes, Kaballarios, Kantakouzenos, Livadarios, Nestongos, Palaiologos, Philanthropenos, Philes, Raoul, Strategopoulos, Tarchaneiotes, Tzamantzouros and Tornikes. He does not mention other prominent aristocratic families such as Asan, Glabades, Synadenoi, Vranades and Laskaris; however, Pachymeres hints on the existence of other golden families (καὶ ὅσοι ἄλλοι οίς ἡ μεγάλογενής σειρά καὶ χρυσή συνεκρότητο).

High aristocrats were conscious of their class. Moreover, they were proud of their ancestry, which for many of them could be traced back in the Komnenian era. They also claimed imperial ancestry, by adding in their lineages the names of the glorious imperial clans/dynasties of Komnenoi and Doukai, either through direct blood

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\(^{87}\) The office of *Konostaulos/ Kontostaulos* seems to be inspired by the Latin office of Grand Contostable. The Byzantine sources referred to the holders of this specific office as *konostaulos*. Consequently, referring to it, I shall follow the spelling of the Byzantine sources.

\(^{88}\) LAIOU, The Byzantine Aristocracy 133; NICOL, Last Centuries 30-31; GENEAKOPOLOS, Michael Palaiologus 39-45.

\(^{89}\) George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἑστορίαι I (91-93 FAILLER–LAURENT).
kinship or not⁹⁰. In order to secure the kinship through bloodline, they were engaged in intermarriages with members of their own social group, as we will clearly demonstrate later in this study. The following pages present in alphabetical order these aristocratic families of the early Palaiologan period.

The main criteria for a family to be considered a member of the high aristocracy are the kinship with the Comnenian clan, the intermarriages with the imperial dynasty of Palaiologoi, the position in the Nicaean court firstly and in the Palaiologan court afterwards. Another parameter is the intermarriages with other families of the high aristocracy; all these criteria depend on the evidence of the primary sources.

**Angelos (Ἄγγελος)**

The Angeloi originated from Philadelphieia in Asia Minor. They came into the historical spotlight around 1110-15 when Konstantinos Angelos married Theodora, the youngest daughter of Alexios I Komnenos. The lineage of this main couple produced three emperors and established one of the branches in the State of Epirus⁹¹.

Michael I Doukas, one of the most prominent members of the family, seems that he had never used the family name of Angelos, since it was connected to a dynasty that caused the fall of the empire in 1204. The name Angelos has been used extensively by modern scholars though. Reason for this use might be the testimonies by Byzantine historians, who were hostile to him and to his successors. On the contrary, the affinity to the imperial dynasties of Komnenos and Doukas was mostly emphasized by both Michael, his brother Theodore and their successors, since they were referred to as Michael and Theodore Komnenos Doukas or Komnenodoukas⁹². Even the offspring of the couple, Constantine Angelos and Theodora Komnene, seem to prefer the name Doukas of their maternal grandmother, Eirene Doukaina, since it was more illustrious⁹³.

**Aprenos (Ἀπρηνός)**

Aprenoi were probably originated from the Thracian town of Apros⁹⁴. Already in 1258, they were included in the high aristocracy of the Nicaean Empire. After the

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⁹¹ Polemis, The Doukai 85.
⁹² Nicol, Despotate 3; Polemis, The Doukai 85.
⁹³ Polemis, The Doukai 85.
thirteenth century few members of the family are mentioned mostly as Doukai-Apropoi. The origins of this combination cannot easily been traced. A known member of the Apropoi family was the *protostrator* Andronikos Doukas Apropoi who lived in the reigning years of Michael VIII. His daughter of unknown name was the first wife of *Megas Domestikos* Michael Tarchaneiotes.

Asan – Asanes (Ἀσάν- Ἀσάνης)

The Byzantine family of Aas (or Ἀσάνης in the Byzantine sources) came into the forefront after the marriage of the Bulgarian tsar Ivan (John) III Aasen with Eirene Palaiologina, daughter of Michael VIII in 1278. The couple had no less than ten children, all of whom survived and many of them married into prominent families of the Byzantine aristocracy. Andronikos Doukas Angelos Komnenos Palaiologos Aasen is one of their sons, about whom Philes wrote several poems. The name Aasen was very attached to him and his children and Andronikos has adopted the string of names born by the Palaiologoi. His daughter, Eirene married John VI Kantakouzenos, who refers often to the Aasen family in his work.

Batatzes (Βατάτζης)

Batatzes was the name of a distinguished aristocratic family, whose members became also emperors of Nicaea. The origins of the family can be traced back to the tenth century when its members served in the army and were established in Thrace. According to a theory, the family name derives from the words βάτος (bush) or βατάκι (ray fish). After an intermarriage between two distant branches of the family in the thirteenth century, the surname of Diplobatatzes was created. Although the Batatzai was an old family having members such as John Komnenos Batatzes, commander of Philadelpheia and kin of the imperial dynasty, John III Batatzes seemed to prefer the...
name Doukas rather than Batatzes, emphasizing his descent from this imperial family.\textsuperscript{103}

\textbf{Branas (Βρανάς)}

The Branas family appear for the first time in the Byzantine sources in the eleventh century, when they seem to have followed mostly a military career. Their name is probably of Slavic origin deriving from the word ‘vran’ meaning raven; in Serbia the name Branos is attested already in the tenth century\textsuperscript{104}. The first known member in Byzantium is Nikolaos Branas, general of Alexios I Komnenos, who died fighting against the Pechenegs in 1086. Other members of the family were generals of Manuel I Komnenos, while Theodore Branas, one of their grandsons married the former empress Anna-Agnes of France and became a vassal of the Latin Emperor\textsuperscript{105}.

In the thirteenth century, the family belonged to the Nicaean aristocracy possessing properties in the region of Smyrna\textsuperscript{106}. The Branades intermarried with members of Komnenoi, Angeloi, Palaiologoi and Petraliphes families. The marriage of Eirene Branaina and Constantine Palaiologos, brother of the emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos in 1259 was important for both families. Both are depicted in the Typikon of Bebaia Elpis Monastery, since they are the parents of the foundress, Theodora Synadene\textsuperscript{107}. Around 1300 many members of the Branas family, some of whom bore also the name Komnenos, were the emperor’s oikeioi\textsuperscript{108}.

\textbf{Choumnos (Χούμνος)}

The Choumnoi were first attested in the eleventh century but are more widely known in the fourteenth century. The most prominent representative, Nikephoros Choumnos held a very high position in the Byzantine state, that of mesazon (chief minister) and epi tou kanikleiou. The Choumnoi accomplished intermarriages among others with the Palaiologoi, the Tarchaneiotai and the Philanthropenoi\textsuperscript{109}.

\textsuperscript{103} George Akropolites, Χρονικὴ Συγγραφή I (26 HEISENBERG-WIRTH).
\textsuperscript{104} A. KAZHDAN, ‘Branas’ ODB 1, 319-320.
\textsuperscript{105} KAZHDAN, ‘Branas’ ODB 1, 320.
\textsuperscript{106} H. AHRWEILER, L’histoire et la géographie de la région de Smyrne entre les deux occupations turques (1081-1137) particulièrement au XIIIe siècle. TM 1 (1966) 1-204, here 168.
\textsuperscript{107} PATLAGEAN, Ελληνικός Μεσαίωνας 197-198.
\textsuperscript{108} PLP 3149-3151, 3153-3171.
Glabas (Γλαβάς)

The first representative of the Glabades is attested in the late tenth century; however, they were established as a distinguished aristocratic family in the thirteenth century\textsuperscript{110}. Their name derives from the Slavic word “голова”, meaning in Greek ‘κεφάλι’ (‘head’)\textsuperscript{111}. During the first Palaiologoi, the family enjoyed high social standing and forged marriage alliances with other families of the high aristocracy and especially the Tarchaneiotai. They may have acquired the surname Doukas through this intermarriage\textsuperscript{112}.

The most distinguished member of the family is Michael Doukas Glabas Tarchaneiotes. He was one of the most successful generals of Andronikos II, whose career covered almost three decades\textsuperscript{113}. The contemporary sources refer to him mostly as Glabas, Doukas Glabas or Tarchaneiotes Glaba\textsuperscript{114}. He was one of the commissioners of Philes\textsuperscript{115} and had financed the restorations of the monasteries of Pammakaristos in Constantinople in 1293 and of St John the Baptist in Sozopolis\textsuperscript{116}.

Kaballarios (Καβαλλάριος)

A family of high-ranking officials for the period ca. 1250-1350, the Kaballarioi claimed their origin of the Latins, since their name means “cavalryman” or “knight”\textsuperscript{117}. They held high positions in the Nicaean court. In 1258/9 Basil Kaballarios was married to Theodora Tarchaneiotissa, whose family was also one of the most aristocratic families\textsuperscript{118}. The marriage was approved by Theodore II Laskaris but later annulled by

\textsuperscript{110} POLEMIS, The Doukai 120.
\textsuperscript{111} The meaning of this word was known to the Byzantines, since Philes in his poem for Glabas, refers to it, Manuel Philes, Carmina II (107 MILLER).
\textsuperscript{112} POLEMIS, The Doukai 120.
\textsuperscript{114} George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἑιστορίαι I, II (250, 271 FAILLER–LAURENT); Nikephoros Gregoras, Ἱστορία Ἱστορίων I (159, 484 SCHOPEN–BEKKER); Manuel Philes, Carmina I (91, 280, 432 MILLER).
\textsuperscript{115} Manuel Philes, Carmina II (14, 103, 107, 139 and many more MILLER). A poem of Philes entitled Εἰς τὰ τοῦ πρωτοστράταρος ἱκετεύων τοῦ θυμαστῶν στρατηγῆματα cites important historical information about Michael’s military career, Ibid. II 240-255.
\textsuperscript{117} A. KAZHDAN, ‘Kaballarios’, ODB 2, 1087.
\textsuperscript{118} George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἑιστορίαι I (34, 109 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 10037.
Michael VIII Palaiologos, for reasons that are going to be analysed below. During the reign of the first Palaiologans, members of the Kaballarios family belonged in the immediate entourage of the emperor and held offices and being listed among the emperors’ *oikeioi*, such as Michael Kaballarios and Bardas Kaballarios. The intermarriages of Kaballarioi, with the exception of the marriage with a member of the Tarchaneiotes family, are unknown for the period under examination.

**Kamytzes (Καμύτζης)**

Pachymeres in his famous passage about the golden line of the aristocratic families listed also the family of Kamytzes. A Manuel Kamytzes was protostrator and commander of Adrianople in 1225; another member of the family, John was megas hetaireiarches under John III. Nonetheless, members of the family appear already in the Komnenian period, one of whom, Constantine married the emperor’s Alexios I Komnenos granddaughter, Maria Komnene. By the time of the Fourth Crusade in 1204, the Kamytzai were known as great landowners.

**Kantakouzenos (Καντακουζηνός)**

The family of Kantakouzenos is one of the most famous families of the high aristocracy, which also succeeded in ascending to the throne of Constantinople. The origin of the family name has monopolised the interest of many scholars, who proposed that it is a compound of κατά-κουζηνάν or κατά-κουζηνόν; the name reveals probably the origin of the family since Kouzenas was the local name for the southern part of Mount Sipylon near Smyrna. In the same place existed also a monastery, called Saint Theophylaktos of Kouzenas. Therefore, the original form of the name seems to have been Katakouzenos, although in the sources is being found both as Katakouzenos and Kantakouzenos, with the latter to be used from the Byzantine writers as the official one.

Therefore, the family of Kantakouzenos traced its origins in Asia Minor, although from the twelfth century onward they appeared with land properties in the

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119 George Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικά Ἱστορίαι* I (324 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 10034.
120 George Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικά Ἱστορίαι* I (93 FAILLER–LAURENT).
121 George Akropolites, *Χρονική Συγγραφή* (20 HEISENBERG–WIRTH); MACRIDES, Akropolites 137.
122 E. TRAPP, ‘Kamytzes’ *ODB* 2, 1099.
124 NICOL, Kantakouzenoi ix.
Western provinces of the Byzantine Empire. The Kantakouzenoi were great landowners with estates in Macedonia and Thrace, maybe also in the Peloponnese before the Fourth Crusade. It seems though that the main inherited estates were in Serres, where the most prominent member of the family, Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos is described to have his wealth\textsuperscript{125}.

Despite its obscure beginnings at the start of the eleventh century, the family rose to prominence in the twelfth century. The earliest known members of Kantakouzenoi belonged without an exception in the military aristocracy of the Empire. In the thirteenth century they entered the high aristocracy by marrying into the families of Komnenos, Angelos and Palaiologos. During the 13th and the beginning of the 14th century the family of Kantakouzenos was related through intermarriages with the majority of high aristocracy such as the families of Asan, Branas, Doukas, Laskaris, Philanthropenos, Raoul, Synadenos, Tarchaneiotes and Tornikes, but also with those of Choumnos and Mouzalon\textsuperscript{126}.

The first prominent member of the family that appeared in the sources was a Kantakouzenos of unknown name, who took part in the defensive campaign of emperor Alexios I Komnenos against the Cumans in 1094\textsuperscript{127}. He served the emperor in many military missions with bravery and even though his name and family members before him are unknown, Anna Komnene described him as a remarkable soldier, who had the appreciation of the emperor\textsuperscript{128}. After him the family was known for its military commanders, who gained high ranks and titles such as sebastos John Kantakouzenos, who died in Myriokephalon in 1176\textsuperscript{129}. But obviously the most distinguished member of the family was John Kantakouzenos, the later emperor John VI. He had a strong friendship with the grandson of the emperor Andronikos II, Andronikos III and he supported him during the civil war of the two Andronikoi. He held initially the office of megas papias, and in ca.1325 he became megas domestikos before becoming emperor in 1347\textsuperscript{130}.

\textsuperscript{125} NICOL, Kantakouzenoi x.
\textsuperscript{126} Op. cit. xi.
\textsuperscript{127} NICOL, Kantakouzenoi 3.
\textsuperscript{130} PLP 10973; NICOL, Kantakouzenoi 35-108.
Laskaris (Λάσκαρις)

The first known member of the Laskaris family is the emperor of Nicaea, Theodore I. He was married to Anna, daughter of Emperor Alexios III Angelos. He received the title of Despotes but the family’s origins and background are uncertain. A distant relationship to the Komnenoi could be deduced from the fact that he is also called Komnenos. Laskaris is believed to derive from the word of Cappadocian dialect meaning teacher (δάσκαρης) or as it is more acceptable by the scholars from the persian word lascar or the arab word al-askar meaning warrior. The last explanation seems more probable, since in the Byzantine tradition the word Λάσκαρης was interwoven with the word πολεμιστής (warrior). The origin and the meaning of the name of the Laskaris family could reveal not only information about the family itself, but also for its role against their enemy number one after the blinding of John IV Laskaris, the Palaiologoi.

The Laskareis, as already mentioned, belonged to the high aristocracy, but they were not one of the most active families in the marriage policies during the first Palaiologoi. Nevertheless, the surname continued to exist in the late Byzantine period.

Libadarios (Λιβαδάριος)

The Libadarioi were one of the greatest family in the middle of the thirteenth century. Although we lack information on their origin, Libadarioi held high court and military offices; the daughter of a certain Libadarios, who was pinkernes in the reign of Michael VIII Palaiologos, married the emperor’s son, Theodore Palaiologos. Some members of the family held successfully military positions in the early Palaiologan period. Others were also founders of monasteries, such as Theodore Komnenos.

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132 POLEMIS, The Doukai 139.
134 On the meaning of the word Laskaris in Late Byzantium see E. KRIARAS, Λαζάρος ο Μεσαιωνικός Ελληνικής Δημοσίων Γραμματέων (1100-1669). Thessaloniki 1985, 113.
135 POLEMIS, The Doukai 139; B.A. MYSTAKIDES, Λάσκαρεις 1400-1869. EEBs 5 (1928) 130-168.
136 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαί Ιστορία I (91-93 FAILLER–LAURENT).
137 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαί Ιστορία I II (318, 181 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 92538.
Libadarios who established a monastery dedicated to the Virgin and which Manuel Philes praised\(^\text{138}\).

**Metochites (Μετοχίτης)**

The Metochitai was an important family of the Palaiologan era. Their family name derived from the Greek word μετόχιον meaning part of a Monastery\(^\text{139}\). The most prominent member of the family for the early Palaiologan period was Theodore Metochites, minister of Andronikos II Palaiologos, who had five sons, who all gained positions in the administration and a daughter, Eirene, who married the emperor’s nephew, John Palaiologos\(^\text{140}\). Theodore Metochites is depicted as a donor in a mosaic of the Monastery of Chora in Constantinople\(^\text{141}\).

**Nestongos (Νεστόγγος)**

The earliest reference to the Byzantine family of Nestongos appears in the twelfth century Pantokrator *Typikon* \(^\text{142}\). The name Nestongos (Νεστόγγος), was probably owned to a Bulgarian prince named Nestong\(^\text{143}\). They were related to John III Batatzes, but two of them, Andronikos and Isaac, conspired unsuccessfully against him\(^\text{144}\). However, the Nestongoi retained prominence; Theodore II seems to have planned to make George Nestongos his son-in-law\(^\text{145}\).

In the thirteenth century the family belonged already to the high aristocracy. The Nestongoi participated in the conspiracy against the regency of Mouzalon in 1258. Several members of the family were connected through marriages with the families of Batatzai, Palaiologoi and Tarchaneiota\(^\text{146}\). Constantine Doukas Nestongos was uncle of Andronikos II, whereas Eudokia Nestongonissa, was an aunt of Andronikos II and

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\(^{138}\) Manuel Philes, Carmina II (203 MILLER); PLP 14861.

\(^{139}\) E. TRAPP, ‘Metochites’ *ODB* 2, 1357.

\(^{140}\) PLP 5972, 17976-17986.


\(^{142}\) POLEMIS, The Doukai 150.


\(^{144}\) George Akropolites, Χρονική Συγγραφή (225 HEISENBERG- WIRTH); MACRIDES, Akropolites 169-170.

\(^{145}\) George Pachymeres, Συγγραφική Ιστορία I (95 FAILLER- LAURENT).

\(^{146}\) POLEMIS, The Doukai 150-151.
The name Doukas was probably assumed after the thirteenth century, probably through intermarriages with the Palaiologoi.

**Palaiologos (Παλαιολόγος)**

The Palaiologos family is the imperial family of the period 1261-1453 and one of the most long-term dynasties in the history of the Byzantine Empire. The name has become a subject of research for scholars, since there was a theory that the words consisting the name Palaiologos, in Greek παλαιός λόγος is a Hellenization of the Latin words vetus verbum and are actually denoting the origin of the family from the Italian city of Viterbo. This theory seems to be invented from the descendants of the family, who moved to Italy after the Fall of Constantinople in 1453.

The family appeared for the first time in the eleventh century, with its first known member to be the commander Nikephoros Palaiologos, counsellor of the emperor Romanos VI Diogenes, who died fighting bravely the Normans in 1081. His son, Georgios Palaiologos, was also a brave commander who married the sister of the empress Eirene Doukaina, Anna. The Palaiologoi were known as an aristocratic family of military commanders; prior to 1204, Alexios III Angelos married his firstborn daughter Eirene to Alexios Palaiologos, who was intended to be his heir since he didn’t have a male heir to the throne. Alexios died before the capture of the city and therefore the emperor’s heir became his second son in law, Theodore Komnenos Laskaris.

The claims of Michael VIII Doukas Angelos Komnenos Palaiologos to the throne were based on the plans about Alexios Palaiologos. His mother was Theodora Palaiologina, daughter of Eirene Angelina and Alexios Palaiologos and his father was Andronikos Palaiologos. Michael’s parents had the same surname because they originated from two separated lines of the Palaiologoi, going back to the Komnenian era and more specifically to Georgios Palaiologos; therefore, Michael VIII called

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147 PLP 20197.
148 POLEMIS, The Doukai 151.
150 Anna Kомнene, Alexias II (84 REINSC- KAMBYLLIS); PAPADOPULOS, Palaiologen vii.
151 Anna Kомнene, Alexias II (69 REINSC- KAMBYLLIS); PAPADOPULOS, Palaiologen 2.
152 Nikephoros Gregoras, 'Ῥωμαϊκή ἱστορία I (69 SCHOPEN- BEKKER); MACRIDES, Akropolites 116.
153 MACRIDES, Akropolites 114.
154 PLP 21528.
himself Diplopalaioiologos, which means double Palaiologan. The names that the emperor used reveal his kinship to the imperial families of Komnenos, Doukas and Angelos. He was especially interested in the intermarriages of high aristocracy, since he was aware of claims that could be raised through family connections and relations. His son and heir, Andronikos II was also aware of this fact and he showed a unique interest in this aspect of social life.

As it can be assumed, high aristocratic families would aim at becoming part of the imperial clan and family of the emperor. This explains why the Palaiologoi engaged in intermarriages with almost all families of high aristocracy; those family ties are going to be analysed in the next chapter.

**Petraliphas (Πετραλίφας)**

The family of Petraliphas owned its origin to the Norman nobleman of the First Crusade Πέτρο τοῦ Ἀλίφα. Peter stayed in Byzantium under the service of emperor Alexios I Komnenos, settled in Didymoteichon in Thrace and established his family, as did another Latin, Raoul. After the Fall of Constantinople in 1204 some of its members appear in Nicaea, among the high aristocracy, while others had settled in the State of Epirus. The Petraliphai continued to exist until the fifteenth century. Generally, they forged marriage alliances with the Komnenoi, Tornikai, Branades and Doukai. The most distinguish member of the family is Saint Theodora Doukaina Petralipha, basilissa of Epirus and wife of Michael II.

**Philanthropenos (Φιλανθρωπηνός)**

The family name of Philanthropenos is etymologically connected to the Constantinopolitan Monastery Χριστοῦ τοῦ Φιλανθρώπου, the Comnenian foundation. The first Philanthropenos that attested in the sources is Athanasios Philanthropenos, abbot of St Mamas Monastery, which belonged to the Monastery Χριστοῦ τοῦ
Φιλανθρώπου in 1158. However, Athanasios was probably not related to the aristocratic family. The Philanthropenoi are not attested in the twelfth century, however in the thirteenth century they received high military and administrative positions. They were connected through kinship ties, probably mostly through intermarriages with the families of Komnenoi, Doukai, Laskareis, Angeloi, Palaiologoi and Kantakouzenoi.

There were many prominent members of this specific family such as Alexios Doukas Philanthropenos, *megas dux* under Emperor Michael VIII and his homonymous grandson, the *pinkernes*. The latter was much praised for his military skills and successes in Asia Minor. However, in 1296 he revolted against Andronikos II. Originally, his paternal surname was Tarchaneiotes, but he had chosen the name of his maternal grandfather.

**Philes (Φιλής)**

The family of Philes flourished during the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries. The most known member of the family is the poet Manuel Philes, but there other members of the family belonged in the entourage of the emperors. Theodore Philes, governor of Thessaloniki after 1246, was blinded by Theodore II Laskaris and in 1258 was an ardent supporter of Michael VIII Palaiologos. His son married into the Palaiologan family, whose union lead their ancestors to adopt also the name Palaiologos into their family names among with that of Philes.

**Raoul-Ralles (Ῥαούλ-Ῥάλλης)**

The Raoul family was of Norman origin. Its first mentioned in 1081, when the brothers Rotgerus (Ῥογέρης) and Raoul (Ῥαούλ), sons of Dagobertus (Τακουπέρτος), left the court of Robert Guiscard, Norman Duke of Apulia and Calabria and went to

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161 ATHENAGORAS, Philanthropenoi 61-62.
162 POLEMIS, The Doukai 167.
163 ATHENAGORAS, Philanthropenoi 61.
167 PLP 29817.
168 PLP 29812.
169 For example John Palaiologos Philes, PLP 29815.
Constantinople\textsuperscript{170}. There they entered the service of Alexios I Komnenos and participated in several diplomatic missions as Byzantine imperial ambassadors\textsuperscript{171}. The names of their wives are not known; however, they must have been from prominent families, since such marriages were frequent enough at that time\textsuperscript{172}. Their immediate descendants used the name of the family’s founders as a surname probably from the middle of the twelfth century onwards. In the first half of the same century, the family was completely hellenised and in the same century, there is Constantine Doukas Raoul with the title of pansevastos sevastos\textsuperscript{173}.

A gap appears in the genealogical succession of the Raouls from the end of the twelfth to the middle of the thirteenth century. Nevertheless, they left the capital after its fall in 1204 and moved to Nicaea; a member of the Raoul family is attested in Nicaea in 1242, being related by marriage to emperor John III Vatatzes and holding the title of protovestiarios; he was also married into the Kantakouzenos family\textsuperscript{174}. The Raoul continued to play an important role in the intermarriages of the aristocracy until the fourteenth century, being related already from the thirteenth century with the families of Kantakouzenos, Palaiologos and Stratagopoulos\textsuperscript{175}. This is attested also in the case of Theodora Kantakouzene Raoulaina, niece of emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos, who was married into the Raoul family\textsuperscript{176}.

**Synadenos (Συναδηνός)**

Synadenos denotes the inhabitant of the Phrygian town Synada\textsuperscript{177}. The family Synadenos appears for the first time in the eleventh century; they belong already in the high aristocracy since they married into the imperial family of Komnenoi\textsuperscript{178}. They continue to be members of the high aristocracy in the thirteenth century, using also the names Komnenos and Doukas among their surnames\textsuperscript{179}. In the thirteenth and fourteenth

\begin{footnotes}
\item[170] Anna Komnene, Alexias, XIII (423 REINSCH – KAMBYLIS).
\item[173] FASSOULAKIS, Raoul 13.
\item[175] FASSOULAKIS, Raoul 3.
\item[177] HANNICK-SCHMALZBAUER, Synadenoi 125; POLEMIS, The Doukai 178.
\item[178] HANNICK-SCHMALZBAUER, Synadenoi 154.
\item[179] For example John Synadenos Komnenos Doukas Angelos, HANNICK-SCHMALZBAUER, Synadenoi 134.
\end{footnotes}
centuries they concluded several intermarriages with members of the high Palaiologan aristocracy such as the Kantakouzenoi and Palaiologoi.

Information about the family comes not only from historical sources and poems, but also from the Typikon of *Bebaia Elpis* nunnery, a foundation of Theodora Synadene. The illuminations of the Typikon depict many members of the family; they paint a clear picture of the kinship ties through intermarriages of this aristocratic family.

**Strategopoulos (Στρατηγόπουλος)**

The family Strategopoulos belongs to the most important aristocratic families in the empire of Nicaea. The name derives from the Greek word στρατηγός (general), which surprisingly represents the career of the majority of the members of this family, who held high military positions. The first known representative of Strategopouloi was John Strategopoulos, *megas logothetes* and *sebastos* in the court of Nicaea in the early thirteenth century. Nevertheless, the most prominent member was the general Alexios Strategopoulos, who started his military career under the emperor John III Batatzes. During the reign of Theodore II Laskaris, he fell into disfavour and was imprisoned; his son, Constantine was also accused for treason and blinded. For this reason, the Strategopouloi supported Michael VIII Palaiologos and Alexios gained the title of *megas domestikos* in 1259 and in 1261 he was the one who recaptured Constantinople.

It is unknown why the most distinguished members of the Strategopoulos family used the name Komnenos. It is possible that there an intermarriage with a member of the Komnenos family had taken place, probably before the thirteenth century. The intermarriages of the Strategopouloi are generally unknown, except from those with members of the Raoul family. Probably the influence of the family later declined, since there is no evidence of their presence in the court of Constantinople in the fourteenth century.

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183 Macrides, Akropolites 286-287.
184 PLP 26894, 26897.
185 Geanakoplos, Michael Palaiologos 88-92.
186 Fassoulakis, Raoul 31-33.
**Tarchaneiotes (Ταρχανειώτης)**

Pachymeres listed the Tarchaneiotes family among the most influential families of the empire of Nicaea; it seems that they possessed land in the Smyrna region. The name Tarchaneiotes may derive from the Mongolian-Turkish word “tarquan” meaning blacksmith or the Bulgarian routed word τορκάνος. However, these etymologies object to the fact that there is no evidence of a family name deriving from an office or craft with the suffix -ώτης. Therefore, it is more probable that there is a metathesis of a single letter from Τραχανειώτης to Ταρχανειώτης. The family may originated from Thrace; Anna Komnene is referring to a member of the family, Katakalon Tarchaneiotes, as one of the citizens of Adrianople.

The Tarchaneiotes family appeared for the first time in the reign of Basil II and they seemed to be a part of the military aristocracy of the time. In the beginning of the eleventh century they hold important military offices: Gregorios Tarchaneiotes for example was katepano of Italy (998/9-1006) whereas Basil Tarchaneiotes was strategos, katepano, magistros, doux. Joseph Tarchaneiotes was also an important general under Romanos IV Diogenes; in the reign of Michael VII Doukas he became dux of Antiocheia (1072-1074) and later katepano of Adrianople (1077).

Although the members of the family were extremely active as military commanders, the rising of the social status of the Tarchaneiotai was achieved after intermarriages with the family of Bryennios (1077) and the kinship to the Komnenian clan. It is possible that after the reign of Komnenoi, the Tarchaneiotai suffered a temporary decline, but they regained their importance after 1204. Nevertheless, the peak of the family came when Nikephoros Tarchaneiotes, general of emperor John III Doukas Batatzes, married into the family of Palaiologos and more specifically to Maria-Martha, the older sister of Michael VIII Palaiologos.

The children of this couple were among the most prominent members of the family; they and their progeny played an important part in the marriage policy of high

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187 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι, I (91-93 FAILLER–LAURENT).
190 Anna Komnene, Alexias X (287 REINSCH- KAMBYLLIS)
191 LEONTIADES, Tarchaneiota 28-29, 35-41.
194 LEONTIADES, Tarchaneiota 29, 61-63.
aristocracy in Late Byzantium as it is going to be demonstrated in the next chapter. They were all high ranking military commanders; one of them, John Tarchaneiotes, the third son of Nikephoros, was an Athonite monk. He supported the Arsenites and he opposed Union policy of emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos195.

The family of Tarchaneiotes intermarried mostly with the families of Palaiologos, Glabas, Nestongos and Philanthropenos. One of the most prominent members of the Philanthropenos family, Alexios Doukas, is also a member of the Tarchaneiotai by his paternal side196.

**Tornikios (Τόρνικιος)**

The Tornikioi originated from the Armenian dynasty of Taron, known in the Byzantine sources as Taronites. The name Tornikios or Tornikes, T’ornik in Armenian is diminutive of the word t’orn meaning grandson197. The first bearer of the name Tornikios was a son of a prince of Taron named Abu Ghanim (Apoganem) according to emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos198. Apoganem was brought to the Byzantine Empire and took the title of protospatharios in the early tenth century; his son, came to Constantinople later and granted the rank of patrikios199.

Even though the members of the family were mostly military commanders at the outset, from the 10th century onwards they were principally civil functionaries as the examples of John Tornikios, megas logothetes tou dromou in the late 12th century and his son, Constantine, who was logothetes reveal200. In the 13th century, John Tornikios was dux of Thrakesion and was proudly called himself συμπένθεος of the emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos201. The Tornikioi intermarried mostly with the family of Palaiologos, but also with the Raouls and the Akropolitai202. Some of their members bore also the names of Komnenos and Doukas among such as Andronikos Komnenos Doukas Palaiologos Tornikes and his brother, Constantine; the adoption of those names could be explained after the intermarriages with the family of Palaiologoi.

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195 PLP 27487; LEONTIADES, Tarchaneiotai 30.
196 PLP 29751; LEONTIADES, Tarchaneiotai 30.
199 SCHMALZBAUER, Tornikioi 116.
201 PLP 29126; SCHMALZBAUER, Tornikioi 121-122.
202 SCHMALZBAUER, Tornikioi 116, 121, 123-124.
and earlier with John III Batatzes, since no information exists about any Tornikios married into the Komnenoi.203

According to the sources and the modern scholars the families of the aristocracy described above belonged to the high aristocracy of the Byzantine Empire. The duration of their presence in this specific social circle depended mostly on their successful alliances with persons of the same milieu and some of them struggled through the marriage strategies to get into the high aristocracy and remain a part of it. The majority of them moved from Constantinople to Nicaea after the Fourth Crusade and they continued being the elite of the imperial court there. These aristocratic families were completely aware of their class and they proved their self-consciousness by pursuing intermarriages between them. Five of them raised claims to the imperial throne, the Angeloi, the Batatzes, the Laskareis, the Kantakouzenoi and the Palaiologoi; the last one became the long term and last dynasty of the Byzantine Empire.

Nevertheless, there were other families who belonged to the aristocracy or entered the high aristocracy through intermarriages with members of the families mentioned before, but they were never considered actual members of the high aristocracy. The Akropolitai entered the entourage of the Palaiologan emperors and some of its members married into the high aristocracy and the imperial family of the Megaloi Komnenoi in Trebizond. The members of the Mouzalon family appeared mostly when Theodore II Laskaris tried to marry female members of the high aristocracy with prominent members of lower aristocratic esteem. These families (Akropolitai, Mouzalones), are also presented in this subchapter, as they played an active role in the marriage policy of the high aristocracy.

**Akropolites (Ἀκροπολίτης)**

Akropolites is a well-known family name, specifically through the most distinguished member of the family, the historian and state official, Georgios Akropolites. The Akropolitai were probably of Constantinopolitan origin, and are firstly mentioned around the 10th century.204 In 1088, a Nikolaos Akropolites was βεστάρχης και χαρτουλάριος τοῦ στρατιωτικοῦ λογοθέτου. Other representatives of the

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203 PLP 29122; Polemis, Doukai 184-185; SCHMALZBAUER, Tornikioi 121-122.
204 POLEMIS, The Doukai 82.
family are known of lead seals and references in documents and other sources\textsuperscript{205}. Georgios Akropolites himself was sent by his father from Constantinople to the Empire of Nicaea at the age of sixteen to be further educated\textsuperscript{206}. In the thirteenth century, matrimonial alliances took place between the family of Akropolites and representatives of the high aristocracy such as the Tornikioi and the Philanthropenoi\textsuperscript{207}.

**Mouzalon (Μουζάλων)**

The Mouzalones were firstly mentioned in the eleventh century. Nikolaos Mouzalon was patriarch of Constantinople in 1147-1151\textsuperscript{208}. The Mouzalon brothers, George and Andronikos, were raised to high positions during the reign of Theodoros II. According to Akropolites they were from Adramyttion (modern Edremit) and of humble origin\textsuperscript{209}. Although George Mouzalon married Theodora Palaiologina (later Raoulaina)\textsuperscript{210}, the niece of the later emperor Michael VIII, he failed to be acknowledged as a member of the high aristocracy; in 1258, he was brutally murdered\textsuperscript{211}. Nevertheless, another Mouzalon, Theodore, was *megas logothetes* of the emperor Andronikos II\textsuperscript{212}.

\textsuperscript{205} Kazhdan (Ronchey), L’aristocrazia 208, 262.
\textsuperscript{206} Macrides, Akropolites 7-8.
\textsuperscript{207} Polemis, The Doukai 82.
\textsuperscript{208} Op.cit. 148.
\textsuperscript{209} George Akropolites, Χρονική Συγγραφή Ι (124 Heisenberg-Wirth); George Pachymeres, Συγγραφική Ιστορία Ι (41 Failer-Laurent).
\textsuperscript{210} PLP 92686, 21382.
\textsuperscript{211} George Pachymeres, Συγγραφική Ιστορία Ι (79-81 Failer-Laurent).
\textsuperscript{212} PLP 19439.
CHAPTER TWO
MARRIAGE STRATEGIES OF THE ARISTOCRACY IN THE EARLY PALAIOLOGAN PERIOD

1. Marriage Strategies of the aristocracy from the tenth to thirteenth century

The marriage strategies played an important role in Byzantine society, especially in relation to the emperor and the members of high aristocracy. Already since the ninth century, when for the first-time surnames appeared among the members of the aristocracy and in the tenth century, when the surnames were widely used by the great aristocratic families, the importance of the intermarriages became more obvious; now, they could be traced more easily on the base of the added family names, known as ἐπώνυμα (surnames) or ἐπίκλην/ἐπίκλησις. In order to declare their origin, many prominent individuals are no longer known only by their first name combined with the name of their father, who may also have held an important or similar post in the military or civil administration; instead, they and their progeny use a specific surname demonstrating in this way their family links and connections. Therefore, the presentation of the aristocratic marriage policies before the Early Palaiologan period is necessary, since it will allow a better understanding of the function and meaning of the intermarriages within this social group. The kinship by blood or marriage could be more easily traced and the reasons for the practice of marriage strategies among specific aristocratic families could reveal their importance also for the centuries to come.

Marriage Strategies of the Military Aristocracy of the Tenth Century

Through this innovation of the tenth century, it is possible to observe not only the rise of military aristocratic families of the extremely important eastern frontier of the Byzantine empire such as Phokades, Maleinoi, Skleroi, Kourkoues, Argyroi and Doukai, but also the links between them, their family alliances and networks. It is

not coincidental that in this specific period the military aristocratic families of Asia Minor and the eastern *themata* of the empire such as the Phokades or the Skleri came close or even ascended to the throne; their most prominent members apart from the fame they gained in the battlefields- since the majority of them were influential military commanders, had also practiced intensive family alliances by marrying into military families of the same milieu. Although the ranks and offices were not hereditary, sons were very often following the same career steps with their fathers. They were aware of their kin relations and they were self-conscious of their class, factors which made the scholars to consider those families as clans and clan formations215.

The family networks and the practices of intermarriages of the aristocracy could be successfully noticed in several examples, but Nikephoros II Phokas and his nephew, John I Tzimiskes are the most distinctive cases. Nikephoros II Phokas was the most famous military commander of his era before becoming emperor; his ancestors were known for their military careers and his father was married to a member of the Maleinoi, an important military family. When Nikephoros became an emperor, he had by his side his brother, Leo Phokas, whose offspring actively engaged in the aristocratic intermarriages of his time216.

John I Tzimiskes was by his mother related to Phokas family; she was a sister of Nikephoros II Phokas and his father was supposedly a nephew of the famous military commander John Kourkouas217. John’s first wife Maria, belonged to the family of Skleri; she was the sister of Bardas Skleri218 and even after her death, the kinship with the Skleri was of great importance. They were his main supporters in his struggle for the throne against Phokas and Tzimiskes promoted them to senior positions in the state219. His first choice for a planned diplomatic marriage with the king of Germany and Western emperor Otto II was Theophano220, the daughter of his brother-in-law,
Constantine Skleros, and Sophia Phoka. The latter was John’s cousin by his mother’s side. John I also married the porphyrogennete princess of the ruling dynasty, the Macedonians, to secure his position.

About half a century earlier, Romanos Lekapenos, the basileopator of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, seemed to be aware of the significance of the intermarriages of aristocratic families. Therefore, he arranged the marriages of his children to members of prominent persons and families; unfortunately, there is not enough evidence to underpin his position in the centre of a network of intermarriages prior to the marriage of his daughter to the future emperor or at a later stage. Impressively is the fact that even though he was thinking of a betrothal between his son Constantine and Euphrosyne, daughter of the Domestikos ton scholon John Kourkouas, he cancelled his plan; his sons and co-emperors seemed to have found the marriage too risky due to the glory of the Kourkouas family.

It seems that probably Romanos’ sons and co-emperors of both their father and brother-in-law, feared that Kourkouas was going to gain more power through the intermarriage, leading easily to a revolt against them. Since Romanos had married most of his sons into significant families of the period, it was quite reasonable for him to practice a reverse strategy in order to prevent the rise of another important family to power. Besides, it must not be forgotten that Romanos himself rose to power after the marriage of his daughter, Helen with the young emperor Constantine VIII Porphyrogenetos, so he was quite aware of the consequences of the marriage policies.

Affinity played an important role in the military aristocratic families of Asia Minor; for them also the family name was significant, since they seemed to depend mostly to their relatives and members of their clan. Nevertheless, the kinship ties seem to be known up to a specific degree of cousins; of paramount importance were the relations by blood or marriage such as first cousins, uncles, gambroi (sons-in-law)

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221 Leon Diakonos, Ἱστορία VII (118 HASE); SEIBT, Skleroi 58-60; PATLAGEAN, Ελληνικός Μεσαίωνας 158-159; A. PANAGOPOLIOU, Οι Διπλωματικοί Γάμοι στο Βυζάντιο (6ος-12ος αιώνας). Athens 2006, 152-170.
222 G. DAGRON, Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium. Cambridge 2003, 35.
223 PATLAGEAN, Ελληνικός Μεσαίωνας 149.
224 Theophanes Continuatus, Χρονογραφία VI, 40 (426-427 BEKKER); PATLAGEAN, Ελληνικός Μεσαίωνας 150.
225 CHEYNET, Pouvoir et contestations 261-263.
or syggambroi (men, whose spouses are sisters). The relations by marriage, being in fact relations made by choice, give a good example of the different priorities of the aristocratic families and the reasons for the followed marriage strategies. In general terms, the family bonds that lead to kinship were crucial. However, the marital affiliations did not necessary imply the cooperation of the two families. A telling example is the intermarriage between the Phokades and the Skleroi, which did not put an end to their fierce rivalry.

Marriage Strategies of the Aristocratic Families of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries. The Komnenoi and the Doukai

By contrast, the intermarriage between the Komnenos family and the rival family of Doukas ended up in the most successful alliance of aristocratic families related by marriage in the course of Byzantine history. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as in the tenth century, the social and political aspects of the aristocracy were based on the marriage policies; the latter were also reflecting the ambitions of the families. The military aristocracy projected their glory, which derived mainly from the military career and posts. Therefore, their members perceived themselves as more proper claimants of the imperial throne since the war victories were a substantial element for the imperial power.

In the eleventh century, there is a change in the names of the aristocratic families that came into the forefront. The families that comprised the military aristocracy of the past century such as the Phokades and the Maleinoi had either disappeared from the foreground or survived through intermarriages like the Skleroi. The military aristocracy finds its worthy representatives in the families of the Komnenoi, Doukes, Dalassenoi, Bryennioi and Diogenes. While the Dalassenoi, the Bryennioi and of course the Doukai were known from the 10th century, others like the Komnenoi, a

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226 PATLAGEAN, Ελληνικός Μεσαίωνας 188-189.
227 CHEYNET, Pouvoir et contestations 263.
229 PATLAGEAN, Ελληνικός Μεσαίωνας.
230 CHEYNET, Pouvoir et contestations 273.
military aristocratic family probably from Asia Minor, rose up in power for the first time.\textsuperscript{232}

When the first prominent representative of the Komnenoi, Isaakios I Komnenos, became emperor, among his comrades were many members of the military aristocracy like Romanos Skleros. Isaakios’ brother was married to Anna Dalassene, also a member of the military aristocracy; with a member of the Dalassenos family was also married Constantine X Doukas, the rival of Isaakios.\textsuperscript{233} The Doukai were a prominent family, which have tried to ascend to the throne already in the tenth century with the revolts of Andronikos and Constantine Doukas. Their unsuccessful attempts caused them such a huge downgrading that Michael VII came probably from a completely different branch of Doukai.\textsuperscript{234} After the prevalence of the Doukai and the failure of Isaakios to establish his own imperial dynasty, the Komnenoi were waiting for the right moment to rise to imperial power.

Years later, Michael VII Doukas, son of Constantine X, was replaced by the usurper Nikephoros III Botaneiates, who married the emperor’s wife Maria of Alania in order to legitimize his rise to power. In this case, the Doukai and the empress were searching for a strong ally to uphold the claims of the legal heir to the throne. Their allies were found among their former rivals, the Komnenoi. Empress Maria, who might also had the support of her first husband’s family, used the policy of adoption of the young general, Alexios I Komnenos, nephew of the former emperor.\textsuperscript{235} Isaakios Komnenos, his brother, was already married to the cousin of the empress, Eirene of Alania, while Alexios I was betrothed by that time to a member of the Argyros family.\textsuperscript{236} Nevertheless, the ultimate alliance between the Komnenoi and Doukai was sealed with the rise of Alexios I to the throne and his marriage to Eirene Doukaina. According to Magdalino, the Komnenian system of intermarriages and family kin as it is known was also employed by Kaisar John Doukas, who had promoted the family unity, entrusted military command to other relatives, marrying into the other prominent military families of Komnenos and Palaiologos and of course supported the Komnenian

\textsuperscript{233} CHEYNET, Pouvoir et contestations 275, 277.
\textsuperscript{234} POLEMIS, The Doukai 7-8.
\textsuperscript{235} Anna Kомнene, Alexias II (55-57 REINSCH-KAMBYLIS).
\textsuperscript{236} Alexios was betrothed to an Argyropoulina, who died probably before 1081, Nikephoros Bryennios, Υλη Ιστορις (ed. D. TSOGKARAKIS – D. TSOUKLIDOU). Athens 1996, 212-213.
coup of 1081\textsuperscript{237}. The Komnenoi rose to power as the dominant military family from a specific circle, a concept which can be also noticed later, in the rise of the Palaiologoi as an imperial dynasty.

The marital union between the two families inaugurated a new era in intermarriage policies of the aristocratic families, who were directly related to descendants or relatives of the dynasty. Either representatives of families of the older aristocracy or new military aristocrats connected their fortunes to that of the Komnenoi, serving in crucial posts. The Komnenian elite was a military one with the emperors of the Komnenian restoration being military commanders. The reign of Alexios I seemed to show a return to the priorities of the soldier emperors Nikephoros II, John I and Basil II; it is of great importance that the first two came from great Anatolian aristocratic families, as the Komnenoi\textsuperscript{238}.

The extended family network established already from the first dynastic pair of Alexios I and Eirene lead the majority of aristocratic families of the later Byzantine period to claim a Komnenian ancestry. The significance, which the name Komnenos acquired in the twelfth century and later as a status symbol is quite obvious. It was an idea which Alexios I introduced\textsuperscript{239}. The relatives of the family, the people connected to it and the share of ranks and titles among the family made modern scholarship to describe the phenomenon as either the Komnenos-Doukas dynasty or the Komnenos-Doukas clan.

At this point, it is of paramount importance to treat the role of the imperial \textit{gambroi} (sons in law), the spouses of the daughters and the female relatives of the emperor\textsuperscript{240}. The historians of the time refer extensively to them and Nikephoros Bryennios, a \textit{gambros} of the emperor himself, enumerates them\textsuperscript{241}. Alexios I started with the betrothal of his first daughter, Anna with the son of Maria of Alania, Constantine Doukas, rightful heir to the throne, sealing once again an alliance with the Doukas family\textsuperscript{242}. Among the other \textit{gambroi} we found one of the sons of the former emperor, Romanos IV Diogenes and a Taronites, member of an important aristocratic

\textsuperscript{237} P. MAGDALINO, The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180. Cambridge 2002, 186-187. The Kaisar John Doukas was brother of Constantine X Doukas and grandfather of the empress Eirene Doukaina, POLEMIS, The Doukai 34-41.

\textsuperscript{238} MAGDALINO, Manuel I Komnenos 185.


\textsuperscript{240} PATLAGEAN, Ελληνικός Μεσαίωνας 188-189.

\textsuperscript{241} Nikephoros Bryennios, ‘Ὑπήνετον’ (232-233, 304-305 TSOUKARAKIS – TSOUKIDOU).

\textsuperscript{242} Anna Komnene, Alexias VI (184-185 REINSCH–KAMBYLIS).
family of the Komnenian era, deriving from the princes of Taron, Armenia. Many other names of aristocrats, who are going to play a significant role in the next centuries, are enlisted in the sources of the period\textsuperscript{243}. One of them is George Palaiologos, \emph{syggambros} of Alexios I, since he married Anna Doukaina, sister of empress Eirene\textsuperscript{244}. His father, Nikephoros Palaiologos, the first known member of the family of Palaiologos, was a commander under Romanos IV and Michael VII; he had also supported Nikephoros III, but his son became a member of the Komnenian clan\textsuperscript{245}. The Palaiologos family was related not only directly by marriage to the Doukas family. In the reign of John II Komnenos there was also an intermarriage among a Palaiologos and a Komnene\textsuperscript{246}. Once again, the significance of the role of a female aristocrat is quite apparent, since she creates a \emph{gambros}, a man related by marriage kinship to the family; a kinship tie that could give him legal claims even to the ascendance of the Byzantine throne.

Apart from the Palaiologoi, there were several prominent aristocratic families that were connected to the Komnenian dynasty and are going to constitute also the Palaiologan high aristocracy. Members of the Komnenian kin were Constantine Angelos -also a \emph{gambros} of Alexios I-, who married his youngest daughter Theodora, and John Kantakouzenos, \emph{gambros} of Andronikos Komnenos, married to Maria, John’s II granddaughter. During the reign of John II, son-in-law of the emperor became also a Batatzes\textsuperscript{247}. More than three members of the Synadenos family are also found among the Komnenian clan. Adrianos Komnenos, brother of Alexios I, married Zoe Doukaina, first betrothed to Nikephoros Synadenos; their son Alexios married also a member of the Synadenos family\textsuperscript{248}. The Palaiologoi appeared again in an intermarriage within the Komnenian clan, since the daughter of Komnenos and Synadene, Anna married Alexios Palaiologos\textsuperscript{249}. The daughter of Adrianos Komnenos married a member of the Tarchaneiotes family\textsuperscript{250}.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[243] For example Anna Komnene in her \textit{Alexias} provides us with the names of many names of the sons-in-law of emperor Alexios I, such as Palaiologos, Synadenos and others.
\item[244] \textsc{Patlagean}, \textsc{Eλληνικός Μεσαίωνας} 188; \textsc{Polemis}, The Doukai 74-75; J.F. \textsc{Vannier}, Les premiers Paléologues in J.C. \textsc{Cheynet}, J. F. \textsc{Vannier}, Études Prosopographiques. Paris 1986, 125-186, here 141.
\item[245] \textsc{Vannier}, Premiers Paléologues 134.
\item[246] \textsc{Magdalino}, Manuel I Komnenos 208; \textsc{Vannier}, Premiers Paléologues 153-155; \textsc{varzos}, \textit{Γενεαλογία} I 680.
\item[247] \textsc{Magdalino}, Manuel I Komnenos 207.
\item[248] \textsc{varzos}, \textit{Γενεαλογία} I 115-117; \textsc{Cheynet}, Pouvoir et contestations 280.
\item[249] \textsc{Vannier}, Premiers Paléologues 149-151.
\item[250] \textsc{Leonitiades}, Tarchaneiotaik 57.
\end{footnotes}
All the above-mentioned intermarriages were part of the extensive marriage policies of the Komnenian dynasty. But, even though it could be argued that the Komnenoi followed the intermarriage model of the military aristocracy introduced already in the tenth century, they have perfected the marriage strategies of their class and have made by far the most successful marriage alliances among members of the older and the upcoming aristocracy of their time. Their network of marriage alliances was the most extensive and interwoven between the emperor and his court, from whom all privileges derived. Therefore, the greatest emphasis was placed on the role of the imperial family and the most influential families were bound to it by ties of blood and marriage. However, apart from the first dynastic couple, who established the dynasty and both belonged to military aristocratic families, the heirs of the Komnenian throne were married mostly with foreign princesses and not female members of prominent Byzantine aristocratic families.

In the reign of Manuel I, the marriages of the immediate family and relatives of the emperor were mostly with rulers of the West or the Crusader States. Those intermarriages included among others, the kingdoms of Austria and Hungary; the Byzantine emperor had also accomplished through the marriage alliances to interfere in the accession of the Hungarian throne. That happened not only due to the pro-western policy of the emperor, but also in order to avoid political problems from members of the aristocracy. A foreign empress had no family in the direct entourage of the emperor; therefore, she could not easily influence the emperor in favour of the interests of her family or advance her family’s power, raise claims to the throne and revolt against the emperor. Another reason could also have been that the endogamies

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251 ANGOLD, Byzantine Government 60.
253 For the Komnenian marriage policies see MAGDALINO, Manuel I Komnenos 201-217.
255 As it was already noticed in the intermarriages of emperors with members of aristocratic families in the tenth and eleventh centuries, see above.
inside the Komnenos family were against the canonical law which prohibited a marriage between blood relatives up to the seventh degree.\textsuperscript{256}

\textbf{Marriage Strategies of the Angeloi and the Laskarids}

The Fall of Constantinople in 1204 found on the Byzantine throne the dynasty of Angeloi. They were linked to the Komnenoi by intermarriage, since they were descendants of Alexios I son-in-law, Constantine Angelos and Theodora Komnene. Alexios III Angelos was married to Euphrosyne Kamaterissa, who belonged to the Kamateros family known for bureaucrats and patriarchs.\textsuperscript{257} Since they had no male heir to the throne but only three daughters, Alexios III was planning to proclaim one of his sons-in-law emperor. The predominant son-in-law was the husband of his firstborn daughter Eirene, Alexios Palaiologos. However, after his death, Theodore Komnenos Laskaris, husband of Alexios’ III second daughter, Anna, took his position.\textsuperscript{258} This fact reveals that before 1204 there were already members of the high aristocracy that with their capacity as the emperor’s \textit{gambroi} (sons-in-law) were proclaimed heirs to the Byzantine throne. Of significance is also that they were both related to the family of the Komnenoi.\textsuperscript{259} Once more, the importance of the husbands of the imperial daughters is apparent, mainly when there is no direct male line to ascend to the throne. Therefore, women seemed to play a crucial role in the marriage strategies, since their husbands could gain the capacity of the sons-in-law only by marriage and could have claims to the imperial throne.

The establishment of the empire of Nicaea under Theodore I Laskaris was a milestone for the high aristocracy. Many prominent members of the Constantinopolitan

\textsuperscript{256} MAGDALINO, Manuel I Komnenos 209-210, 214. The most characteristic example of those endogamies is that of Anna Komnene Batatzina, who took as her second husband her third cousin, Alexios Branas Komnenos. Other examples are Alexios Komnenos and Andronikos Kontostephanos Komnenos, whose wives were members of the Doukas family, related to the Komnenoi, VARZOS, \textit{Γιγαντολόγια} II 194, 251, 395-396.

\textsuperscript{257} For the family of Kamateroi see G. STADTMÜLLER, Zur Geschichte der Familie Kamateros, \textit{BZ} 34 (1934) 352-358.

\textsuperscript{258} Before the capture of Constantinople by the Crusaders, Isaakios Angelos and his son, Alexios IV, took the throne back. The husband of the third daughter of Alexios III, Eudokia, was also proclaimed emperor as Alexios V Mourtzouphlos, but many of the historians of the time do not recognize him as such, see George Akropolites, Χρονική Συγγραφή 2, 3, 5 (4-7, 8-9 HEISENBERG – WIRTH). According to Choniates, Alexios V was not married to Eudokia when they left Constantinople, Niketas Choniates, Χρονική Διήγησις 50 (ed. J.V. DIETEN, Niketas Choniatae Historia, vols. 2 [CFHB 11]. Berlin / New York 1975), 571.

\textsuperscript{259} MACRIDES, Akropolites 116.
aristocracy followed him and settled at his court, along with families of the local aristocracy of Asia Minor. Certainly, not all of them possessed estates in Asia Minor, so it seems that they must have been depended heavily on Theodore’s generosity. The family ties were once again of major significance, since important military positions were given to Laskaris’ brothers, a fact that shows the reliance of the emperor to his immediate family; also, the aristocrats seemed to strengthen their loyalty to the emperor by marriage into the imperial family. Theodore himself chose as his son-in-law and heir to the throne Andronikos Palaiologos, and after his death, John III Batatzes; both were related by kinship to the Komnenos-Doukas clan. Interesting is also the fact that many of the families of Constantinopolitan aristocracy which followed Laskaris in Nicaea were connected through blood or marriage ties to the Komnenian clan.

John III Batatzes probably did not put his siblings in prominent positions of the government, apart from his brother Isaakios Doukas, who held the rank of sevastokrator. John III faced early a conspiracy against him by members of the Nestongos family, who were his relatives, and of other aristocratic families. The office holders under John III did not come from the aristocracy; on the contrary, the emperor selected as his collaborators capable people, independently of their blood line and origins.

The Byzantine aristocracy could not be characterized as a closed caste, since social mobility of competent individuals into the aristocracy has been observed throughout the centuries; new families moved into ranks and offices, while others such as the Kamateroi disappeared. The aristocracy had also various layers as mentioned above, where some families consisted the high aristocracy and being more wealthy and influential than others. However, it seems that during the reign of Theodore II Laskaris this mobility did not find the acceptance of the aristocrats. Theodore II tried

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260 ANGOLD, Byzantine Government 62.
262 See the previous chapter.
263 George Akropolites, Χρονική Συγγραφή 51 (101 HEISENBERG – WIRTH); ANGOLD, Byzantine Government 68.
264 Akropolites emphasises how Andronikos Nestongos did not consider the ties of kinship and plotted against his first cousin and emperor. By his side were also his brother and cousin of the emperor, Isaakios, and members of further aristocratic families such as Tarchaneiotes, Synadenoi and others. George Akropolites, Ποίημα Χρονικόν Ημερησίων 23 (225 HEISENBERG – WIRTH).
265 ANGOLD, Byzantine Government 75.
266 ANGOLD, Byzantine Government 70.
obviously to reduce the power of the aristocracy and bestowed offices to persons of lower origins; he selected them on the base of their abilities rather than on their blood lines. According to Pachymeres the emperor aimed at finding the most efficient associates. In order to secure their positions and knowing the significance of marriage policies in the aristocratic milieu, Theodore tried to tie his collaborators with bonds of kinship through marriage to the high aristocratic families. At the same time, the emperor bypassed quite obviously aristocrats like Michael Palaiologos or Alexios Strategopoulos, who as commanders of the army had distinguished themselves serving under John III Batatzes.


The marriage policies of Theodore II disappointed the members of high aristocracy, who searched for a worthy representative. They found him in the face of the young commander, Michael Palaiologos. The Palaiologoi were not only one of the most prominent families of the Nicaean aristocracy but they could also raise claims to the throne due to their kinship with the Angeloi and the many lost opportunities to ascend to power. Michael VIII Palaiologos or Michael Doukas Angelos Komnenos Palaiologos -as he seemed to call himself, who by his name emphasised all his blood relations to three imperial families- was proclaimed regent of John IV Laskaris, after a conspiracy of the aristocracy in 1258. Among the members of the aristocracy that took part in this conspiracy, one can find some of the most known families of the high

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267 Pachymeres emphasises that the emperor intended to find the most capable collaborators among his childhood friends. George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαι Ιστοριαι I (61 FAILLER–LAURENT); The most suitable example is George Mouzalon, who did not come from an aristocratic family, or at least a family of the high aristocracy, PLP 92686.
268 ANGOLD, Byzantine Government 78.
269 Op. cit. 76.
270 The first case is Alexios Palaiologos, husband of Eirene Angelina and maternal grandfather of Michael VIII and the second case is Andronikos Palaiologos, who was married to Eirene Laskarina, daughter of Theodore I. They were both acclaimed despotes because of their marriages with the firstborn imperial daughters, MACRIDES, Akropolites 114-116, 148-149; VANNIER, Premiers Paléologues 172-174.
271 For the list of surnames of emperor Michael VIII see Dölger, Regesten 30. Akropolites refers to him mostly as Michael Komnenos or Michael Komnenos the Palaiologos, George Akropolites, Χρονικη Συγγραφη 51, 64 (100, 134 HEISENBERG-WIRTH). Pachymeres on the contrary refers to him as Michael Palaiologos, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαι Ιστοριαι II (137 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 21528; ΠΑΠΑΔΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, Palaiologen 3-4.
272 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαι Ιστοριαι I (95-97 FAILLER–LAURENT).
aristocracy; the reasons are going to be analysed alongside with the intermarriages of the period.

The members of the high aristocracy aimed at marrying into the imperial family, which granted them a considerable prestige. The emperors of Nicaea seemed to exercise the right to arrange marriages of the aristocracy as a kind of reward for the services of capable associates or a kind of control though kinship over a person whose loyalty was under question\textsuperscript{273}. This fact is impressive, since two different and totally opposed reasons have the same result, an intermarriage. It seems that the emperors wanted to tie with bonds of kinship by marriage their most trusted collaborators and made them their relatives. On the contrary, the marriage of a person, whose loyalty to the emperor was under question with a member of the extended imperial family, could remind many of the modern quote “keep your friends close and your enemies closer”. The emperor pursued to tie the potential rioter with kinship into the family by marriage probably in order to keep an eye on him more easily. The results of this marriage strategy are quite doubtful, since there are not many examples of a positive influence by his wife; in some cases, the conspiratory actions towards the emperor stopped, but these cases seem to have been rather rare. Furthermore, the way that the emperors treated those whom they did not trust, could bring to mind the modern term “frenemy”, a friend who could be easily or is already a hidden or obvious enemy.

Following this policy, John III Batatzes arranged a marriage for his efficient commander Michael Palaiologos, who had been earlier accused of treason and had been in trial. At first, Batatzes planned to marry him with his eldest granddaughter Eirene\textsuperscript{274}. However, he later thought that this marriage might be too risky, due to the fact that Michael was not only descending from an illustrious family, which was also related to him, but he was also quite efficient and-above all- ambitious\textsuperscript{275}. Even though sometimes John III set aside the regulations of the canon law about the prohibited marriages, in this case he chose not to permit it. Michael VIII and Theodore II were actually second

\textsuperscript{273} ANGOLD, Byzantine Government 66.
\textsuperscript{274} George Akropolites, Χρονική Συγγραφή 50 (100 HEISENBERG – WIRTH).
\textsuperscript{275} Akropolites emphasised that John III Batatzes thought about Michael’s Palaiologos distinguished family and his ‘kinship’ with him, meaning obviously the fact that John’s first wife was a granddaughter of Alexios III Angelos. Therefore, they were related by marriage, George Akropolites, Χρονική Συγγραφή 51 (100 HEISENBERG – WIRTH); MACRIDES, Akropolites 268-269.

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cousins, as sons of two granddaughters of Alexios III\(^{276}\). That means that Eirene was a niece (ἀνεψιά) of Michael\(^{277}\).

The proper bride for Michael Palaiologos was finally found in Theodora, the granddaughter of John’s III brother, sevastokrator Isaakios Doukas\(^{278}\). Mother of Theodora was Eudokia, daughter of John Angelos; she was also related to the Strategopouloi\(^{279}\). Their marriage took place between 1253 to 1254 and it seems that Michael received at the same time the office of megas konostaulos\(^{280}\). In the Typikon of Saint Demetrios, Michael Palaiologos stresses that Theodora was Batatzes’ niece, and that the emperor loved her as his own daughter\(^{281}\). Theodora and Michael had seven children, whose marriages are going to be presented later in this chapter.

Since the Palaiologoi were a high aristocratic family, which several times came close to ascend to the throne, the marriage alliances with other aristocratic families seem to have been made through careful consideration. When Michael VIII became co-emperor of John IV, he raised also his brothers in higher offices and arranged their marriages, probably according to his policy of finding useful allies and supporters. Firstly, he made his brother John Komnenos Palaiologos, who was also a Diplopalaiologos\(^{282}\), sevastokrator and then he arranged his marriage to a daughter of Constantine Tornikes in 1259, whose name unfortunately is not known\(^{283}\). John’s father-in-law was already related to the Palaiologos family, since his father Demetrios

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\(^{276}\) George Akropolites, Χρονικὴ Συγγραφή 50 (100 HEISENBERG – WIRTH); MACRIDES, Akropolites 268.

\(^{277}\) George Akropolites, Χρονικὴ Συγγραφή 50 (100 HEISENBERG – WIRTH); ANGOLD, Byzantine Government 66.

\(^{278}\) George Akropolites, Χρονικὴ Συγγραφή 51 (100-101 HEISENBERG – WIRTH). For Theodora see PLP 21380; POLEMIS, The Doukai 109; For Theodora see also A. M. TALBOT, Empress Theodora Palaiologina, wife of Michael VIII, DOP 46 (1992) 295-303.

\(^{279}\) About the kinship of Eudokia to the Strategopouloi see George Akropolites, Ποίημα Χρονικὸν Ἁμητολὸς 51 (253 HEISENBERG – WIRTH); MACRIDES, Akropolites 269. Also for Eudokia see PLP 6228.

\(^{280}\) Pachymeres does not mention the marriage alliance, but only that Michael Palaiologos received a higher office at this time, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἡστορίαι I (41 FAILLER – LAURENT). On the contrary, Akropolites refers to the title that was bestowed upon Michael by the time of his marriage later, insisting that he referred to that already earlier, but he had not, George Akropolites, Χρονικὴ Συγγραφή 64 (134 HEISENBERG – WIRTH); MACRIDES, Akropolites 314.


\(^{282}\) Michael’s parents, Andronikos Palaiologos and Theodora Palaiologina, both came from two branches of the Palaiologos family. Therefore, Michael VIII Palaiologos was also called Diplopalaiologos (two times a Palaiologan). Theodora was the granddaughter of Alexios III, daughter of Alexios Palaiologos and Eirene Angelina, PAPADOPULOS Palaiologen 1-2.

\(^{283}\) George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἡστορίαι II (137 FAILLER – LAURENT); PLP 21487; PAPADOPULOS Palaiologen 4-5; SCHMALZBAUER, Tornikioi 119-120.
Tornikes, mesazon of Theodore I Laskaris, had married a cousin of Andronikos Palaiologos.\textsuperscript{284}

Constantine Palaiologos was Michael’s half-brother, but the name of his mother and her family are unknown.\textsuperscript{285} In 1259, he married Eirene Komnene Laskarina Kantakouzene Palaiologina Branaina, who as the list of her surnames reveals came from the family of Branas and was related by blood and marriage to many aristocratic families.\textsuperscript{286} They are both depicted in the Typicon of the Monastery of Bebaia Elpis, founded by their daughter, Theodora; at the same time, the enlistment of their surnames reveals their pride on their ancestry and the scion of their family.\textsuperscript{287} They had together many children, who were active in the marriage alliances of the imperial family. Constantine was in the same year raised to the dignity of Kaisar by his brother and emperor; after the battle of Pelagonia, he became sevastokrator, like his half-brother John before him, a title he kept until his death.\textsuperscript{288}

The role of women in the marriage strategies was also significant, since the female members of the aristocracy should marry into families of at least the same status. As a consequence, the sisters of Michael Palaiologos were married into families of the high aristocracy of Nicaea. The eldest daughter of Andronikos Palaiologos and his wife, Martha (Maria) Palaiologina, married in ca.1237 the megas domestikos Nikephoros Tarchaneiotes, who has been one of the most sufficient generals of John III Batatzes and the most known member of his family for the period before 1259.\textsuperscript{290} This was the second marriage for Nikephoros, since he was firstly married to the unnamed daughter of the protostrator Andronikos Doukas Aprenos; he had a daughter with her, known as Nostongissa Tarchaneiotissa, who became a nun and was a supporter of the

\textsuperscript{284} SCHMALZBAUER, Tornikioi 117-119. Constantine Tornikios became Megas Primekerios, and his son-in-law became despot after the Battle of Pelagonia in 1259, George Akropolites, Χρονικὴ Συγγραφή 83 (173 HEISENBERG – WIRTH).

\textsuperscript{285} George Akropolites, Χρονικὴ Συγγραφή 77 (161 HEISENBERG – WIRTH); PLP 21498; PAPADOPOULOS Palaiologen 6.

\textsuperscript{286} George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι II (138-139 FAILLER–LAURENT).


\textsuperscript{288} George Akropolites, Χρονικὴ Συγγραφή 77, 83 (161, 173 HEISENBERG – WIRTH).

\textsuperscript{289} PLP 21389.

\textsuperscript{290} George Akropolites, Χρονικὴ Συγγραφή 36 (55 HEISENBERG – WIRTH); George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι I (55 FAILLER–LAURENT); LEONTIADES, Tarchaneiota 61-63.

\textsuperscript{291} PLP 1207.
Arsenites. Nikephoros and Martha had together four children, three sons, who all of them followed a military career and a daughter, Theodora Tarchaneiotissa.

Theodora was selected by Theodore II Laskaris to marry his childhood friend and collaborator, Balanidiotes; this accords with the emperor’s policy of marrying women of the high aristocracy with capable people of humble origin who were under his service. Even though they were betrothed in 1258, the emperor changed his mind and against her will, he married her to Basil Kaballarios, a member of a Nicaean aristocratic family. Since their marriage was not consummated from impotence of the husband, Theodore II accused Theodora’s mother, Martha, of sorcery and mistreated her; he also imprisoned Theodora’s uncle, Michael VIII. After the death of Theodore II and the rise of Michael VIII as co-emperor in 1259, the latter divorced her from Kaballarios and married her to her previous fiancé, Balanidiotes in Lampsakos; he also raised him in the office of megas stratopedarches. Therefore, Theodora was also known as megale stratopedarchissa.

The expansion of the family networks of the Palaiologoi continued with marriage alliances with other families of their own milieu for the period until 1259 with the marriage of Michael’s VIII younger sister, Eirene (Eulogia) Komnene Palaiologina to John Komnenos Angelos Kantakouzenos in ca.1240. It was the first of the intermarriages between the two families; John shared also among his surnames those of Komnenos Angelos, as Palaiologos did. Eirene and John had together four daughters, Theodora, Maria, Anna and Eugenia, whose marriages are going to be presented in the following. The first one who married was Theodora, who seems to have been the eldest daughter of the couple. She was one of the aristocratic brides

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292 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἑστορίαι IV (385 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 27512; LEONTIADES, Tarchaneiota 73.
293 PLP 27510; LEONTIADES, Tarchaneiota 63-64.
294 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἑστορίαι I( 55 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 10037.
295 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἑστορίαι I (57 FAILLER–LAURENT). Nikephoros Tarchaneiotes was already dead by that time, LEONTIADES, Tarchaneiota 61.
296 According to Pachymeres, Martha Palaiologina was thrown naked in sack full of cats in order to admit Theodore’s II accusation for sorcery, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἑστορίαι I (57 FAILLER–LAURENT). Nikephoros Tarchaneiotes was already dead by that time, LEONTIADES, Tarchaneiota 61.
297 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἑστορίαι II (155 FAILLER–LAURENT).
299 Pachymeres refers to him only by his surname Komnenos, but in an epigram of Maximos Planoudes in the church of Saint Andrew in Constantinople, rebuilt by Theodora, John’s daughter, he is referred with his surnames Komnenos Angelos, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἑστορίαι II (155 FAILLER–LAURENT); Maximos Planoudes, Ἐπιγράμματα 2 (ed. SP. LAMBROS, Ἐπιγράμματα Μάξιμου Παλανοδή, NE 13 (1916) 414-421, here 416-417.
300 PLP 10943; NICOL, Kantakouzenoi 16-19.
that Theodore II had chosen for his childhood friend and most trusted person, George Mouzalon in 1256\textsuperscript{301}. At the conspiracy that costed the lives of the Mouzalon family, Theodora seemed to be quite scared and anxious about her husband’s fortune; her uncle though, Michael Palaiologos told her to keep quiet, otherwise she might have had the same fortune\textsuperscript{302}.

When Michael VIII Palaiologos had risen firstly as a despot in 1258 and later as co-emperor with the support of the aristocracy, he restored many of the aristocrats in their previous posts or bestowed upon them even higher offices. Moreover, he had organised intensively the intermarriages among prominent members of the aristocratic families who supported him with members of his family such as the case of Theodora Tarchaneiotissa. Theodora, the daughter of his beloved sister Eirene was also married to a prominent member of the family of Raoul, John Komnenos Doukas Angelos Petraliphas Raoul\textsuperscript{303}. His surname reveals the ties of kinship with the three imperial families and the aristocratic family of Petraliphas, with whom the family of Raoul were connected through intermarriages.

The Raoul belonged to the families of high aristocracy who seemed quite disappointed of the policies of Theodore II and after his death supported openly Palaiologos to his rise as regent emperor. Already in 1256, Theodore II decided to marry the brother of George Mouzalon, Andronikos, to the daughter of protovestiarios Alexios Raoul, even though he had earlier deprived him of his dignity\textsuperscript{304}. Alexios Raoul was among the most efficient commanders of John III Batatzes and probably son-in-law of the emperor\textsuperscript{305}. The four sons that he had with his wife, might have been imprisoned by the time of the decision of the marriage of their sister to Mouzalon\textsuperscript{306}. After the assassination of the Mouzalones at the Monastery of Sosandra in Magnesia and while Raoulaina has been widowed for a short time, Michael VIII married her with his cousin, Andronikos Palaiologos and bestowed upon him the office of protostrator\textsuperscript{307}. Andronikos had also a sister, Maria; she was married to the protosevastos Manuel Komnenos Laskaris, probably before 1259. Maria is known by

\textsuperscript{301} George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὶ Ἱστορία I (41 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 92686.
\textsuperscript{302} George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὶ Ἱστορία I (89 FAILLER–LAURENT).
\textsuperscript{303} George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὶ Ἱστορία I (55 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 24125; FASSOULAKIS, Raouls 18-19.
\textsuperscript{304} George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὶ Ἱστορία I (41 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 24110.
\textsuperscript{305} George Akropolites, Χρονικὴ Συγγραφὴ 49 (92 HEISENBERG–WIRTH).
\textsuperscript{306} FASSOULAKIS, Raouls 15-16, 24.
\textsuperscript{307} George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὶ Ἱστορία II (155 FAILLER–LAURENT); Andronikos is the son of Michael’s VIII paternal uncle, Michael Palaiologos, PLP 21432.
the sources with the surnames of her husband, Komnene Laskarina and the title of protosevaste.

The Strategopouloi was another family of the Nicaean high aristocracy, who supported Palaiologos, even though some of its members were related by marriage to the Laskarids. More specifically, Constantine Strategopoulos, megistanas and son of Alexios Komnenos Strategopoulos, general of John III Batatzes, married in ca. 1254 the daughter of the emperor’s brother, the sevastokrator Isaakios Doukas. The name of Strategopoulos’ wife is not known and the sources referred to her as Strategopoulina. Michael Strategopoulos might be their son, since he is known by the sources as a cousin of empress Theodora Palaiologina. The kinship through intermarriage did not prohibit Theodore II from blinding Constantine Strategopoulos and therefore he and his father became two of the strongest supporters of Michael VIII.

Constantine Strategopoulos was not the only aristocrat, who was blinded by Theodore II; the same passages reveal also the name of Theodore Philes, who was probably blinded for the same reason as Strategopoulos, accused of arrogance towards the emperor. Therefore, the family of Philes, also a member of the Nicaean high aristocracy, had supported the rise of Palaiologos. In 1259, Michael VIII Palaiologos married his niece Maria Kantakouzene, daughter of Irene (Eulogia) Komnene Palaiologina and John Komnenos Angelos Kantakouzenos to the son of Theodore, Alexios Philes and raised him to the dignity of megas domestikos.

Marriage Strategies of the Laskarids and other Families of the Aristocracy

As it can be deduced, the Palaiologoi had practiced many intermarriages with members of the high aristocracy. By contrast, the marriage policies of the Laskarids

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309 PLP 26897.
310 PLP 26894.
311 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὰ Ιστορία Ι (41 FAILLER–LAURENT). In the same passage Pachymeres refers also to Constantine’s blinding.
312 PLP 26892.
313 PLP 26889.
314 Pachymeres reveals also the reason for the blinding of Constantine by Theodore II and refers again to his marriage to Strategopoulina, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὰ Ιστορία Ι (93 FAILLER–LAURENT).
315 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὰ Ιστορία Ι (93 FAILLER–LAURENT), PLP 29812.
316 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὰ Ιστορία ΙΙ (155 FAILLER–LAURENT), PLP 29809, 16910.
aimed at creating marital relations with rulers of other states, rather than with the aristocratic families of Nicaea. Since John III and his son, Theodore II Laskaris, were aware of the fact that an intermarriage could be a potent act of diplomacy and affect mostly positive the relations between two hegemonies, they decided to marry two of Theodore’s daughters with foreign rulers, with whom they wanted to establish political alliances.

Eirene Laskarina, the eldest daughter of Theodore II was, as mentioned above, the first choice of John III for a marriage with Michael Palaiologos. This union did not take place because it was within the prohibited degrees of marriage. Eirene was still unmarried, when Constantine Tich, the Bulgarian ruler, asked for her hand. Constantine Tich or son of Toichos as he is known in the Byzantine sources, became the heir of the Bulgarian throne after the murder of Michael II Asan, brother-in-law of Theodore II, by his cousin Kaliman and a series of events which left the Bulgarian realm without a ruler. As he was not related to the ruling family of Asan, he sent an embassy to request a marriage with Eirene, who by her mother, empress Helen was granddaughter of the former ruler of the Bulgarians, John Asan, and therefore he could legitimize by this marriage union his succession to the throne. Theodore II accepted the proposal and the marriage took place in 1257.

A treaty between John III Batatzes and the despot of Epirus Michael II was also sealed with a marriage alliance. The emperor chose the second daughter of his son, Maria to marry Nikephoros I, son of Michael II. It seems by the sources that the betrothal took place between 1248-1250, but the marriage, even though it was

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317 George Akropolites, Χρονική Συγγραφή 73 (152 HEISENBerg –WIRTH); PLP 5976, 27550.
318 Theodore II was married to Helen Asan, daughter of the Bulgarian ruler John II Asan by his first wife, Maria of Hungary. Michael II Asan was the half-brother of Empress Eirene, since his mother was Eirene, daughter of Theodore Komnenos Doukas, brother of Michael I of Epirus.
319 George Akropolites, Χρονική Συγγραφή 73 (152 HEISENBerg –WIRTH). For the significance of kinship through marriage in the legitimation of claims to the Bulgarian throne in the Bulgarian affairs see MACRIDES, Akropolites 53, 92, 335. Pachymeres and Gregoras refer also to another claimer of the throne, Mytzes, son-in-law of Asan and next to the line of the throne, since Michael had no children; the reference is important since the offspring of Mytzes took part in the intermarriages with the Palaiologans, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικά Ιστορία II (449-451 FAILLER–LAURENT), Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή Ιστορία I (60-61 SCHOPEN–BEKKER).
321 George Akropolites, Χρονική Συγγραφή 49 (88 HEISENBerg –WIRTH); PLP 91042; POLEMIS, The Doukai 94-95.
322 The exact chronology of the betrothal of Maria and Nikephoros is uncertain. Several scholars have proposed different chronologies, all between 1248-1250, for example DÖLGER–WIRTH, Regesten 42. A
planned for the year after the betrothal\textsuperscript{323}, finally happened in 1256\textsuperscript{324}. According to Akropolites, Nikephoros was made despot by the emperor, already by the time of the betrothal; however, the author refers to the title of Nikephoros again by the time of his marriage, probably to emphasize the legitimization of it by the emperor\textsuperscript{325}.

In his passage for the betrothal between Maria Laskarina and Nikephoros I Doukas Komnenos Angelos, Akropolites informs us that the latter, when he reached Pegai, was accompanied by his mother, Theodora Petraliphaina,\textit{ basilissa} of Epirus\textsuperscript{326}. The historian identified Theodora Petraliphaina as the sister of Theodore Petraliphas, son of\textit{ Megas Chartoularios} John Petraliphas\textsuperscript{327} and son-in-law of Demetrios Komnenos Tornikes, a man greatly honoured by emperor Bataztes, since apart from acting like a\textit{ mesazon} in the affairs of the empire, the emperor called him his brother in documents\textsuperscript{328}. The unknown Tornikina, daughter of Demetrios, was also related to the Palaiologans, since her mother was a cousin of Andronikos Palaiologos, father of Michael VIII\textsuperscript{329}.

Apart from a daughter Demetrios Tornikes had three sons, Constantine, John and Andronikos\textsuperscript{330}. Contrary to his younger brothers, who either had left no offspring or about whose offspring nothing is known, Constantine had married a member of the Raoul family and had with her two daughters, whose names remain unknown. One of his daughters married, as already mentioned, John Palaiologus, brother of Michael VIII

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\textsuperscript{323} George Akropolites, \textit{Χρονική Συγγραφή} I (48 HEISENBERG – WIRTH); MACRIDES, Akropolites 251.

\textsuperscript{324} George Akropolites, \textit{Χρονική Συγγραφή} 64 (134 HEISENBERG – WIRTH). Pachymeres refers also to Maria as the wife of Nikephoros I in the passage on Theodore’s II death, George Pachymeres, \textit{Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι} I (59 FAILLER – LAURENT).

\textsuperscript{325} MACRIDES, Akropolites 314.

\textsuperscript{326} George Akropolites, \textit{Χρονικὴ Συγγραφὴ} 49 (88 HEISENBERG – WIRTH).

\textsuperscript{327} George Akropolites, \textit{Χρονικὴ Συγγραφὴ} 49 (91 HEISENBERG – WIRTH). The Life of Saint Theodora,\textit{ basilissa} of Epiros seems to agree to the fact that Theodora was the daughter of John Petraliphas and therefore related to the family of Petraliphas in Nicaea, even though members of the Petraliphas family seem to be also prominent aristocrats in Epirus. This \textit{Vita} is the only source that gives a genealogy of the family. A. \textsc{Moustoxydes}, Βίος τῆς Ὀσίας Θεοδώρας ὑπὸ ὸμβ. Ἐλεγμομήνιον. Athens 1965, 41-59; A. M. \textsc{Telbot}, Holy Women of Byzantium. Washington 1996, 326-333; MACRIDES, Akropolites 176.

\textsuperscript{328} George Akropolites, \textit{Χρονικὴ Συγγραφὴ} 49 (90 HEISENBERG – WIRTH); MM IV 147; MACRIDES, Akropolites 254-255. It cannot be argued with certainty if the emperor and Demetrios Tornikes had entered a relationship of spiritual brotherhood (adelphopoiesis), but their affiliation was honoured by the next two generations, C. \textsc{Rapp}, Brother-Making in Late Antiquity and Byzantium. Oxford 2016. According to Pachymeres, Demetrios’ sons acquired prestige from the fact the emperor John III Doukas Bataztes called their father his ‘brother’, George Pachymeres, \textit{Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι} I (93 FAILLER – LAURENT).

\textsuperscript{329} George Akropolites, \textit{Χρονικὴ Συγγραφὴ} 50 (93 HEISENBERG – WIRTH); SCHMALZBAUER, Tornikioi 117-118.

\textsuperscript{330} PLP 29129, 29126, 29122; SCHMALZBAUER, Tornikioi 117-119, 121-123.
whereas the other daughter, known as Tornikina Komnene, married John I Doukas Angelos of Thessaly, the illegitimate son of Michael II of Epirus.\textsuperscript{331}

Apart from Eirene and Maria, Theodore II with his wife, empress Helen, had four more children; John IV, Theodora, Eudokia and a daughter of unknown name. Theodore II considered to marry one of his daughters to the pinkernes George Nestongos because he was thinking highly of him, but the death prevented him\textsuperscript{332}. Unfortunately, more information about this marriage plan is not known; we miss any hint on the Laskarid princess to become Nestongos’ spouse or the reason for the selection of the pinkernes among the other aristocrats by Theodore. The Nestongoi, as already mentioned, was a prominent family of Nicaea related by kinship to John III; George is also mentioned as cousin ($\alpha\tau\alphaνεψιος$) of Michael VIII.\textsuperscript{333} After this proposal, the ambitious Nestongos still hoped that he was going to marry one of the princesses and he was showing his abilities as a cavalry man in the court, trying to catch the interest of Theodore’s daughters\textsuperscript{334}.

In the period until 1259, it is evident that the Palaiologoi were at the forefront in the establishment of an active network of marriage alliances with the majority of the families of the Nicaean high aristocracy. Through their marriage policies they accomplished to strengthen the ties of kinship with prominent members of aristocratic families, with whom they either had practiced marriage alliances in the past such as the Tornikioi, or with whom they already shared common surnames and bloodlines revealing their Komnenian ancestry like the Kantakouzenoi or to whom they were connected by marriage for the first time like the Tarchaneiotai.

Since the Palaiologos family had the most active family network in Nicaea by that time, it seems quite reasonable that Michael VIII Palaiologos found his supporters among the members of high aristocracy. Already in his role first as a despot and then as an emperor-regent, he showed that he was quite aware of the significance of the marital unions between aristocrats; that is why he tended to marry his relatives into the families of his supporters and bestowed upon them dignities or support the intermarriages between the aristocratic families, which supported him; in that way he strengthened not only his position as a heir to the throne, but also the positions of his

\textsuperscript{331} George Pachymeres, \textit{Συγγραφικαί Ιστορίαι} I (108, 243 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 29138; POLEMIS, The Doukai 95; SCHMALZBAUER, Tornikioi 119-120.
\textsuperscript{332} George Pachymeres, \textit{Συγγραφικαί Ιστορίαι} I (95 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 20724.
\textsuperscript{333} George Pachymeres, \textit{Συγγραφικαί Ιστορίαι} I (95 FAILLER–LAURENT).
\textsuperscript{334} Ibid.
allies. His interference in the intermarriages of the aristocracy had also as a result his family to be the most secured by its connections, since the most prominent persons of the empire were related to him.

Andronikos Palaiologos, Michael’s father, would possibly share the same ideas with his son, since his daughters were married into some of the most prominent families of the Empire, the Tarchaneiotai and the Kantakouzenoi. The role of women seems to be quite significant, since the kinship by marriage and the role of their husbands as gambroi, could raise a man’s claims even to the imperial throne. Subsequently, it could be assumed that it was crucial for an aristocratic family to have many female members, since they could be the protagonists of the marriage alliances of their family as conveyors of lineage. It could be said that the Palaiologoi knew the importance of the intermarriages better than any other family- maybe with the exception of their rivals, the Laskarids- since it was their marital unions, which brought them so close to the throne already before 1204.

It could also be noticed, that in the intermarriages of this period several aristocratic families in Nicaea remained inactive. The Kammytzes family left no evidence of intermarriages in this specific period; furthermore, for the Synadenos family we lack on evidence in the sources for almost fifty years. The Nestongoi had not an active role in the intermarriages, as only two members of this family provide evidence on their potential marriages or kinships.

On the contrary, the families of Aprenoi, Kantakouzenoi, Raoul, Petraliphai, Tarchaneiotai and Tornikioi are often mentioned in the sources, not only for the deeds of their prominent members, but also for their marriage strategies. The majority of them was eventually related to the Palaiologoi; they also appear many times to have kinship ties with each other, such as the Raoul and Petraliphias families, both of Norman origin and firstly appeared in the Komnenian era. An example of these bonds could easily be traced in John Komnenos Doukas Angelos Petraliphas Raoul, who in the list of his surnames has both those of Petraliphas and Raoul, but also surnames that reveal a connection to the great families of the twelfth century.

335 This fact had already been noticed from the ninth and tenth centuries, when the use of surnames by the aristocratic families allowed not only to the male members of the family, but also to the female to declare their lineage and be conveyors of it. Families such as the Komnenoi or the Doukai, who, it could be said, were ‘privileged’ by having many women among their family members, had accomplished successful marriage alliances among their milieu and obtained an extensive family network.

336 HANNICK-SCHMALZBAUER, Synadenoi 134.
The imperial family of the Laskarids seems by the period under research to prefer the intermarriages with rulers of other states, since the proposals of marital unions with aristocrats are quite few. Even though the marriages of the daughters of Theodore II are not related to the high aristocracy, their significance could be observed in the reigning years of the founder of the Palaiologan dynasty. The reference to the royal intermarriages of the first Laskarid daughters, Eirene and Maria are making even more remarkable the difference between the marital unions of the younger princesses of the Laskarids, who married in the reign of Michael VIII; the latter was the one who found their future spouses. Another fact that might be crucial is how luck brought two Palaiologines to become royal brides on the side of the husbands previously married to Laskarid princesses and influence anew the marriage strategies of the next periods.

As it might be noticed, the Palaiologan system of intermarriages presents already from the beginning differences in comparison to the Komnenian one. Although, both the Komnens and the Palaiologoi rose up in power as a dominant family from a specific circle, the latter practiced many intermarriages with families of the same milieu long before their accession to the throne and they continued this practice during at least the reign of first two Palaiologans.

3. Marriage Strategies in the Reign of Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259-1282)

In the previous subchapter were presented the marriage strategies of the aristocracy until 1259; it became quite obvious that the Palaiologoi were the aristocratic family with the most active network among its milieu. Michael VIII Palaiologos seemed to be really concerned in the influence that not only the marriage policies of his family could have to his role as an emperor, but also the marriage strategies of the aristocratic families that consisted his entourage.

The intermarriages of the Palaiologoi secured the support of the aristocracy to Michael VIII and his military successes strengthened his position as a worthy emperor\textsuperscript{337}. In 1261 the recapture of Constantinople, accomplished by Michael’s

\textsuperscript{337} The battle of Pelagonia in 1259 was a great military success for Michael VIII Palaiologos when he was still co-emperor, since he defeated the alliance of Guillaume II de Villehardouin, prince of Morea, Michael II Komnenos Doukas of Epirus and Manfred of Sicily. According to Geanakoplos, in the period immediately preceding the Nicene reconquest of Constantinople in 1261 no event was of greater importance than Michael Palaeologus' victory at Pelagonia, GEANAKOPOLOS, Michael Palaiologus 47. For
general Alexios Strategopoulos, led to the coronation of Michael VIII and his son, Andronikos II Palaiologos on the 15th August of the same year; in December, the young emperor John IV Laskaris, who was still in Nicaea, was blinded, an act that confirmed the earlier fears of the Patriarch Arsenios for the luck of Theodore’s son. Arsenios reacted immediately with the excommunication of the emperor, a ban that was active until 1268.

The blinding of John IV led to the immediate reaction of his sister, Eirene Laskarina, who as it was mentioned earlier, was the wife of the tsar of Bulgaria, Constantine Tich. Since she wanted to revenge Michael VIII for what he did to her brother, she induced her husband to attack the Byzantine territories. The successful diplomatic marriage of Theodore II had now become detrimental for the Empire, since Eirene’s deeds were incited by her hate for the Byzantine emperor. Michael VIII was convinced that the remaining Laskarid princesses could cause further problems as they would not probably stop their struggle to restore their brother to the throne, therefore he decided that their marriages should be arranged carefully.

Michael VIII wanted to secure his position to the throne against anyone who could be an aspiring rival, since the blinding of the rightful heir made him to be seen as an usurper among a large proportion of the population, mostly in the Byzantine territories of Asia Minor. Hence, the spouses of the Laskarid princesses must not have the power to claim the ascendance to the throne. The appropriate husbands were found among two noblemen of Latin origin and a Bulgarian ruler. In 1261, Theodora

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338 D. GEANAKOPOLOS, Greco-Latin Relations on the Eve of the Byzantine Restoration: The Battle of Pelagonia-1259. DOP 7 (1953) 99-141. An interesting fact for the alliance of Michael II of Epirus is that both Guillaume II and Manfred were his sons-in-law; Manfred was married to the eldest daughter of Michael, Helen Komnene Doukaina and Guillaume to the second, Anna Angelina Komnene Doukaina in 1258, George Akropolites, Χρονική Συγγραφή 76 (156-159 HEISENBERG–WIRTH); George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὶ Ἑστορία I (117 FAILLER–LAURENT); Nikephoros Gregoras, Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἑστορία I (71-72 SCHOPEN–BEEKER); NICOL, Despotate 172-173.

339 George Akropolites, Χρονικὴ Συγγραφή 85-88 (181-188 HEISENBERG–WIRTH); George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὶ Ἑστορία I (191-203 FAILLER–LAURENT); Nikephoros Gregoras, Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἑστορία I (83 SCHOPEN–BEEKER).

340 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὶ Ἑστορία I (191 FAILLER–LAURENT); Nikephoros Gregoras, Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἑστορία I (99 SCHOPEN–BEEKER).

341 Michael’s VIII fears about the claims of the remaining Laskarids were reasonable, since after the death of Theodore II was already under discuss if the guardianship of the underaged emperor John IV should be taken by one of the husbands of the three daughters of Theodore, when they got married and not Michael, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὶ Ἑστορία I (107 FAILLER–LAURENT).

342 The marriage of the daughters of Theodore II with non-Byzantines made impossible their access to the imperial throne, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὶ Ἑστορία I (243 FAILLER–LAURENT); Nikephoros Gregoras, Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἑστορία I (92-93 SCHOPEN–BEEKER).
Laskarina married Mathieu de Véligourt, baron of Veligosti in the principality of Achaia\(^{342}\); her two sisters were also married in the same year. The marriage of Eudokia Laskarina was arranged with Guglielmo, count of Ventimiglia, who was a vassal of Genova\(^{343}\) and finally the last sister, of unknown name was married to the Bulgarian ruler of Vidyne, Svietoslav\(^{344}\).

Before the marriage policies that he followed with the last representatives of the rival dynasty of the Laskarids, the emperor wanted to create a marriage alliance with the Mongols, who were attacking the Empire in the East. He proposed the marriage of his illegitimate daughter, Maria to the Mongol khan, Hülegü\(^{345}\). Maria’s mother was a lady probably of the aristocratic family of Batatzes, since she is known as Diplobatatzina (two times a Batatzes)\(^{346}\). Maria was probably born before 1253/4, since Michael VIII then married Theodora; therefore, she must have been of proper age for marriage\(^{347}\). But before the young bride reached her spouse-to-be, Hülegü died and Maria finally married his son and heir, Abaqa\(^{348}\). After the death of her husband in 1281, Maria known also as Δέσποινα/ Κυρά τῶν Μουγουλίων (Lady of the Mongols), came back to Constantinople, where she established the Monastery of Mougouli\(^{349}\). She is also depicted in the Monastery of Chora in Constantinople as a nun with the name Melania, with the inscription Lady of the Mongols\(^{350}\). Her diplomatic actions by the time of the reign of her half-brother Andronikos II, as well as the marriage of her daughter, Theodora Palaiologina Arachatlun with a member of the family of Asan are going to be analysed in the next chapter.

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\(^{342}\) PLP 7304, 2555.  
\(^{343}\) PLP 6234 (91888), 2738.  
\(^{344}\) George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι I (243 FAILLER–LAURENT). Nikephoros Gregoras confused the names of the Laskarid princesses and wrote that the wife of Constantine Tich was Theodora, instead of Eirene, the eldest daughter of Theodore II, Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκὴ ἱστορία I (92-93 SCHOPEN–BEKKER). Svietoslav is known by the Byzantine sources as Ὀσφεντισθλάβος.  
\(^{345}\) PLP 21395, 30379; PAPADOPULOS, Palaiologen 33-34.  
\(^{346}\) As mentioned in the first chapter, the Batatzes family had two distinctive branches like the Palaiologoi. The name Diplobatatzina reveals that probably in her the two branches of Batatzai met through the marriage of her parents. Unfortunately, no other information is known about Diplobatatzina, since Pachymeres refers to her only by name, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι I (235 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 5515.  
\(^{347}\) The proper age for marriage for the girls was twelve and fourteen for the boys.  
\(^{348}\) George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι I (235 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 1141. The marriage according to Fallier seems to have taken place around 1264 after the death of Hülegü or in 1265 in the coronation of Abaqa. On the contrary, Dölger argued that the marriage took place in 1261, DÖLGER, Regesten 40, 67.  
\(^{349}\) MM I, 312-317.  
\(^{350}\) See chapter one.
Another illegitimate daughter of the emperor, Euphrosyne Palaiologina served the diplomatic strategies of her father and married the ruler of the Mongols of the Golden Horde, Nogai, who was going to be one of the most faithful allies of Michael VIII until his death in 1282. The marriage took place around 1269 to 1270. It is interesting that all marriage policies related to the emperor’s daughters—either illegitimate or not—took place with potential allies of the emperor in order to face the political problems that had risen up after other intermarriages arranged by Theodore II or by Michael VIII himself.

Since the problems with the Bulgarian realm continued to exist, Michael VIII searched for a new ally; he found him in Mytzes, son-in-law of tsar John II Asan, who claimed already from the time of the murder of John II the Bulgarian throne as a rival of Constantine Tich. In 1262/3, the emperor agreed to an intermarriage between the son of Mytzes, John III Asan and his eldest daughter Eirene Palaiologina. The marital union was not concluded until 1278; it is the first time that we observe a fifteen-year betrothal of an imperial daughter in the Palaiologan period. Since the sources do not report them being underage by the time of their betrothal, the marriage must have happened after the pressure of the danger in the north frontier of the Empire, caused by another diplomatic marriage arranged by Michael VIII. Eirene Palaiologina and her husband, John III Asan, who was crowned tsar of Bulgaria in 1279, are the establishers of the Byzantine aristocratic family of Asan, whose members are known as Asan or Palaiologoi Asan. The couple came back from Bulgaria after the defeat of John III by the Bulgarian Lachanas and the rise to the throne of George Terter, husband of Asan’s sister. They had no less than ten children, of whom seven survived. Their marriages took place under Andronikos II and some of them served the diplomacy of the emperor.

351 Papadopulos, Palaiologen 33.
352 PLP 20693.
353 George Pachymeres, Συγγραμματεῖα Ἱστορίαι II (447-449 Faille-Laurent).
354 Nikephoros Gregoras, Ῥωμαϊκή Ἱστορία I (149-150 Schopen–Bekker).
355 PLP 19904.
357 George Pachymeres, Συγγραμματεῖα Ἱστορίαι II (553-555 Faille–Laurent).
358 Nikephoros Gregoras, Ῥωμαϊκή Ἱστορία I (132-133 Schopen–Bekker).
359 George Pachymeres, Συγγραμματεῖα Ἱστορίαι II (561-567 Faille–Laurent).
360 See subchapter four.
A marital union between the second daughter of Michael VIII, Anna Palaiologina and Stephan Urôs II Milutin, the second son of the kral of Serbia, Stephan I Urôs seemed to be proposed by the Byzantine emperor in 1269. Michael VIII wanted probably to extend the network of intermarriages with the foreign rulers, in order to diminish the Bulgarian threat in the northern borders. Even though there was a strong interest of both the Serbian ruler and the emperor, the marriage arrangements were finally cancelled. A new potential spouse for Anna was found in Demetrios (Michael) Doukas Komnenos Koutroules Angelos, younger son of Michael II, Despot of Epirus. Demetrios was a captive in Constantinople and after the death of his father was renamed Michael. However, a marriage between those two seemed to be difficult, since they were related by marriage in a lower degree than the seventh, a fact that made their union unacceptable by the Church. In 1278, after the decision of the Synod they were finally married. The emperor bestowed upon Michael Angelos the title of Despot, as he had done earlier with Eirene’s husband, John III Asan. Michael and Anna had together two children, Andronikos and Constantine, who acquired positions in the court of the emperor. Finally, the last daughter of Michael VIII, Eudokia married shortly before her father’s death in 1282, the emperor of Trebizond John II Komnenos.

Michael VIII had tried, when the circumstances allowed it, to first establish and then extend his network of alliances, depending heavily on diplomacy and mostly on one of the most significant means of the Byzantine diplomacy, the intermarriages. The emperor and his wife had together seven children; the marriages of their daughters Eirene, Anna and Eudokia had already been mentioned, together with those of the illegitimate daughters of the emperor, Maria and Euphrosyne. From their four sons, Manuel had died as an infant; they still had Andronicos II – the later emperor –.
Constantine, known as Porphyrogennetos, since he was born after his father’s coronation in Constantinople and Theodore Palaiologos. The matter of marriage of his son and heir Andronikos II was of great significance; therefore, Michael VIII was searching for the proper wife, whose family could be a useful ally or she could at least bring without bloody conflicts a dowry consisting of territories belonging earlier to the Empire. Therefore, the emperor’s first choice was Isabeau de Villehardouin, princess of Achaia and firstborn daughter of Guillaume II and Anna Angelina of Epirus. Since the Byzantines could not take back Morea from the Latins by war, Michael VIII had proposed the marital union in order Andronikos to gain Achaia as his wife’s inheritance. The barons of Achaia had probably understood the purposes of the emperor and they did not want Morea to become a Byzantine province, thus the proposal was rejected.

After the failed attempt for an intermarriage with the Frankish princess of Achaia and since the treaty of Viterbo had made him to be quite worried for the luck of the restored Empire, Michael VIII turned to the Western kingdoms to find a wife for his heir. His quest led him to Eirene, daughter of king Stefan V of Hungary; she was a granddaughter of Bela IV and Maria Laskarina, daughter of Theodore I of Nicaea. Since the intermarriages between the Byzantine Empire and the Hungarian realm were a tradition already from the Komneni an era, both sides were more than willing for this marriage to take place. Eirene travelled to Constantinople, renamed to Anna and married Andronikos in 1272.

369 Papadopoulos, Palaiologen 22-23.
370 Marino Sanudo Torsello, Istoria (129 Papadopoulou); PLP 6445.
371 The proposal had followed the defeat of the Byzantines in Prinitsa in 1263, Chronicle of Morea vv. 4664-4863 (196-204 Kalonaros). According to the Frankish law in the principality of Achaia, the Assizes of Romania, the female heirs of the princes of Morea could inherit the principality. This matter was of great significance for the Villehardouins, since their male lines were extinct after the death of Guillaume II, P. Topping, Liber Consuetudinum Imperii Romaniæ. Feudal Institutions as Revealed of the Assizes of Romania, the Law Code of Frankish Greece. Philadelphia 1949, 39, 143. The reigning dynasty of the principality were the members, -male and female, since the Lex Salica was not followed by the Frankish hegemonies in the Aegean, of the de Villehardouin family until its last female representative, Mahaut de Hainaut in 1318, M. Dourou-Eliopoulos, Το Φράγκικο Πριγκιπάτο της Αχαΐας (1204-1432). Thessaloniki 2005, 29-33.
372 Interesting is the fact that this marriage proposal is not referred to any Byzantine source, except from an account of Pachymeres about a Byzantine embassy to the Italians for a potential marriage of Andronikos. The embassy couldn’t accomplish its purpose due to the presence of Charles D’Anjou, claimer of the Byzantine territories in Greece and declared enemy of Byzantium in Sicily, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικα Ιστορίαι II (411 Failer–Laurent).
373 For the Treaty of Viterbo see Géanakoplos, Michael Palaiologus 152-155.
374 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικα Ιστορίαι II (411-413 Failer–Laurent).
375 Dölger suggested that Andronikos was crowned co-emperor already in 1261 in the coronation of his father, F. Dölger, Die dynastische Familienpolitik des Kaisers Michael VIII Palaiologos in: F. Dölger
The younger brothers of Andronikos II, Constantine and Theodore Palaiologos were married after the death of Michael VIII. Nevertheless, Gregoras informs us about a marriage plan that the emperor had in mind for his beloved son, Constantine Porphyrogennetos. He, except the privileges and incomes that his father had given to him, was going to be married with a prominent lady belonging to the Latin aristocracy; furthermore, Michael VIII intended to give him the territory of Thessaloniki in order to establish a new Byzantine hegemony. Even though Gregoras supports his account, it seems that this policy is far away from the diplomatic activities of Michael VIII, whose priorities were the survival of the Empire and the intermarriages of his immediate family and relatives.376

The Palaiologoi were a family which in order to success their alliances not only with the aristocratic families, but also with the foreign rulers, used all their relatives into their marriage strategies, female and male, legitimate or illegitimate into their marriage strategies. This was the case of the marriage of the illegitimate daughter of Despot John Palaiologos, brother of Michael VIII.377 After his defeat in Nea Patra by the ruler of Thessaly, John I the Illegitimate in 1273, Palaiologos fell in disfavour and was sent by his brother in the Eastern frontier of the Empire.378 There, John had not only many military successes, but also a diplomatic one, since he married his illegitimate and only daughter of unknown name to the ruler of Iberia, David.379 The intermarriage was significant for the defence of the Eastern frontier of the Empire and the emperor seemed to be satisfied by his brother’s action.

The members of the family of Michael’s beloved sister, Eirene (Eulogia) Komnene Palaiologina and her husband, John Komnenos Angelos Kantakouzenos are the representatives of the family of Kantakouzenos. The couple had four daughters, as it was referred above. The eldest, Theodora was married to a prominent member of the Raoul family and the second, Maria was married to the *megas domestikos* Alexios

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377 John Palaiologos had no children with his wife, the daughter of Constantine Tornikes. Also, the mother of his illegitimate daughter is not known by any of the sources.
378 George Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι* I (285 FAILLER–LAURENT); P. MAGDALINO, Notes on the last years of John Palaiologos, brother of Michael VIII. *REB* 34 (1976) 143-149.
Philes. The last two, Anna and Eugenia were still unmarried, when their uncle the emperor concluded peace with the Despot of Epirus, Michael II and an intermarriage. Michael’s II son, Nikephoros I was windowed after the death of his wife, Maria Laskarina, daughter of Theodore II. The emperor selected Anna Palaiologina Kantakouzene as the proper bride; the marriage took place in 1265 in Epirus. After the marriage, Michael VIII invited Nikephoros I in Constantinople, where he welcomed him with honours and gave him many presents. Anna and Nikephoros had together three children, Maria, Thomas and Thamar, who are going to play an important role in the intermarriages of Andronikos II.

When Eirene Laskarina, wife of the Bulgarian tsar Constantine Tich died, the latter wanted to put an end in the hostilities against the Empire, because he had exhausted his army fighting against the Byzantines for his wife’s claims. Moreover, he asked for the hand of a Byzantine, preferably Palaiologan, princess. Michael VIII chose his niece, Maria Palaiologina Kantakouzene, the widow of Michael Palaiologus. They were married in 1268/9, but unfortunately the peace between the two countries did not last long.

Michael VIII was aware that the Byzantine Empire was in danger, as his most fatal and powerful enemy by that time was Charles d’Anjou, who was already planning his campaign for the restoration of the Latin Empire. Therefore, the emperor tried to delay Charles’ expedition with his intensive diplomatic activity; in this context he had suggested the Union of the Churches. His action, even though he wanted to be beneficial for the Empire, had faced the forceful opposition first of the Church, but also of the aristocratic circles of Constantinople. It also caused the division of the Byzantine

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380 PLP 10933; NICOL, Kantakouzenoi 20-24; PAPADOPOULOS, Palaiogen 19
381 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικα Ιστορίαι I (315 FAILLER–LAURENT); Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή Ιστορία I (92 SCHOPEN–BEKKER).
382 PLP 19910; NICOL, Kantakouzenoi 19-20; PAPADOPOULOS, Palaiologen 20.
383 Charles d’Andjou, the younger brother of the King of France, Louis IX, became King of Sicily, after his precedence firstly in the battle of Benevento in 1266, where he defeated Manfred Hohenstaufen, King of Sicily and then in the battle of Tagliazzo two years later, where with the help of prince Guillaume II of Achaia, who was his vassal, he defeated the last representative of the Hohenstaufen, the sixteen-year-old, Conrad V, known as Conradin, GEANAKOPOLOS, Michael Palaiologus 147-165.
384 Charles’ marriage policies mirrored clearly his ambitions. He had married his eldest daughter, Beatrice to the titular Latin emperor of Constantinople, Philipp de Courtenay and then his own son, Philipp d’Anjou, titular King of Thessaloniki to the princess of Achaia, Isabeau de Villehardouin. By the last intermarriage he had also gained the suzerainty over the principality of Achaia. An interesting fact is also that Charles’ eldest son, Charles II, was married to a daughter of King Stephan V of Hungary and sister of the Byzantine empress Anna; therefore, it could be said that he was suggambros of Andronikos II, P. LOCK, The Franks in the Aegean (1204-1500). London/ New York 1995, 66, 84-85, 360-361; On Charles d’Anjou and the Frankish hegemonies in Romania, see M. DOUROU-EILOPOULOU Η Ανδρονικοκυριαρχία στην Ρωμανία επί Κάρολου I (1266-1285). Athens 1987.
society into those who found his diplomacy effective and to those that were totally against it. Among the prominent members of the aristocracy that were against the Union were even members of Michael’s VIII immediate family and entourage such as his sisters, Eirene (Eulogia) Palaiologina Kantakouzene and Martha (Maria) Palaiologina Tarchaneiotissa and their families.\(^{385}\)

Her opposition to the Union had brought also Maria Kantakouzene into direct conflict with her uncle. Instead of helping Michael VIII to obtain a beneficial alliance, she followed the policy of Eirene Laskarina and conducted her husband to start a new series of invasions in the Byzantine territories. Her mother had also moved in Bulgaria with her and as a pioneer of the anti-unionists, she accepted in the Bulgarian court all the people that were against the ecclesiastical policy of the emperor.\(^{386}\) The power of Maria Kantakouzene as a queen and her involvement in the politics of the Bulgarian realm increased notably after the birth of her son with Constantine, Michael and the sickness of her husband. Since she wanted to secure her son’s ascendance to the throne, Maria pretended that she wanted to adopt Svietoslav, the ruler of Vidyne and husband of the younger daughter of Theodore II; however, her intention was to murder him.\(^{387}\) The success of Maria’s attempt against Svietoslav followed the murder of Constantine Tich in 1277 by a shepherd named Lachanas.\(^{388}\)

When Maria married Lachanas in 1278 and legitimized his rise to the throne, the emperor decided to help the fiancé of his eldest daughter, John III Asan (Mytzes) to claim the Bulgarian throne. Michael VIII and John III with the valuable help of the Mongols of the Golden Horde tried to defeat Lachanas and they captured Maria, who was pregnant to his daughter and imprisoned her in Constantinople.\(^{389}\) As it was mentioned above, Eirene Palaiologina and Asan married the same year and John was also crowned king of Bulgaria in 1279. Unfortunately his reign and with it the

\(^{385}\) It should be mentioned here that the names Eulogia and Maria had been taken by Eirene and Martha after they had become nuns, a common practice of the members of the high aristocracy of the Palaiologan period, E. Mitsiou, Late Byzantine Female Monasticism from the Point of View of the Register of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in: C. Gastgeber, E. Mitsiou, J. Preiser-Kappeller (ed.), The Register of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Wien 2013, 105-114.

\(^{386}\) Eirene and her daughter, Maria, supported at first the Arseniates and then the anti-unionists, causing great trouble to Michael VIII, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικι Ιστορία ΙΙ (431-435, 545 Failler–Laurent); Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή Ιστορία I (130 Schopen–Bekker).

\(^{387}\) George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικι Ιστορία ΙΙ (547 Failler–Laurent).

\(^{388}\) George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικι Ιστορία ΙΙ (551-553 Failler–Laurent); Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή Ιστορία I (130-131 Schopen–Bekker); PLP 14609, where Lachanas is also referred with his Bulgarian name Ivajlo Vurdokva.

\(^{389}\) George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικι Ιστορία ΙΙ (561-569 Failler–Laurent).
Byzantine influence in the Bulgarian realm, did not last for a long time. John III lost the throne from George Terter and he returned to Constantinople with his wife and children, who constituted the family of Asan. Moreover, Lachanas was defeated by another son-in-law of the emperor, the Mongol Nogai.

The offspring of Martha (Maria) Palaiologina, Michael’s VIII sister and wife of *megas domestikos* Nikephoros Tarchaneiotes played an active part in the marriages policies of the Palaiologan dynasty. Nikephoros and Martha had three sons and one daughter, Theodora Tarchaneiotissa Balanidiotissa, whose marriage was referred earlier. When Despot Michael II of Epirus died in 1267, the emperor extended his diplomatic relations to the ruler of Thessaly, John I Angelos the Illegitimate, who competed his brother, Nikephoros I of Epirus. Michael VIII had asked for the hand of one of John’s daughters for his nephew, Andronikos Tarchaneiotes, eldest son of Martha.

By the time of his marriage with the unnamed by the sources daughter of John I, Andronikos took the office of *megas konostaulos* and resided in Adrianople; his father-in-law became also *sevastokrator*. Sometime near 1272, Andronikos felt possibly offended of the fact that his younger brother, Michael Palaiologos Tarchaneiotes was raised to the office of *megas domestikos* probably due to his military successes. Andronikos fled with his wife in Thessaly, to his father-in-law and caused an upheaval between John Angelos and the Byzantine empire. Unfortunately, there is no evidence about any offspring of his.

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390 George Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι* II (591 FAILLER–LAURENT).
391 From their sons, the older two were married; their youngest son John Tarchaneiotes took part in military expeditions by the side of his maternal uncle, the Despot John Palaiologos. In circa 1266 he was already a pioneer of the Arseniates. His mother and half-sister, Nostongissa Tarchaneiotissa were also supporters of the Arseniates. There is no evidence about him ever being married or having any children,
393 PLP 608; POLEMIS, The Doukai; NICOL, Despotate 11.
394 George Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι* II (399-401 FAILLER–LAURENT).
395 The emperor sent his brother, John Palaiologos there as commander with a considerable military power, but he was defeated and later quitted from his office and privileges in 1273. John I Angelos, asked for the help of the Duke of Athens, Jean de la Roche against the Byzantines, suggesting also an intermarriage between Jean and one of his daughters; since the Duke was not well in his health, he suggested as potential spouse his brother, Guy I de la Roche. He finally became the husband of John’s daughter, Helen Doukaina; although the alliance of the Sevastokratour of Thessaly was important, he was finally defeated by the Byzantine army under Alexios Philanthropenos. George Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι* II (417-419, 421, 425-427, 431-433 FAILLER–LAURENT); GEANAKOPOLOS, Michael Palaiologus 279-285.
396 LEONTIADES, TarchaneiotaI 65.
The second son of Nikephoros Tarchaneiotes, Michael Palaiologos Tarchaneiotes was raised as the rest of his siblings in the imperial palace after the coronation of his uncle. He married possibly before 1262 the unnamed daughter of megas domestikos Alexios Doukas Philanthropenos, who had been a great military commander already by the time of Theodore II. The couple had together two children, Alexios Doukas Philanthropenos, who, as it is clear from the sources, preferred the name of his maternal grandfather and an unnamed daughter, who married into the Raoul family.

The youngest brother of emperor Michael VIII, sevastokrator Constantine Palaiologos, and his wife Eirene Branaina had together five children, Michael Komnenos Branas Palaiologos, Andronikos Komnenos Branas Doukas Angelos Palaiologos, Maria Komnene Laskarina Doukaina Tornikina Palaiologina, a daughter of unknown name and Theodora Palaiologina. Their eldest son was not married and he became a monk with the name Makarios. Constantine and Eirene seemed to have died early enough to leave their youngest daughter, Theodora, under the guardianship of the emperor, as she herself informs us in the Typikon of the Monastery of Bebaia Elpis. According to the same Typikon, shortly after their death Theodora married, probably with the consent of her uncle, into the Synadenos family in ca. 1280. Her husband was John Angelos Doukas Synadenos, upon whom the emperor received by the time of their marriage the rank of megas stratopedarches.

Interestingly enough Theodora Palaiologina Synadene referred to her husband’s lineage emphasising that it could be traced back clearly to the Komnenoi, meaning probably the intermarriages between the imperial family and the Synadenoi. They had together three children, John, Theodore and Euphrosyne. After a military career of

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397 PLP 27505; LEONTIADES, Tarchaneiota 66-67; Papadopoulos confuses in his work the Protovestarios Michael Palaiologos Tarchaneiotes to the protostrator Michael Doukas Glabas Tarchaneiotes, PAPADOPULOS, Palaiologen 14-15.
398 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι I (155 FAILLER–LAURENT).
399 In the same passage of the marriage, Alexios Philanthropenos is referred as αὐτόδελφος of Theodore I Laskaris’ brother, Michael. George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι I (273 FAILLER–LAURENT); ATHENAGORAS, Philanthropenoi 63.
400 PLP 21530.
401 Papadopoulos placed their death in ca. 1271, PAPADOPULOS, Palaiologen 6.
402 PLP 21381; PAPADOPULOS, Palaiologen 9; SPATHARAKIS, Portraits 193-199.
403 DELEHAYE, Deux typica 24; TALBOT, Bebaia Elpis: Typikon of Theodora Synadene 1525.
404 PLP 27125; HANNICK-SCHMALZBAUER, Synadenoi 134-135.
405 DELEHAYE, Deux typica 24; TALBOT, Bebaia Elpis: Typikon of Theodora Synadene 1525. Through their kinship with the Komnenoi, the Synadenoi had practiced an intermarriage with the family of Palaiologos already from the twelfth century (see above). Pachymeres refers to John only as Synadenos, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι III (81 FAILLER–LAURENT).
some distinction, John became a monk under the name Joachim, probably shortly before his death. Theodora then decided to embrace the monastic life herself under the name Theodoule (ca. 1295–1300), along with her daughter Euphrosyne Komnene Doukaina Palaiologina, who was of young age\textsuperscript{406}. In the Typikon, Theodora Synadene speaks about many members of her family apart from her parents such as not only her children and grandchildren with their spouses, but also her siblings, giving ambulant information about their family connections and the use of surnames among the members of the aristocracy of the period\textsuperscript{407}.

Apart from Theodora, Maria Palaiologina, the eldest daughter of the Sevastokrator Constantine Komnenos Palaiologos, married probably during the reign of her uncle, Michael VIII. On the other hand, Andronikos Komnenos Branas Doukas Angelos Palaiologos might have been married during the reign of Andronikos II, as his anonymous sister also did. Unfortunately, the exact dates of the marriages of Andronikos and Maria are not known, therefore it could only be assumed that Maria Komnene Laskarina Doukaina Tornikina Palaiologina\textsuperscript{408}, as she is referred in the Typikon, may have been married before her youngest sister, Theodora. Her husband was Isaakios Komnenos Doukas Tornikes\textsuperscript{409} and they had together one son, Andronikos Komnenos Doukas Palaiologos Tornikes\textsuperscript{410}.

A common phenomenon when listing the marriages of the aristocracy is the lack of evidence regarding the dates of the marital unions. Thus, the marriages of some prominent members of the aristocratic families are mentioned in the chronological time frame that they most likely have happened, based on the information that is available about their lives, careers and sometimes the dates of the marriages of their children. The above-mentioned case of Maria Tornikina Palaiologina was one of such cases during the reign of Michael VIII Palaiologos; the other cases are those of Theodore Mouzalon, Michael Strategopoulos and Michael Glabas Tarchaneiotes.

Belonging probably to the family of Mouzalones from Nicaea, Theodore Boilas Mouzalon, logothetes tou genikou from 1277 to ca.1282 and megas logothetes (1282–

\textsuperscript{406} TALBOT, Bebaia Elpis: Typikon of Theodora Synadene 1512; PLP 21373; SPATHARAKIS, Portraits 199 and pl.153.
\textsuperscript{407} For the Typikon of Bebaia Elpis see above.
\textsuperscript{408} DELEHAYE, Deux typica 92; PLP 21396; PAPADOPULOS, Palaiologen 8.
\textsuperscript{409} DELEHAYE, Deux typica 92; PLP 29125; POLEMIS, The Doukai 185; SCHMALZBAUER, Tornikioi 125-126.
\textsuperscript{410} PLP 29122; POLEMIS, The Doukai 185; SCHMALZBAUER, Tornikioi 126-127.
1294) was married to a Kantakouzene; their marriage was arranged by the emperor. Unfortunately, there is not enough information about the identity of the parents of this unnamed Kantakouzene, it is only supposed that she might be one of the daughters of Eirene-Eulogia and John Kantakouzenos. They had together a daughter, Eudokia, whose marriage took place in the reign of Andronikos II.

The protostrator Michael Strategopoulos, apparently the son of Constantine Strategopoulos, mentioned earlier in the chapter and of his wife, known as Strategopoulina, was also a cousin of empress Theodora Palaiologina. He married Anna Komnene Strategopoulina Raoulaina, possibly a daughter of John Komnenos Doukas Petraliphas Raoul and Theodora Raoulaina Palaiologina Kommene Kantakouzene, who was known also as protostratorissa, by her husband’s title. They had together a son, Andreas Strategopoulos, who died very young.

The protostrator Michael Doukas Glabas Tarchaneiotes was one of the most successful military commanders of both of emperor Michael VIII and his son, Andronikos II. He married Maria Doukaina Komnene Branaina Palaiologina Tarchaneiotissa, known also as protostratorissa and they had -after many years of marriage- a daughter of unknown name. Maria’s parents were possibly the megas papis Nikolaos Komnenos Doukas Glabas Tarchaneiotes and Theodora Doukaina Branaina; in such a case it is observed an endogamy in the Tarchaneiotes family. Michael and Maria were responsible for the restoration of the Church of

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411 In the passage is clear that the emperor gave in marriage this unnamed Kantakouzene to Theodore Mouzalon, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικα Ἰστορίαι II (625 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 19439. Theodore seemed to have died in 1294.
412 For Theodore’s wife, Nicol had expressed the opinion that she might have been a daughter of John Kantakouzenos and Eirene-Eulogia, because she is described as ‘Kantakouzenos’s daughter’ and John is usually referred in Pachymeres only as ‘Kantakouzenoi’, NICOL. Kantakouzenoi 25-26.
413 PLP 26898; Doukaina Strategopoulina is the sister of John Doukas, father of Michael’s VIII wife, Theodora Palaiologina.
414 Manuel Philes, Carmina II (135, 263 MILLER); PLP 26893; FASSOULAKIS, Raoul 31-33.
415 PLP 26895.
416 Manuel Philes, Carmina II (114, 103, 107, 139 and many more MILLER). A poem of Philes entitled Εἰς τὰ τῶν πρωτοστράτορος ἕκκλην τοῦ θυμωποῦ στρατηγήματι cites important historical information about Michael’s military career, Ibid. II 240-255. Michael Glabas Tarchaneiotes had served the Empire in many posts such as those of kouropalates (1262), pinkernes (1282), megas konostaulos (1282-1297), before being protostrator in ca.1302, an office that he held until 1304 after when he became a monk, PLP 27504; LEONTIADES, Tarchaneiotoi 69-72; POLEMIS, The Dokai 121.
418 PLP 4208; LEONTIADES, Tarchaneiotoi 81-82. Leontiades referred to the matter of Maria’s parents after careful consideration, expressed the opinion that her potential mother Theodora Doukaina Branaina Glabaina might had become a nun with the name Theodosia. However, he insists that the kinship relations
Pammakaristos in Constantinople, probably in ca.1263 and therefore they were known as the new κτήτορες of the Church with inscriptions referring to them\textsuperscript{419}.

During the reign of Michael VIII Palaiologos, it is apparent that the emperor played a predominant role in the intermarriages of his immediate family, his relatives and the members of the high aristocracy. Since the Palaiologoi were now the imperial dynasty, their marriage strategies were planned firstly and foremost depending on the internal and external policies, of the emperor. Consequently, the members of the extended family network of the Palaiologoi had practiced several intermarriages not only with persons of the same milieu, but also with foreign rulers, serving the emperor’s diplomacy.

After ascending to the throne, Michael VIII was seriously concerned to outplay any of his possible rivals; therefore, he promptly started to plan the marriages of the Laskarid princesses. As immediate descendants of the former emperor of Nicæa and probably furious after the blinding of their brother and rightful heir to the Byzantine throne, John IV Laskaris, they were a constant threat for Palaiologos. The fact that they were women did not exclude them from their imperial right as many cases in Byzantine history proved; on the contrary, as it was presented earlier in this chapter, if they were married, their husbands would be the gambroi of Theodore II, which automatically legitimised any claims they may have to the throne\textsuperscript{420}. Since the older two of them were already married and their spouses had started to cause problems in the Empire by attacking the Byzantine territories, the emperor decided that the husbands of the last three daughters of Theodore II should not be considerable rivals. Therefore, he had chosen two Latin nobles, vassals of Achaia and Genova respectively and a Bulgarian ruler of minor importance and diminished any danger by ‘exiling’ the princesses through their marriages in territories out of the borders of the Empire\textsuperscript{421}.

\textsuperscript{419} Belting - Mango – Mouriki, Pammakaristos 21; Schreiner, Pammakaristoskirche 222.

\textsuperscript{420} As Gregoras describes in his account, the importance of the imperial descent had made emperor Michael VIII Palaeologos, to present his nieces and daughters of Kantakouzenos as daughters of Theodore II Laskaris, when he wanted to marry them with Nikephoros I of Epirus and Constantine Tich, Nikephoros Gregoras, Ποιητική Ιστορία I (130 Schopen – Bekker).

\textsuperscript{421} Although it could be assumed that in this way the emperor had secured his dynasty from the rival family of Laskarids, an event in the period of war between the Byzantines and the Latins in Morea (1263-1266) reveals the opposite. After the battle of Makryplagi in 1264, the prince of Achaia took as prisoners the Megas Domestikos Alexios Philes, the parakoimomenos John Makrenos and Alexios Kaballarios; the
Meanwhile, Michael VIII tried to secure the Empire by forging new alliances and using many means of diplomacy, but mostly the intermarriages, to shield them. He arranged the marriages of his illegitimate daughters to Mongol rulers and of his three daughters by empress Theodora correspondingly to a claimant of the Bulgarian throne, to a son of the Despot of Epirus and to the emperor of Trebizond. Michael VIII had also proposed an intermarriage between a son of the Serbian king and one of his daughters; a proposal was also made to the prince of Achaia, in order to marry his eldest daughter to emperor’s son and heir Andronikos II, who in the end took as his first wife the daughter of the Hungarian king Stephan V. The majority of those marriages and proposals of marriage were suggested by the emperor, since he was well aware of the dangers that the Empire faced, mostly by the Latins and especially of Charles d’Anjou, who wanted the restoration of the Latin Empire of Constantinople.

Not only his own children participated in the marriage alliances which served the policies of the emperor, but also the children of his siblings, the primary representatives of the prominent families of Kantakouzenoi and Tarchaneiotai. Although Michael VIII conceived the intermarriages of the daughters of Eirene (Eulogia) Palaiologina Kantakouzene to the Bulgarian ruler and the Despot of Epirus as profitable for the Empire, they finally proved problematic. Especially Maria, the wife of Constantine Tich caused many problems to her uncle due to her opposition to the Union of the Churches and her mother’s influence on this matter. It was then that Michael VIII, in order to face the hostilities of the Bulgarians, had tried to raise to the Bulgarian throne his son-in-law, John III Asan, whose reign with the Byzantine support did not last long.

As it can be deduced, the role of women in the intermarriages is quite significant. The existence of many female representatives seemed to be a great privilege for an imperial or an aristocratic family, since women were preferred in the marriage strategies of their family or the emperor in order to achieve a successful alliance. The first two were put in charge of the Byzantine army in Morea by the Sevastokrator Constantine Palaiologos. Philes died while imprisoned, but the emperor managed to exchange the others. By his return in Constantinople, Makrenos faced the accusations of the emperor’s sister and mother-in-law of Philes, Eirene-Eulogia that he had betrayed the emperor and had contributed to the defeat of the Byzantines in Makreyplagi. According to Eirene-Eulogia, he wished to marry Theodora Laskarina, the widow of Matthieu de Véligourt, who lived by that time in the Principality and to surrender Byzantine territories to the Latins, revolting also against the emperor. Makrenos was punished for treason and was blinded, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικα Ἰστορίαι I (275-277 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 92605.

422 As mentioned above the marriages of his children were also an evidence of his plans for the Byzantine territories.
interaction of these women with their husbands could be either beneficial or not for the Empire, therefore the age of the bride seemed to have played an important role. Maria, the illegitimate daughter of Michael VIII with Diplobatatzina, was chosen among the other daughters of the emperor by the time she was in the proper age of marriage according to the Byzantine law, that is around twelve or thirteen years old.

Whether a marriage proposal would lead to a betrothal and finally to a marriage, depended on several factors. Age was one of the most crucial; however, equally important factor was the degree of consanguinity of the two potential spouses, as it is observed in the case of Anna Palaiologina and Demetrios Michael Angelos Koutroules. Anna and Demetrios seemed to have been related in sixth degree, but since the marriage was politically important, it was finally allowed by the Church. It seems that when a marriage was extremely crucial for the Empire, the kinship prohibitions could be overruled.

When the norm was a betrothal of one year before the marriage, the unique phenomenon of a fifteen-year-long betrothal is observed in this period between the eldest daughter of the emperor, Eirene Palaiologina and her fiancé, John III Asan Mytzes. The two future spouses seem to have been both at the proper age for marriage by the time of their betrothal; nevertheless, they married only in 1278 and then Michael VIII helped his son-in-law to ascend the Bulgarian throne in 1279\textsuperscript{423}. Even though Eirene and John had not married earlier due to political reasons, Eirene’s engagement did not allow to her father to negotiate another marital union for her.

Of great importance are issues related to the marriage of the illegitimate daughters not only of the emperor, but also of his close relatives. John Komnenos Palaiologos, brother of Michael VIII, succeeded to marry his only daughter to the King of Iberia. The matter of her being illegitimate did not bother the Iberian ruler; for his part, the emperor was quite satisfied with the successful marriage strategy of his brother, even though it is not quite clear whether it was an action motivated by the emperor or it was an initiative of his brother. However, it seems that the direct imperial descent mattered greatly, and there were cases where the foreign ruler demanded a marriage only with a legitimate daughter of the emperor. The same principle affected

\textsuperscript{423} The rise of John III Asan Mytzes to the Bulgarian throne was important for Michael VIII, who wanted to expand his influence on the realm and restore the relations of the two countries, which were disturbed due to the former marriage alliances. Therefore, the emperor was quite unsatisfied when Eirene and her husband returned to Constantinople and they had not defended their claims against those of George Terter.
also the intermarriages between the members of the aristocratic families, since there is no record of this period for intermarriages with illegitimate children apart from the ruler of Thessaly, John the Illegitimate.

At this point it is of importance to comment on the different treatment of male and female relatives of the Emperor. For example, the nieces of emperor, the two Kantakouzene, who opposed to their uncle’s diplomacy and caused more troubles to the Empire than benefits through their marriages, seemed not to have been prevented from further intermarriages with members of aristocratic families. On the contrary, the marriage of Michael’s nephew, Andronikos Tarchaneiotes to the daughter of the ruler of Thessaly and his opposition to the emperor, led to the abandonment of this type of intermarriage; from now on this was left for the emperor’s brothers, sons or grandsons. In other words, this case confirmed the emperor’s concerns about how dangerous a member of an aristocratic family could be, when he gained enough power through his marriage, even when he was related to the emperor.

It could also be noticed that many of the aristocratic families in Constantinople had participated in the intermarriages of the period. The most active were indeed the families of Kantakouzenoi and Tarchaneiotai, which were also related immediately with the emperor. The families of Raoul, Strategopouloi, Synadenoi and Tornikioi had also accomplished several marital unions between them, as also did the family of Glabas-Tarchaneiotes. A member of the Mouzalon family appeared also in the marriage strategies of the period. Of major importance is the fact that many of the prominent members of those families are linked by ties of blood or marriage with the family of the Palaiologoi. In the same period appears also for the first time the family of Asan as an aristocratic family of Constantinople with its founders to be the eldest daughter of the emperor and her husband.

The offspring of many aristocratic couples, whose intermarriages were presented in the previous subchapters will take part in the marriage strategies of the aristocracy in the next period. Therefore, the marriage policies of the early Palaiologan aristocracy continue in the reigning years of Michael’s VIII heir, Andronikos II.
4. Marriage Strategies in the Reign of Andronikos II, until the First Phase of the Civil War (1282-1320)

Although Andronikos II seemingly had a quite different character from his father and followed a different external and internal policy he was aware of the importance of marriage strategies. Hence, he arranged marital unions not only for the members of his immediate family, but also for his relatives and many prominent members of the high aristocracy of his time.

Very early in his reign, Andronikos II had to negotiate his own marriage, since his first wife Anna had died in 1281. Even though they had together two sons, Michael IX and Constantine, the emperor decided after some consideration that for diplomatic reasons, which could benefit the Empire, he should marry again. Although his policies where mostly focused on the defence of Asia Minor and on the rejection of Michael’s VIII efforts for the Union of the Churches, in the beginning of his reign his diplomacy was turned to the West.

His father already from 1281 had suggested the marital union with a daughter of king Peter III of Aragon and Constanza Hohenstaufen; the intermarriage would have sealed the alliance of the two rulers against the Angevins. Since this intent seemed too risky for Peter after the events in Sicily (Sicilian Vespers), Andronikos turned to the king Alfonso X of Castille. The latter was reluctant, since the Byzantine emperor had rejected the Union of the Churches and was not accepted in the circles of the Catholic rulers as a potential son-in-law. However, the king of Castille found the proper bride for the emperor, not among his daughters, but in his granddaughter, Yolanda of Montferrat. The emperor seemed to be quite satisfied by his choice, since with his marriage to Yolanda, who was renamed Eirene, he received as a dowry Thessaloniki, which the family of Montferrat was claiming as its inheritance.

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424 In 1282, prior to Michael’s VIII death, had taken place the uprise of the Sicilians against the suzerainty of the Angevins, which cancelled the campaign of Charles d’Anjou against Byzantium. This revolt is rumoured to have happened due to the diplomacy of Michael VIII, who was associate of the claimant of the kingdom of Sicily, Peter III of Aragon. The claims to the Sicilian throne were inherited by his wife, Constanza of Hohenstaufen, after the death of her father, Manfred of Sicily in the battle of Benevento in 1266. Geanakoplos, Michael Palaiologus 247-268; Especially on the matter see S. Runciman, Sicilian Vespers. Cambridge 1958.
425 PLP 91142.
426 Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή ἱστορία I (167-168 SCHOPEN–BEKKER); PLP 21361.
427 The kingdom of Thessaloniki was considered an inheritance of the family of Montferrat already after the Fourth Crusade, when Boniface de Montferrat claimed Thessaloniki arguing that it was given as a
‘The Porphyrogennetos’ Constantine Palaiologos, brother of Andronikos II and beloved son of Michael VIII, married during his brother’s reign. As already mentioned, his father was possibly thinking of marrying him with a noble woman of Latin origin, a fact quite extraordinary, since in the early Palaiologan period the only members of the imperial family who married foreigners were the heirs to the throne. However, Constantine finally married Eirene Raoulaina, daughter of John Komnenos Doukas Angelos Petraliphas Raoul and Theodora Komnene Palaiologina Kantakouzene Raoulaina in ca.1289. Even though the two spouses were related in a lower degree than the seventh, since Eirene Raoulaina was Constantine’s niece, it is impressive that there was no objection by the Church to their marriage. They had together a son, John Palaiologos. Constantine was known only as landowner (μεγιστάνας), since he refused to accept any other title than that of despot, which his brother did not want to give him.

This fact caused an incident between his wife and the wife of Constantine Strategopoulos, known as Strategopoulina. When the emperor was in Nymphaion in 1292 for the celebration of the Feast of Peter and Paul, the high aristocracy had also joined the imperial family. Eirene Raoulaina and her husband entered the hall were the celebration was going to take place and although her husband took his place among the emperor and the other aristocrats, Eirene demanded from Strategopoulina, who was an old woman by that time, to take her position. Since Strategopoulina refused to do so, invoking her age, Eirene quarrelled with her and was angry with the fact that even though she was the wife of emperor’s brother, she had no title to secure her precedence at court and was only an ἰδιώτις. The kinship relation between the two women and

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promoi to his ancestor, Rainier de Montferrat when he married Maria Komnene, daughter of emperor Manuel I Komnenos, LAIOU, Constantinople and the Latins 46.

429 Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή ἱστορία I (187 SCHOPEN–BEKKER). The foreign noble women and princesses were probably chosen due to the fact that the marriage could be beneficial for the Empire on a diplomatic level contrary to the members of high aristocracy, who could easily interfere in the politics of the Empire for the benefit of their family.

430 In his account of their marriage, Gregoras inform us only about Constantine’s age, who was then reaching the age of thirty, Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή ἱστορία I (190 SCHOPEN–BEKKER); PLP 24142; FASSOULAKIS, Raoul 30-31. Failler expressed the opinion that the marriage took place before 1288, based on the fact that Pachymeres describes their son, John Palaiologos, as seventeen-year old in 1305, when he became a Panspersevastos, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικά ἱστορίαι IV (565 FAILLER–LAURENT); A. FAILLER, Pachymeriana altera. REB 46 (1988) 67-83, here 72.

431 The blood relation was from Eirene’s mother, Theodora Raoulaina, who was daughter of Eirene-Eulogia Kantakouzene, sister of Michael VIII and Constantine’s first cousin.

432 Due to the intensive efforts of Andronikos II to restore and defend the Byzantine territories in Asia Minor, he and his court moved for some time from Constantinople to Nymphaion.

433 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικά ἱστορίαι III (173 FAILLER–LAURENT).
the genealogy of Strategopoulina, who Pachymeres described as Raoulaina’s aunt, although she was in fact the daughter of the great-great uncle of Eirene, are also mentioned in this passage. It is a telling example of the kinship relations of the families of the high aristocracy from the generations of John III Batatzes until Andronikos II Palaiologos434.

Constantine Palaiologos ‘Porphyrogennetos’ probably chose to defend his wife’s deeds; however, since he could not insult directly the Strategopoulina, because they were related after all, he turned to an oikeioς of hers, paneugenestatos Constantine Mavrozomes435. The emperor was infuriated by Constantine’s actions and showed his discontent to his brother. Shortly after this incident, Constantine was accused of conspiracy. Andronikos II then imprisoned him and some of his friends, who were also accused for treason and their properties were confiscated436.

The fourth son of Michael VIII, Theodore Palaiologos was also married during his brother’s reign in 1293437. At first, Andronikos II planned a marriage alliance between his brother and the daughter of Theodore Mouzalon, probably named Eudokia, who however was accused of having illegitimate relations with a male relative438. Finally, the emperor through careful consideration, decided that Theodore should married the daughter of the Pinkernes Libadarios439. Of interest is the fact that he gave

434 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικά Ιστορία III (173 FAILLER–LAURENT). Failler referred extensively to the kinship structure that Pachymeres described in this passage. More specifically he analysed the terms of kinship mentioned by Pachymeres starting with αὐτανεψία meaning cousin, then ἀδελφαμη denoting the niece (Strategopoulina is the niece of John III Batatzes) and θεία, which had a less precise meaning, since Strategopoulina is called "aunt" of Eirene Raoulaina, although she is actually daughter of a great-great-uncle of Eirene. Finally, Strategopoulina is also described by Pachymeres as a μάμη, grandmother of both Eirene and Constantine, but she was neither the grandmother of the first nor the second. Therefore, Failler emphasized that obviously ‘the collateral line is shifted to the direct line. The use of this terminology probably implies a legal nuance; the deceased grandmother is somehow represented or replaced with the granddaughter or grandchild by a person who is at the same degree as the grandmother, but at a variable proximity (sister or cousin of the grandmother), in a collateral branch’, FAILLER, Pachymeriana altera 71-73.

435 PLP 17443; Constantine Mavrozomes was rumoured to have an affair with Strategopoulina. He paraded naked in a public square and he was finally released by the emperor, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικά Ιστορία III (175 FAILLER–LAURENT).

436 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικά Ιστορία III (175-181 FAILLER–LAURENT). Among the conspirators was also Strategopoulina’s son, Michael Strategopoulus. It is not known if Constantine was in fact conspiring against his brother or Andronikos II acted this way out of jealousy, since his father preferred Constantine as his heir to the throne, finding a way to diminish any of Constantine’s claims to the throne. But even though Michael VIII may had favoured his third son, by the time of Andronikos’ II grief for the death of his first wife, Anna of Hungary, the emperor, Michael VIII, recalled Constantine’s right to wear the purple shoes and acclaimed Michael IX as co-emperor, securing the line of succession, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικά Ιστορία II (531 FAILLER–LAURENT).

437 PLP 21464; PAPADOPULOS, Palaiologen 27.

438 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικά Ιστορία III (201 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 91886.

439 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικά Ιστορία III (201 FAILLER–LAURENT).
Eudokia to his own son, Constantine ‘Porphyrogennetos’ in 1294 and bestowed upon him the title of Despot. Theodore Palaiologos wanted also to become a Despot and he refused the title of Sevastokrator that his brother gave him.

The emperor, who showed such an interest in the marriages of his brothers and his younger son, could certainly not neglect his son and heir to the throne, Michael IX Palaiologos. Andronikos II tried already from 1288 to find the proper bride for his son, turning at first to the West. The first candidate was Catherine de Courtenay, titular empress of the Latin Empire of Constantinople and therefore a desirable bride among the Western nobility. The reasons for the emperor’s choice are more than obvious; a marriage alliance between the heir to the Byzantine throne and the titular Latin empress would have ensured the legitimisation of Catherine’s claims to the throne and at the same time eliminate the Angevin danger. Andronikos’ proposal was difficult to accept, since the Angevins did not want this marriage. However, Maria of Hungary, wife of Charles II d’Anjou and aunt of both Catherine and Michael IX, supported the proposal of her brother-in-law. Unfortunately, even though the discussions of a marriage alliance continued until 1294 and the Pope was encouraging this effort, in order Andronikos to return to his father’s Unionist policies, Catherine finally married Charles de Valois and Andronikos continued to search for a wife for his son.

At the same time, the Angevins were trying to arrange a marriage between Philipp d’Anjou, prince of Taranto and Thamar of Epirus, daughter of Despot Nikephoros I Doukas Angelos of Epirus. Even though Nikephoros was thinking of the

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440 Theodore Mouzalon, who was ill as Pachymeres described in the same passage, had died prior to the marriage of his daughter to Constantine, Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὶ Ἑιστορίας III (201-203 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 21499; PAPADOPULOS, Palaiologen 37.
441 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὶ Ἑιστορίας III (203 FAILLER–LAURENT).
442 PLP 21529; PAPADOPULOS, Palaiologen 36-37.
443 PLP 444; Catherine was the daughter of Philipp de Courtenay, titular emperor of the Latin Empire of Constantinople and Beatrice d’Anjou, daughter of Charles I d’Anjou. As it can be assumed, Catherine’s husband would have inherited her claims to the throne; as a consequence, many prominent noblemen wanted her as their wife.
444 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὶ Ἑιστορίας III (171 FAILLER–LAURENT). Maria of Hungary was the sister of Anna, Andronikos’ II first wife.
445 LAJOU, Constantinople and the Latins 49-52.
446 Andronikos II, when it came to the marriage strategies, was not a person who could simply give up; seventeen years later, in 1311 he suggested the marriage of his grandson Andronikos III, son of Michael IX, to the only daughter of the couple, Catherine de Valois (see below).
447 PLP 8152; PAPADOPULOS, Palaiologen 32; NICOL, Byzantine Lady 24-32. Thamar was the youngest daughter of Nikephoros and Anna. Their eldest daughter, Maria, had married to Giovanni Orsini, eldest son of count Riccardo Orsini of Cephalonia; the marriage took place while Maria was held hostage in Cephalonia, without the consent of her father, who finally accepted the marital union, NICOL, Despotate 43.
advantages of this union against Byzantium, his wife, the basilissa Anna Palaiologina Kantakouzene, cousin of Andronikos II, was convinced that a marriage between her daughter and the heir of the Byzantine throne would be more beneficial, not only for the Despotate but also for the Empire. In 1295, when Nikephoros died, Anna made clear her intentions for an alliance between the two states; she wanted obviously to protect her territories from the attacks of the ruler of Thessaly and consequently, she suggested the intermarriage between her daughter and Michael IX.

The exact date of the discussions for the marriage alliance cannot be easily determined. The account of Pachymeres placed the marriage proposal after the death of Nikephoros, but since it is not quite precise, several scholars have suggested different dates. However, despite the efforts of Anna, the marriage did not take place, since Thamar and Michael IX were second cousins and therefore, their kinship relations were into the prohibited degrees of consanguinity. The excuse seems to be quite reasonable, but one should not forget that the decision of the Synod of 1278 was still in effect, which had allowed the marriage between Demetrios Michael Angelos Koutroules and Anna Palaiologina, who were also closely related. Hence, the reason for the rejection of this proposal should probably have been political.

The search of Andronikos II for the proper bride for Michael IX continued. This time, the emperor turned to the Christian kingdoms of the East. He first proposed an intermarriage between his heir and one of the sisters of the King of Cyprus, Henry II de Lusignan, however the different confessions of the potential spouses set an obstacle on Henry II, who wanted Pope’s permission. Thus, the emperor turned to the King of Cilician Armenia, Het’um II and asked for one of his sisters. Finally, Rita, who was

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448 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι III (225-227 FAILLER–LAURENT). Anna, who was against the Union of the Churches like her mother, Eirene-Eulologia, had contributed to the improvement of the relations between the Despotate and the Empire after the death of her uncle. She wanted also the Despotate to be more connected with the Empire and did not support the policy of her husband, who preferred an alliance with the Angevins. The basilissa seems to be completely aware that the Angevins wanted to gain more territories and expand their suzerainty, as they had earlier done with the Principality of Achaia, NICOL, Despotate 36-38.

449 According to Laiou, the marriage alliance was suggested already from 1288 and Anna was probably acting secretly of her husband, LAIOU, Constantinople and the Latins 41-43. On the contrary, Nicol suggested that not only the death of Nikephoros happened later, but also the marriage proposal should be placed in the period 1296-1298, NICOL, Despotate 49.

450 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι III (227 FAILLER–LAURENT).

451 See above.

452 Thamar finally married the grandson of Charles I d’Anjou, Philipp of Taranto and Anna succeeded in receiving her son, Thomas of Epirus the dignity of Despot, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι III (227 FAILLER–LAURENT).

453 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι III (231 FAILLER–LAURENT).

454 PLP 30787. Het’um was married to Heloise, Henry’s II Lusignan sister.
renamed Maria, married Michael IX in 1295; her sister, Theophano, who had accompanied her to Constantinople, took the name Theodora and with the mediation of the emperor she was going to marry, Theodore, the son of John I the Illegitimate of Thessaly. Michael IX and Maria-Rita had together four children, Andronikos III, Manuel, Anna and Theodora.

The marriage of Constantine Palaiologos, second son of Andronikos II and Anna of Hungary, was presented earlier in the subchapter. When his wife, Eudokia Mouzalonissa died childless, Constantine had fallen in love with her maiden, Kathara, with whom he had an illegitimate and only son, Michael Katharos. Nevertheless, he fell in love again—even more vigorously this time—with an aristocrat, Eudokia Palaiologina. She was the daughter of protasekretis Theodore Neokaisareites, but she was already married to an aristocrat named also Constantine Palaiologos. After the death of her first husband, Eudokia and Constantine were finally married—probably before 1320—, but they had no children. Impressively, this is the first time in this period that a marital union took place because the two spouses had fallen in love.

The first son of Andronikos II with his second wife, Eirene, was John Palaiologos. Quite disappointed from the exclusion of her children from the Byzantine throne, the empress started to think of a partition of the Empire, according to the feudal law of the West. She planned therefore to marry her firstborn son to a noble lady of Latin origin; in the end she chose the princess of Achaia, Isabeau de Villehardouin. The fact that Isabeau was almost twenty-five years older than her son, did not seem to disturb her. However, the emperor had a different opinion on the matter and the plan failed.

455 In the same passage is mentioned that Theophano had died in Thessaloniki, before her marriage to Theodore, George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι III (233 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 21394, 195. 456 Nikephoros Gregoras, Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἱστορία I (293-296 SCHOPEN–BEKKER); PLP 10124, 10141. 457 PLP 20091, 21490. 458 Gregoras depicts in detail the love of Constantine for Eudokia, who at first repelled him because she was married until the death of her husband, when they could live together, Nikephoros Gregoras, Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἱστορία I (293-295 SCHOPEN–BEKKER); PLP 21369. 459 PLP 21475; PAPADOULOS, Palaiologen 38-39. 460 Nikephoros Gregoras, Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἱστορία I (233-234 SCHOPEN–BEKKER); MAVROMATES, Πρώτοι Παλαιολόγοι 47-49. 461 The age difference between John Palaiologos and Isabeau reminds of the case of Maria Komnene, daughter of emperor Manuel I Komnenos, who at the age of thirty had married the eighteen-year-old Rainier de Montferrat. A marriage with such an age gap, with the older being the princess of Achaia, widow for a second time, could not easily work for John Palaiologos, who would have to face the knight elite of the principality, which supported mostly the Angevins against the Byzantines.
In 1299, the emperor had arranged a marriage between Eirene Choumnaina, the daughter of the epi tou kanikleiou, Nikephoros Choumnos and his nephew, Alexios II Komnenos of Trebizond\(^{462}\). The dowry of Eirene seemed to be legendary, since Pachymeres reported that it could attract even the son of an emperor\(^{463}\). Eirene had received the δεσποτικά παράσημα and was ready for her trip to Trebizond, but the marriage plans failed, since Alexios II finally married a lady of the Iberian aristocracy\(^{464}\). The emperor thought that such a dowry could find its place into the imperial family, while at the same time he could not deprive Eirene from her dignity, he decided to marry her to his son John, whom he made despot\(^{465}\). This infuriated the empress, who had different marriage plans for her firstborn son and wanted to see him at least a ruler of some considerable territories. She left Constantinople for Thessaloniki, her ‘dowry’, and established there her own court\(^{466}\). Eirene and John lived happily married from 1303-1307, when John Palaiologos died without leaving any children\(^{467}\).

Empress Eirene decided that her second son should have the fate that she wanted for him. Since her brother, John I de Montferrat, had died childless, he designated Eirene and her children as his heirs. The empress at first wanted John to become the Marquis de Montferrat; however, after his marriage to Eirene Choumnaina, she decided that her second son, Theodore, should claim his inheritance; the emperor on the other hand had suggested their third son, Demetrios\(^{468}\). Theodore left for Italy, where he

\(^{462}\) PLP 12084, 30936, 30961.
\(^{463}\) George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικά Ιστορία IV (317, 319 FAILLER–LAURENT).
\(^{464}\) George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικά Ιστορία IV (317 FAILLER–LAURENT). Of interest is the refusal of Alexios II of Trebizond to marry Eirene Choumnaina, a member of the aristocracy- even though not of the old high aristocracy. A similar attitude was also observed by John II Komnenos, who at first refused to marry Eudokia Palaiologina, but then travelled himself to Constantinople in order to marry her. Alexios II may have refused because Eirene was not a member of the imperial family, but a member of a family which came into the forefront in the reign of Andronikos II; actually, Alexios II married without the permission of his uncle a princess of Iberia. Later tried Andronikos II to annulate this marriage but the Church refused to do so, because the Iberian princess was pregnant.
\(^{465}\) George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικά Ιστορία IV (317 FAILLER–LAURENT); Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή Ιστορία I (241 SCHOPEN–BEKKER).
\(^{466}\) George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικά Ιστορία IV (317-319 FAILLER–LAURENT). The permanent quarrels between the emperor and his wife was a huge matter; the Patriarch Athanasios I tried to reconcile the couple and was the intermediary in many of their family matters, see A. M. TALBOT, The Correspondence of Athanasius I, Patriarch of Constantinople (CFHB 7). Washington 1975, 186-190, 226-229, 250-255.
\(^{467}\) Eirene became a nun, over the objection of her parents, taking the name Eulogia, probably to honour the aunt of her husband Eirene- Eulogia. She corresponded with many people of the clergy and important scholars of her time, NICOL, Byzantine Lady 48-59.
\(^{468}\) George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικά Ιστορία IV (659 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 21465; PAPADOULOS, Palaiologen 39.
married Argentina Spinola, a member of a maritime family of Genova. Gregoras criticised this marriage, because he found Argentina’s family and lineage improper for the emperor’s purple-born son. Finally, Demetrios Palaiologos, whom his mother wanted to see as Milutin’s heir, had a daughter, Eirene Palaiologina and maybe another child from a mother of unknown name.

As already mentioned, the role of women in marriage alliances was crucial; an aristocratic family with many daughters could accomplish many intermarriages and connect through kinship ties to many families of the same milieu. Furthermore, an emperor with many daughters could marry them with his potential allies. Unfortunately, Andronikos II, did not have many daughters. He had two illegitimate daughters, Maria and Eirene, from unknown mothers and only one daughter, Simonis Palaiologina, with his second wife, Eirene.

In 1299, the emperor married his illegitimate daughter, Maria, to the Mongol ruler of the Golden Horde, Toqta, in order to obtain an alliance. The intermarriage was planned already from 1292 and even though Maria Palaiologina had already then left Constantinople to meet her future husband, Toqta married her only after the end of his war against Nogai. Eirene Palaiologina, Andronikos’ II second illegitimate daughter, was married the ruler of Thessaly, John II Doukas in ca. 1315. The emperor had proposed this marital union, in order to obstruct the marriage plans of his wife, who wanted to marry their son, Demetrios Palaiologos to the daughter of the Duke of Athens.

When in 1298 the ruler of Serbia, Stephan II Urŏs Milutin had asked for an intermarriage with a Palaiologan princess, the emperor was left without many choices. Milutin had probably in mind Eudokia Palaiologina, Andronikos’ II younger sister, who had returned to Constantinople, after the death of her husband John II Komnenos,

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469 Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή ἱστορία I (237 SCHOPEN–BEKKER). According to Laiou, neither the emperor nor the Patriarch seemed to disagree to this marriage, probably because they might have hoped of the help of the Spinola family and Genova against the Catalan danger, A. LAIOU, A Byzantine Prince Latinized: Theodore Palaiologus, Marquis of Montferrat. Byz 38 (1968) 386-410, here 395-396.
470 PLP 21456; PAPADOPOULOS, Palaiologen 40.
471 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὴ Η̂στορίαι III (295 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 92632, 29149; PAPADOPOULOS, Palaiologen 42.
472 Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή ἱστορία I (278-279 SCHOPEN–BEKKER); PLP 91848, 206; PAPADOPOULOS, Palaiologen 42; NICOL, Despotate 74-75.
473 Gregoras refers to a daughter of the Duke of Athens, but it is known that Guy II de la Roche died childless, Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκὴ ἱστορία I (243 SCHOPEN–BEKKER); PLP 24398.
emperor of Trebizond. The emperor seemed also to have thought of his sister for that marriage; however, Eudokia, already an empress-widow and mother of two sons, Alexios II Komnenos and Michael, vehemently rejected the proposal, although her brother had tried to persuade her in all possible ways, even by the use of threats.

This might have been the first case (at least in the Palaiologan period) when a marriage plan was rejected by the future bride. The evidence show that in the intermarriages between the aristocratic families and the relatives of the emperor, the imposing imperial will was taken for granted, not only for women, but also for men. Moreover, it was almost impossible for women to express their opinion, let alone their disagreement in regard of a potential marital union. The case of Eudokia Palaiologina is unique for the period examined, but the reasons for her refusal being finally accepted by the emperor must be carefully examined. Apart from the fact that Eudokia was the widow of an emperor and old enough to resist to an unwanted marriage, she was also the mother of the new emperor of Trebizond, Alexios II. It seems quite reasonable, that Andronikos II did not want to displease his nephew and ally; furthermore, it may have been impossible for Eudokia to abandon her son and emperor and live for the rest of her life in the Serbian realm.

The refusal of Eudokia had left no other candidate, apart from the young daughter of Andronikos II, Simonis Palaiologina. The emperor had no other choice than to marry his five-year-old daughter to the fifty-year-old Serbian ruler; the marriage had caused the reaction of the Church, not only because of the age of Simonis, but mostly due to the huge age difference between the future spouses. The Patriarch John X opposed totally to this marriage, although the emperor tried to convince him by explaining that he loved his daughter, but the Serbian danger was great for the Empire and there was no other choice left. Only her mother, Eirene seems to have completely

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474 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι III (297 FAILLER–LAURENT); Nikephoros Gregoras, Ἑρωμαϊκὴ Ἱστορία I (202-203 SCHOPEN–BEKKER).
475 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι III (303 FAILLER–LAURENT); Nikephoros Gregoras, Ἑρωμαϊκὴ Ἱστορία I (203 SCHOPEN–BEKKER).
476 PLP 21398; PAPODOPULOS, Palaiologen 41-42.
477 The majority of his female relatives were either already married or underaged. Possibly Stephan II Urôs demanded a princess of the Palaiologan dynasty with an executive position in the court, that means either a sister or a legitimate daughter of the emperor; this could explain why Andronikos II did not chose Eirene Palaiologina, his illegitimate daughter, who might have been of the same age.
478 For an extensive analysis of the ages of marriage see below.
479 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι IV (323 FAILLER–LAURENT).
agreed to this marriage, for her own political reasons. Simonis left for the Serbian court, on the condition that the marital union would be consummated when she came of proper age, but her spouse broke this promise with disastrous consequences for the young girl. The outcome of this intermarriage proved the emperor’s mistake when he did not consider more carefully the age limitations and obstacles, as his father had done earlier.

Following the example of his father, Andronikos II included in his marriage strategies not only his children, but also his immediate relatives such as his nieces and nephews. The children of his eldest sister, Eirene Palaiologina and John III Asan, former rulers of Bulgaria took part in important intermarriages of the time, starting with Maria Asanina, who married the leader of the Catalans, Roger de Flor in 1303. By the time of the betrothal, the emperor had bestowed upon Roger the dignity of Megas Doux and later that of Kaisar. The Catalan Company, an army of warlike mercenaries who were invited by the Byzantine Emperor to put under control the expansion of the Turks in Asia Minor started devastating the Byzantine territories when their payments were not delivered, causing tremendous problems and becoming the greatest danger the emperor had to face. Andronikos II probably thought that the best way to control such an enemy was by an alliance; consequently, he used the most efficient weapon of Byzantine diplomacy, the intermarriage.

Michael IX did not share his father’s opinions, since the increase of Roger’s power seemed to worry him. In 1305, when de Flor was murdered in Adrianople, possibly under Michael’s orders, the Catalans were furious and rose against the emperor. Meanwhile, three Catalans were candidates for becoming leaders of the Company; Berengar de Rochefort became finally the leader and Ferran Ximenes de

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480 She was hoping that the childless kral could select her son, Demetrios Palaiologos as his heir, Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή Ιστορία I (243 SCHOPEN–BEKKER).
481 Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή Ιστορία I (203 SCHOPEN–BEKKER).
482 Simonis was only eight by that time and she became unable to carry any children later. The historians of the time refer to the event with repulsion, for example Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή Ιστορία I (203, 243 SCHOPEN–BEKKER). Simonis tried to escape from her husband, who insisted that only if he kept her, he could only keep the peace with Byzantines. She ran away and tried to become a nun, but her half-brother Constantine brought her back to Milutin, who had started the hostilities against the Empire, Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή Ιστορία I (287–288 SCHOPEN–BEKKER). Simonis was finally free at the age of twenty-four, when her husband died. Although she became a nun, she stand always by the side of her father and brothers, Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή Ιστορία I (411, 533 SCHOPEN–BEKKER). She is mostly mentioned in the sources as Κράλαια (wife of kral, queen).
483 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικα Ιστορίαι IV (437 FAILLE–LAURENT); Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή Ιστορία I (220 SCHOPEN–BEKKER); PLP 16890, 24368; TRAPP, Asanen 167.
484 Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή Ιστορία I (220 SCHOPEN–BEKKER); LAIOU, Constantinople and the Latins 141.
Arenos\textsuperscript{485}, one of the two defeated warriors, found refuge in the Byzantine court bringing with him a part of the Catalan Company\textsuperscript{486}. For the sake of the Empire, Andronikos II was once more willing to marry one of his nieces to a Catalan warrior. Consequently, the emperor selected possibly also Maria’s younger sister, Theodora Palaiologina Asanina as a spouse for Ferran, who became also \textit{megas doux} in ca.1307\textsuperscript{487}.

Eirene Palaiologina and John III Asan had together ten children as already mentioned, of which only seven are known by name; six of them are known to have been married and only four to have a scion. The firstborn son of the couple, Michael Palaiologos Komnenos Asan had married to a lady known by the sources only as Asanina, that is by the surname of her husband; it seems that they did not have any scion\textsuperscript{488}. There is not much evidence of the wife of the second son, Andronikos Komnenos Palaiologos Asan, but we know that they had four children, Manuel Komnenos Raoul Asan, John Asan, Eirene-known in the sources as Kantakouzene due to her marriage with John VI Kantakouzenos- and Helen\textsuperscript{489}. Among the surnames of his eldest son, Manuel, one could find also the surname Raoul. Andronikos is only known by the surnames Komnenos Palaiologos which he inherited from his mother, Eirene Komnene Palaiologina, and the surname of his father, Asan. Since, however, women could also be conveyors of lineage, it is possible that his wife was a member of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[485] PLP 27944; Ferran is known in the Byzantine sources as Φαρέντζας Τζυμῆς. Nikephoros Gregoras, Ἱστορία I (232 SCHOPEN–BEKKER).
\item[486] LAIOU, Constantinople and the Latins 146-147, 174.
\item[487] Nikephoros Gregoras, Ἱστορία I (232 SCHOPEN–BEKKER); PLP 1531. Gregoras in his account about the marriage asserts that d’ Arenos took as his wife, Ἀδελφίδη θυγατέρα τῆς βασιλείας (the widowed niece of the emperor), meaning possibly Theodora Asanina, who may have been the only unmarried niece of the emperor with this name by that time. However, several scholars expressed different theories about the identity of Ferran’s wife. In PLP is written that Ferran married Maria Asanina, widow of Roger de Flor, although it seems difficult considering that Roger had died in 1305 and Maria bore in the same year his child. Trapp also suggested that Maria Asanina might have been the Catalan’s wife based on the fact that the only known marriage of Theodora is possibly before 1321 to Manuel Tagaris. Therefore, she might have been much younger than her sister Maria, who according to Trapp, was possibly born in 1279, almost immediately after her parents’ marriage. The characterization χηρευούση in Gregoras’ passage contributed also to this conclusion, TRAPP, Asanen 168. Finally, Theodora Palaiologina Asanina appears in a document of the Monastery of Zografou with the title of megalēs doukainai, a dignity bestowed upon d’Arenos and not Tagaris, who became megas stratopedarches by the time of their marriage, L. MAVROMMATIS, La pronoia d’Alexis Commène Raoul à Prévista. Byzantina Symmeikta 13 (1999) 203-227, here 204-205. It is known that women are mentioned in the sources by their spouses’ dignity.
\item[488] PLP 1489; TRAPP, Asanen 168.
\item[489] John Kantakouzenos, Ἱστορία II (299 SCHOPEN); PLP 1514, 1520.
\end{footnotes}
the Raoul family. Otherwise, there would be no obvious reason for Manuel using the surname Raoul.490

The wife’s anonymity is also noticed in the marriage of the third son of the family, Constantine Palaiologos Asan.491 Constantine’s son, Michael Komnenos Tornikes Palaiologos Asanes bears the three surnames already known from the members of the family, that is Komnenos Palaiologos Asanes, but also the surname Tornikes. Similarly, to the above mentioned case of Andronikos, one could assume that Constantine’s wife was a member of the Tornikes family.

The only son of the family, whose spouse is known, is Isaakios Palaiologos Asan.492 She was Theodora Palaiologina, the so-called Arachatlun, the daughter of Maria Palaiologina, the Lady of the Mongols, and Abaqa.493 They were married probably after her mother’s death in 1307 but surely before 1320, when Theodora died childless. Impressive is that Isaakios and Theodora were first cousins, since their mothers were half-sisters; nevertheless, the Church did not object to their union although it fell into the prohibited degrees of consanguinity.494

Eugenia Palaiologina, the youngest daughter of Eirene-Eulogia Palaiologina and John Kantakouzenos, was one of the last cousins of Andronikos II who married during his reign.495 She was probably married to Megas Domestikos Syrgiannes496 and they had together a son, Syrgiannes Palaiologos Philanthropenos Komnenos.497

The last cousin of Andronikos II, who wedded during his reign was an unnamed daughter of Sevastokrator Constantine Palaiologos and his wife, Eirene Branaina. She is known in the sources as Σμίλτζαινα (wife of Σμίλτζος), since she married in 1292 the King of Bulgaria, Smilec.498 They had together two children: the first was John

490 By that time no intermarriages between the ancestors of family members to the Raouls are registered.
491 PLP 1504; TRAPP, Asanen 168.
492 PLP 1494; TRAPP, Asanen 168; KUBINA, Philes and Asan Family 187-188.
493 MM I 313; PLP 1229; PAPADOPULOS, Palaiologen 34.
494 Based on this fact, Kyritses suggested that Theodora might have been an adopted daughter of Maria, a Mongol girl who she brought with her in Constantinople, since there is no evidence that she had children with Abaqa, KYRITSES, Byzantine Aristocracy 262-263.
495 PLP 21368; PAPADOPULOS, Palaiologen 21.
496 Syrgiannes might have been of Cuman origin with his name being possibly Sytizgan in its original version, from the Cuman word Siţgan, meaning mouse. It was hellenised to Syrgiannes, when he was baptised (Κυρ Γιάννης, master John), I. VÁSÁRY, Cumans and Tatars: Oriental Military in the Pre-Ottoman Balkans, 1185–1365. Cambridge 2005, 120.
497 PLP 27167, NICOL, Kantakouzenoi 24-25.
498 George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικα Ιστορια III (293 FAILLER–LAURENT); PLP 26265, 26266; PAPADOPULOS, Palaiologen 8-9.
Komnenos Doukas Angelos Branas Palaiologos\textsuperscript{499}; he returned in Constantinople after the death of his father in 1298 and is enlisted in the Typikon of Bebaia Elpis. The second child was Theodora, who married at first Eltimir, brother of George I Terter and then the son of Stephan II Urôs Milutin, Stephan III Urôs Decanski\textsuperscript{500}.

The brother of Σμίλτζαινα and Constantine’s Palaiologos younger son, Andronikos Komnenos Branas Doukas Angelos Palaiologos might also have been married in this period\textsuperscript{501}. Although the date of his marriage is unknown, his wife was the daughter of the famous commander Michael Komnenos Doukas Glabas Tarchaneiotes\textsuperscript{502}. Unfortunately, it is uncertain whether they had any offspring.

The marital union of Theodora Komnene Palaiologina, youngest daughter of Sevastokrator Constantine Palaiologos, and John Angelos Doukas Synadenos was presented in the previous subchapter. They had together three children: a daughter, who followed her mother in the monastery and two sons, all known and portrayed in the Typikon of Bebaia Elpis.

The first son, John Komnenos Doukas Palaiologos Synadenos, who obviously had the same name with his father, was first megas konostaulos and then protostrator; he had married twice\textsuperscript{503}. His first wife was Thomais Komnene Doukaina Laskarina Palaiologina Kantakouzene\textsuperscript{504}; the date of their marriage is unknown, but they seemed to have together two daughters, Anna and Eirene. In the Typikon they both bore also the family name Kantakouzene, probably inherited from their mother, even though their great-grandmother bore also this surname\textsuperscript{505}. Of unknown date was also his marriage to his second wife, Eirene Laskarina Komnene Doukaina Palaiologina, who seemed to be alive when the Typikon was composed\textsuperscript{506}. No offspring is mentioned from this union. Unfortunately, we lack on evidence on both Thomais’ and Eirene’s family ancestry but judging from their surnames they must have been members of families related to the Laskarids.

\textsuperscript{499} John is referred in the Typikon as the son of the Δέσποινα τῶν Βουλγάρων (Lady of the Bulgarians), DELEHAYE, Deux typica 84, 93; TALBOT, Bebaia Elpis: Typikon of Theodora Synadene 1562; PLP 21486.
\textsuperscript{500} PLP 6025, 21181.
\textsuperscript{501} PLP 21439; DELEHAYE, Deux typica 92; PAPADOULOS, Palaiologen 7.
\textsuperscript{502} LEONTIADES, Tarchaneiotaï 72.
\textsuperscript{503} DELEHAYE, Deux typica 13, 82, 91, 95; PLP 27126; HANNICK-SCHMALZBAUER, Synadenoi 135-136.
\textsuperscript{504} DELEHAYE, Deux typica 84, 91; PLP 10944; NICOL, Kantakouzenoi 149-150.
\textsuperscript{505} HANNICK-SCHMALZBAUER, Synadenoi 136.
\textsuperscript{506} DELEHAYE, Deux typica 13; PLP 21362; PAPADOULOS, Palaiologen 9-10.
The second son, Theodore Doukas Komnenos Palaiologos Synadenos, governor of Prilep until 1320, had married earlier the same year Eudokia Komnene Doukaina Palaiologina Synadene, daughter of *eugenestatos* Theodore Doukas Mouzakios. They had together two daughters, Theodora and Maria. The couple is depicted in the *Typikon* of Bebaia Elpis. Interesting is the fact that Eudokia did not added in her surnames that of her father, but she is known with those of her husband. This marital union is one of the few, were the couple is not distantly related and the family of the bride did not appear previously in the marriage arrangements of the high aristocracy. Therefore, for her family this union signaled the entry into the high aristocracy of the reign of Andronikos II.

Alexios Doukas Philanthropenos (Tarchaneiotes) was one of the most efficient military commanders, whom the emperor had bestowed with the dignity of *pinkernes* in 1293. He distinguished himself in the defence of Asia Minor, but then he revolted against the emperor. He was a nephew of Andronikos II, son of his cousin Michael Palaiologos Tarchaneiotes and the daughter of Alexios Doukas Philanthropenos, whose name seemed to prefer. He married Theodora Philanthropene, probably a daughter of *megas logothetes* Constantine Akropolites and Maria Tornikina Komnene Akropolitissa. Constantine was the firstborn son of George Akropolites, the historiographer; his wife, Maria – who as her name reveals– belonged to the family of the Tornikioi, was possibly a daughter of John Tornikes. Moreover, Alexios and Theodora might have had one son, Michael Philanthropenos.

The reign of Andronikos II covered a period of almost forty years and during that period the emperor had the opportunity to arrange also the marriages of some of his grandchildren and those of his siblings. In 1313 took place the marriage of Thomas I of Epirus and Anna Palaiologina, daughter of Michael IX, which was proposed already

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507 Delehaye, Deux typica 92; PLP 27120, 27096, 19428; Hännick-Schmalzbauer, Synadenoi 136-137; Papadopoulos, Palaiologen 10.
508 Spatharakis, Portraits 195.
509 His revolt is thoroughly described by the sources of the period, George Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικά Ἱστορίαι* III (237-251 FAILLER–LAURENT); Nikephoros Gregoras, Ῥωμαϊκή Ἱστορία I (360-362 Schopen–Bekker); PLP 29752; Attenagoras, Philanthropenoi 64-65. Alexios Philanthropenos is also known from his correspondence with Maximos Planoudes, see A. Laiou, Some Observations on Alexios Philanthropenoi and Maximos Planoudes. *BMGS* 4 (1978) 84-99.
510 PLP 29751.
511 Manuel Philes, Carmina I (319 MILLER); PLP 29743, is identical with 7295.
513 PLP 29775.
in 1307\textsuperscript{514}. The intermarriage was succeeded after the constant insistence of the basilissa of Epirus, Anna Kantakouzene, who continued to support the alliance of the Despotate with the Empire, especially after the outcome of Thamar’s marriage to Philipp of Taranto\textsuperscript{515}. A crucial fact is that even though the two spouses were also closely related – Thomas was in fact Anna’s uncle – the Church did not prohibit the marriage, as had happened earlier with Thamar and Michael IX, probably because by that time it served the emperor’s policies towards the Despotate and Thessaly. However, Anna’s marriage did not benefit the Empire; soon after, the Byzantine army, under the command of the emperor’s nephew, Syrgiannes Palaiologos, attacked the Despotate and Thomas imprisoned his wife as retaliation\textsuperscript{516}. In 1318, the Despot was murdered by his nephew, Nicola Orsini; until then he had followed a policy totally opposed to the Empire. Since Thomas and Anna did not have any children, the Despotate of Epirus passed to the family of Orsini; Nicola married Anna Palaiologina, who died in 1320 without any offspring\textsuperscript{517}. Another daughter of Michael IX, Theodora Palaiologina was married in 1307 to the Bulgarian ruler, Theodore Svietslov\textsuperscript{518}.

As already mentioned, the emperor had unsuccessfully proposed in 1311 an intermarriage between his eldest grandson, Andronikos III and the titular empress of the Latin Empire of Constantinople, Catherine de Valois\textsuperscript{519}. Following the same policy of marriages with foreign princesses, Andronikos II selected as bride for his grandson and co-emperor from 1307, Adelheid, daughter of Henry I of Braunschweig-Grubenhagen, who was renamed to Eirene and married Andronikos III in 1317\textsuperscript{520}.

In the same period and surely before 1320 was also married Andronikos’ III best friend, John VI Kantakouzenos to Eirene Kantakouzene, daughter of Andronikos Palaiologos Komnenos Asan and cousin of Andronikos III\textsuperscript{521}. About John’s

\textsuperscript{514} George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὶ Ἰστορία IV (495 FAILLER–LAURENT); Nikephoros Gregoras,Ῥωμαικὴ Ιστορία I (283 SCHOPEN–BEKKER); PLP 21344, 197; PAPADOPULOS, Palaiologen 44; NICOL, Despotate 75.
\textsuperscript{515} Thamar was mistreated by her husband, although she gave her dowry to free him, when he was imprisoned, and she was forced to become a nun when he wanted to remarry, NICOL, Despotate 55-56, 61-62.
\textsuperscript{516} Nikephoros Gregoras,Ῥωμαικὴ Ιστορία I (297 SCHOPEN–BEKKER); NICOL, Despotate 77-78.
\textsuperscript{517} NICOL, Despotate 82-83, 91.
\textsuperscript{518} Nikephoros Gregoras,Ῥωμαικὴ Ιστορία I (283 SCHOPEN–BEKKER); PLP 21379, 27251; PAPADOPULOS, Palaiologen 45.
\textsuperscript{519} PLP 21437; PAPADOPULOS, Palaiologen 43.
\textsuperscript{520} Nikephoros Gregoras,Ῥωμαικὴ Ιστορία I (277 SCHOPEN–BEKKER); PLP 21356.
\textsuperscript{521} The exact date of the marriage is not known, but Kantakouzenos in his History asserts that he had left his wife in Kallioupolis, before he returned to Constantinople in 1320. So by that time they were already married and lived there, see John Kantakouzenos, Ἰστορία I (24 SCHOPEN); PLP 10935, 10973; NICOL, Kantakouzenoi 35-103, 104-108.
Kantakouzenos father almost nothing is known; he was a member of the illustrious family of Kantakouzenos, the Governor of Peloponnese from 1286 to 1294 and he had probably died before the birth of his son\textsuperscript{522}. John VI referred many times in his work to his mother, Theodora Palaiologina Angelina Kantakouzene, even though he did not give adequate information on her ancestry\textsuperscript{523}. John and Eirene had together six children, Matthew, Manuel, Andronikos, Maria, Theodora and Helen.

To the same generation as the children of Michael IX belonged probably also the son of Constantine ‘Porphyrogennetos’ Palaiologos, brother of Andronikos II and Eirene Raoulaina, John Palaiologos\textsuperscript{524}. Although his father was accused of conspiracy against the emperor, John had received the title of \textit{panypersebastos} and he married in ca. 1305/1306, Eirene, the daughter of \textit{megas logothetes}, Theodore Metochites\textsuperscript{525}.

It is hard not to notice that in the reign of Andronikos II the majority of the intermarriages of the entire Early Palaiologan period took place. The emperor, following the marriage policy of his father and grandfather, which helped the family of Palaiologoi to ascend to the imperial throne, interfered in almost all intermarriages of the aristocracy of this period, directly or not. He started by trying to build marriage alliances for himself, his son and heir and his grandson to foreign princesses, in order to obtain allies and earn more in the diplomatic field. This tradition, observed also in the Komnenian era, seemed to have been followed by the Palaiologan dynasty until the end.

The emperor included in his marriage plans not only his own children and grandchildren, but also those of his siblings and other relatives. He did not hesitate to marry his nieces with members of the high aristocracy and with foreign rulers, nobles or mercenaries, who wanted to serve the Empire. The latter received dignities and through their marriage to members of the high aristocracy, they entered the entourage of the emperor. The good example for this case is Roger de Flor, the leader of the Catalan Company who after his marriage to Maria Asanina received the title of \textit{kaisar}.

Apart from his immediate family and close relatives, who were indeed members of the high aristocracy, Andronikos II negotiated also the marriages of the daughters of

\textsuperscript{522} NICOL, Kantakouzenoi 27-30.
\textsuperscript{523} PLP 10942. Modern scholarship suggested that her lineage was interwoven even with the family of Tarchaneiotes. The fact that she is mentioned in the sources as Palaiologina Angelina Kantakouzene may signalise a direct kinship with the Palaiologan family, NICOL, Kantakouzenoi 30-33.
\textsuperscript{524} PLP 21479; PAPADOULOS, Palaiologen 23-24.
\textsuperscript{525} PLP 5972, 17982.
his closest collaborators, such as Nikephoros Choumnos and Theodore Metochites. The emperor had proposed the marriage of Eirene Choumnaina to the emperor of Trebizond and when his attempt failed, he did not hesitate to marry her with his son, John Palaiologos, although he knew that the empress would oppose this marriage. Moreover, he might have also proposed the marital union of his nephew, the *panypersevastos* John Palaiologos, son of Constantine Palaiologos ‘Porphyrogennetos’ with the daughter of his *mesazon* Theodore Metochites, Eirene. In this way, he assured the introduction of the families of his high officials and extremely rich individuals into the high aristocracy, since their daughters married into the imperial family.

While the emperor continued to plan marriage alliances, which were beneficial for Empire, based on his kin and relatives, the aristocratic families involved, gained in power. Among the imperial entourage, they appear to be closer to the emperor raising in higher ranks, mostly after the time of their marriage. However, sometimes members of those families opposed to the emperor’s will, probably when they believed that he mistreated their son or daughter-in-law. An event concerning the Asan family describes such an opposition, when Eirene Palaiologina Asanina and her children tried to persuade Roger de Flor not to go in Adrianople, fearing the worse, knowing probably Michael’s IX intentions, of which his father, Andronikos II must have been aware.\(^526\)

As already mentioned, in the reign of Andronikos II took place many intermarriages, therefore it seems quite reasonable that some of them drew the attention of modern scholars due to some peculiarities. The same person, Constantine Palaiologos, second son of Andronikos II is involved. The first instance is the plan of a marriage between the daughter of Theodore Mouzalon, Eudokia Mouzalonissa and Theodore Palaiologos, younger brother of the emperor. It fell apart, when it became known that the girl had an illegal relationship with a relative. The fact was on its own quite shocking for the society of the time; even more impressive is that the emperor, who was probably a friend of Mouzalon, did not abandon his marriage plan and he honoured Mouzalonissa with a marriage to his beloved son, Constantine Palaiologos.

After the death of his first wife Eudokia and an affair with her maid, who bore his only son, Constantine Palaiologos fell in love with Eudokia Neokaisaritissa, an aristocrat married already to a man with the same name as the emperor’s son. Again,

\(^526\) This actually happened, since he was murdered, Ramon Muntaner, *Crónica XVII* (ed. R. D. Hughes-J. N. Hillgarth, The Catalan Expedition to the East: from the ‘Chronicle’ of Ramon Muntaner. Barcelona/ Woodbridge 2006), 69-70.
the emperor had not opposed to an affair that might have caused a great scandal. The sources describe Eudokia in an extremely positive way, probably because she resisted Constantine’s love while married. She reciprocated Palaiologos’ feelings only after her husband’s death, when the couple finally married.

The third and best-known case is the marriage of Andronikos’ II only legitimate daughter, Simonis to the kral of Serbia, Stephan II Urōs Milutin. The marriage plan was not extremely notable on its own, since the Palaiologans usually made marriage proposals to the Serbian rulers, already from the time of Michael VIII. The reason of the enormous interest of this marriage lies on the extreme age difference between the spouses, since the young princess was at the time of her marriage only five years old and Milutin was reaching his fifties. The age difference between the two spouses was a common phenomenon, maybe not in such an extreme version; however, the disrespectful behaviour against a child-bride and daughter of the Byzantine emperor was recorded for the first time in the sources.

At this point is of importance to refer to a major difference between the marriage strategies practiced by the first two Palaiologan emperors. While proposing or arranging an intermarriage Michael VIII seemed to be careful enough in relation to the age of the future spouses. He married his daughters and sons, but also the members of his immediate kin only if they had come in the proper marriage age, that is twelve to thirteen years for the girls and fourteen for the boys. On the contrary, Andronikos II seems to have arranged the marriages of his children and relatives at a young age, with the marriage of his daughter, Simonis to be the most characteristic example. The proposal faced certainly the opposition of the Church. The matter of the neglect of the marriage age seems to be related to a high degree to the imperial priorities for the Empire’s defence. The pressure for the defence of Asia Minor, which was an extremely important territory of the Empire, in combination with the refusal of the Union of the Churches, obliged the emperor to search for allies in the Balkans; consequently, the situation demanded urgent solutions such as an alliance with the rulers of the Balkan territories at any cost.

527 John III Batatzes married Costanza-Anna of Hohenstaufen, when he was in his fifties and she was around fourteen years old. Andronikos II also married for the second time when he was twenty-nine-years old to Eirene-Yolanda, who was only eleven by that time.

528 For example Nikephoros Gregoras, Ἡ Ῥωμαϊκή Ἰστορία I (203, 243 SCHOPEN – BEKKER).
Involved in the marriage strategies of the high aristocracy in Andronikos’ II reign is the majority of the families already known from the previous periods. The families of Kantakouzenoi, Tornikioi and Tarchaneiotes are in the forefront with many intermarriages among their members and marital unions with the imperial family, followed by the Raouls and the Libadarioi. The Choumnos and Metochites families appear for the first time in the marriage policies of Andronikos II, marrying their female members into the imperial family. Another illustrious family is the one of Asan which derived from a royal couple married in the reign of Michael VIII. They appear for the first time as Byzantine aristocratic family, when John III Asan, king of Bulgaria, and his wife, Eirene Komnene Palaiologina abandoned the Bulgarian realm and settled in Constantinople. The Asan seemed to be quite active in the intermarriages of the period and many of their descendants were married into important families of the same milieu.

As already mentioned, the families consisting the high aristocracy in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century were those of Kantakouzenoi, Libadarioi, Raouls, Tornikioi, Tarchaneiotes with the new entrances of Asan, Choumnos and Metochites; in the intermarriages appeared also the Akropolites family. Most of those families were already related, a fact that seemed to have stopped at some point any marriage plans between them. In this period, it is more obvious that all aristocratic families were closely related to each other, since there are many cases were the spouses were related in a degree lower than the seventh.\(^{529}\) This kind of marriages faced surprisingly not the opposition of the Church, especially if they were for the benefit of the diplomatic efforts of the emperor. The phenomenon of emperors marrying members of their entourage defying the prohibited degrees of kinship was common already in the Komnenian era, it was continued by the emperors of Nicaea and of course by the first Palaiologans.\(^{530}\) The emperor could bring up the close kinship ties of the two future spouses only if the marriage appeared non-beneficial for the Empire or did not serve the imperial policies.\(^{531}\)

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\(^{529}\) Cf. for example the case of Constantine Porphyrogennetos Palaiologos and Eirene Raoulaina, who were related in the fifth degree, since they were uncle and niece.

\(^{530}\) See above 43-48.

\(^{531}\) It was mentioned earlier that Andronikos II refused a marriage between Thamar of Epirus and his son, Michael IX under the pretext that they were closely related, since Thamar was Michael’s second cousin by her mother, Anna Palaiologina Kantakouzene. However, Thomas I of Epirus, Thamar’s brother, married later the daughter of Michael IX, Anna Palaiologina, although they were relatives of a degree lower than the seventh, since Anna was Thomas’ niece.
With the presentation of the marriage strategies in the reign of Andronikos II ends in the present research, since in the first phase of civil war between the two Andronikoi, they changed significantly. Cause of the civil war was the death of Andronikos’ III brother, Manuel, who was accidentally murdered by the guards the young co-emperor had placed in his lover’s house. Upon Manuel’s death followed that of his father, Michael IX, who could not stand the loss of his son. For his grandfather, emperor Andronikos II, the incident revealed once more the immature character of his grandson, who wanted passionately to become emperor, but he was extremely intractable. Andronikos III was also afraid that his grandfather would prefer another grandson as his heir to the throne, Michael Katharos, the illegitimate son of Constantine Palaiologos. Therefore, in April 1321 with the support of his best friend, John Kantakouzenos, he went to Adrianople, his base during the civil war.

532 Nikephoros Gregoras, Ῥωμαϊκὴ ἱστορία I (285-286 SCHOPEN–BEKKER). Kantakouzenos mentions also that Manuel’s death followed that of his sister, Anna Palaiologina, John Kantakouzenos, Ἱστορία I (13-14 SCHOPEN).
533 Nikephoros Gregoras, Ῥωμαϊκὴ ἱστορία I (285 SCHOPEN–BEKKER).
534 John Kantakouzenos, Ἱστορία I (84-89 SCHOPEN).
Marriage strategies were one of the most crucial indicators of the self-consciousness of a social group, since intermarriages with people outside of this group are left almost unnoticed—especially in the Middle Ages. The marriage strategies of the high aristocracy of the early Palaiologan period presented in this specific thesis provide a telling example of the practices followed by the first Palaiologan emperors and the aristocracy of their time concerning marital unions.

As it was described earlier, the imperial dynasty of the Palaiologoi was a family of the high aristocracy, before ascending to the throne. It is not a coincidence that Pachymeres referred to the families constituting the high aristocracy of the time, right before he mentioned the conspiracy that brought Michael VIII Palaiologos to the forefront, first as despotes and then as co-emperor of the underaged John IV Laskaris; the members of those families had helped Michael, who belonged to their milieu and when he became an emperor, Palaiologos rewarded them for their support⁵³⁵.

Marriage Strategies among the high Aristocracy. The Matter of Endogamy

The Palaiologoi was the most powerful family, since they counted many members involved in the marriage policies of the aristocracy and they had come several times extremely close in the ascendance to the throne, already from the early thirteenth century. Therefore, it seems quite reasonable that already under the Laskarids they had accomplished several intermarriages with members of other illustrious families such as the Kantakouzenoi and the Tarchaneiotai.

By the time that Michael VIII Palaiologos came into power first as an emperor-regent and after 1261 as a sole emperor, he showed that he was more than willing to support the marriage alliances among his family’s members and his collaborators, by interfering in the marriage arrangements of the aristocracy, contracting beneficial marriages for his entourage and exercising his power even to dissolve marital unions that were not anymore wanted⁵³⁶. As the majority of emperors before him, Michael VIII knew the importance of kinship by blood or marriage in his social group and wanted probably to expand his family network in order to secure his position through strong

⁵³⁵ George Pachymeres, Συγγραφικὶ Ἰστορίαι I (93 FAILLER–LAURENT).
⁵³⁶ See above the case of Theodora Tarchaneiotissa Balanidotissa, niece of Michael VIII.
allies. He also wanted to keep his closest collaborators into his direct entourage and diminish any claims of his rivals to the throne. Consequently, he practiced intermarriages that were beneficial not only for the Empire, but also for the security of his own dynasty.

Michael’s VIII son and heir, Andronikos II, even though completely different character of his father, was also aware of the significance of the marriage policies. In his long-term reign, he practiced multiple intermarriages, not only among his immediate relatives, but also his collaborators and certainly, the families of his siblings. Furthermore, Andronikos II had to face many changes and urgent dangers concerning the Empire, therefore he was using Byzantine’s diplomacy ultimate weapon, intermarriages in several cases. In his marriage alliances involved the majority of the members of the high aristocracy, a fact that reveals the importance of marriage policies among members of this social group.

An interesting fact that must be addressed at this point are the members that constituted an aristocratic family. In the famous passage of Pachymeres, the historiographer presented the families of high aristocracy and described them as a ‘golden chain’. Those families included first-degree relatives, since their prominent members were in reality the direct offspring of specific persons, such as the cases of the Strategopoulos, who by that time consisted of Alexios and his son Constantine, and the Tornikioi, who are in fact the children of the mesazon Demetrios Tornikes.

Core of the high aristocracy was undoubtedly the immediate family of the emperor, that means his siblings with their spouses and their immediate offspring. The children of Martha (Maria) and Nikephoros Tarchaneiates constituted the family of Tarchaneiates and their descendants are to be found among the Tarchaneiates, the Kantakouzenoi and the Angeloi. The children of Eirene (Eulogia) and John Kantakouzenos among the Kantakouzenoi, the Angeloi and the Raouls. Subsequently, the offspring of Michael’s VIII half-brother Constantine could be found among the Palaiologoi, the Synadenoi and the Tornikioi. In the reign of Andronikos II, the offspring of his sister Eirene and John III Asan constituted the family of Asan, with their descendants to be found among also the families of Kantakouzenoi and

537 See above 22-23.
538 KYRITSES, Byzantine Aristocracy 222-223.
Philanthropenoi, while those of Eudokia to the Megaloi Komnenoi of Trebizond and of Constantine ‘Porphyrogennetos’ to the Palaiologoi.

As it can be deduced, the affinity among the members of the families of the high aristocracy might have been a common phenomenon. The existence of marriages where the spouses were related in a degree of consanguinity lower than the seventh seems quite reasonable, since the majority of the high aristocratic families due to their own marriage strategies could be related by blood or marriage. They might have been against the rules of the Canon or Civil Law, but they helped them consolidate their power within a small circle. Thus, all evidence supports the argument of an endogamy practiced by the high aristocracy of the early Palaiologan period. A further sign of endogamy, even though occasionally beyond the prohibited degrees of consanguinity, was the intermarriage between members of two distant branches of the same family. The parents of Michael VIII, Andronikos and Theodora were both coming from two different branches of the Palaiologos family, thus Michael and his brother, John were known as Diplopalaiologoi; Diplobatatzina, the mother of one of Michael’s VIII illegitimate daughters seemed also to have been a descendant of a marriage between two distant branches of the Batatzes family.

However, in several occasions the endogamy of the high aristocracy was avoided. Andronikos II, whose reign reasonably seems to have the majority of marriages with spouses closely related, was more than willing to include members of families outside the high aristocracy in matrimonial connections of his immediate family. The marital unions of two of his sons, Constantine and John and his nephew, John Palaiologos with the daughters of his ministers Theodore Boilas Mouzalon, Nikephoros Choumnos and Theodore Metochites respectively, are the most telling examples; another case is the marriage of Constantine Palaiologos to Eudokia Neokaisaritissa, daughter of the protasekretes Theodore Neokaisareites.

Impressive is the fact that many aristocratic families who until 1259 were included in the high aristocracy, seem to have been excluded from the network of family alliances by marriage, even though prominent members of those families were in crucial

539 On the matter see also KYRITSES, Byzantine Aristocracy 226-227. Andronikos II had more siblings but some of them, although married, were childless.
540 They have already been presented in the cases of Constantine ‘Porphyrogennetos’ Palaiologos with Eirene Raoulaina, who were fifth degree relatives, of Thomas I of Epirus and Anna Palaiologina also related in the same degree, Michael Koutroules with Anna Palaiologina and Isaakios Asan with Theodora Arachatlun, who were first cousins.
posts. The Nestongoi, related both to the Batatzai and the Palaiologoi, seem to be absent from any of the aristocratic marriage policies, even though they still served in key positions of the Empire. The Batatzai and the Laskaris families disappeared from the forefront; for the latter it is known that Michael VIII took care of that matter up to a certain level. The Kaballarioi probably have lost their most prominent members in the Thessalian campaign in the decade of 1270-1280; the Kamytzai disappeared after 1259 and the Aprenoi extinct possibly in the fourteenth century. Finally, the Philanthropenoi probably survived only through their female members, since Alexios Doukas Philanthropenos, grandfather of the same named pinkernes, might have been the last male representative of the family.

It may be assumed that the families, which did not renew their relations to the ruling dynasty of the Palaiologoi or did not participate in the marriage strategies of the high aristocracy of the time finally lost their significance. Moreover, many families of the high aristocracy survived, only through their matrilineal sides, as had happened in the Komnenian era, keeping the surnames through their female ancestors.

Family and First Names of the High Aristocracy

As it was presented earlier, the use of surnames already from the ninth century by the members of the aristocracy was an innovation that turned out to be extremely helpful to the modern scholars in tracing the intermarriages and their offspring. Until the twelfth century, the members of the aristocracy were mainly known by one surname, mostly that of their father. However, in the years after 1204, many aristocrats claimed their descent from the Komnenos – Doukas imperial family. This had as a consequence that many prominent members of high aristocracy added the surnames of Komnenos Doukas among the main surname of their family in the early Palaiologan period.

The main representative of this innovative demonstration of a lineage through the family names was Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos, attested in the sources also as Michael Komnenos or as he preferred to call himself Michael Doukas Angelos Komnenos Palaiologos or Diplopalaiologos. The sequence of the surnames is not coincidental, since Michael declared through them his ancestors, who legitimised also

541 His grandson with the same name was mainly a Tarchaneiotes by his father, even though he preferred his grandfather’s name, passed to him by his mother.
his right to ascend to the throne. Among his surnames are listed those of Komnenos and Doukas, asserting the intermarriages of the Palaiologans with both the imperial families of Komnenoi and Doukai; then are mentioned the Angeloi because through his grandmother Eirene Angelina he could raise claims to the imperial throne and finally the one of Palaiologoi with the two different branches of the family that were connected to him.

Many prominent representatives of the high aristocracy followed the example of Michael VIII, by listing the surnames of all their important ancestors. To the majority of those surnames, they could be easily traced those of the Komnenos – Doukas, declaring their kinship by blood or marriage, mostly on the side of their female ancestors, who could be transmitters of the lineage, since only few members were known to derive directly from the male line of the Komnenoi. Of course, every aristocrat could add in his list of surnames every ancestral surname he considered of great importance. Those surnames were indicators of the aristocratic intermarriages already from the Komnenian era and could also reveal to a certain degree the endogamous strategies of the marriages followed by the high aristocracy.

Moreover, the full lists of aristocratic surnames could not be found in the historiographers, who usually referred to them with one of their surnames, mainly that of their father; even though sometimes they mentioned also partly their lineages, in order to be more precise to the identity of a person, whose actions were described. The main information about the chain of family names used by the aristocrats were mostly transmitted through documents such as the monastic Typika and poems, such as those of Manuel Philes. Among the Typika of the Palaiologan period, one of the most important is that of Bebaia Elpis Monastery, founded by the niece of emperor Michael VIII and daughter of Constantine Palaiologos, Theodora Palaiologina Synadene. The parents of Theodora, Constantine Komnenos Doukas Palaiologos and Eirene Komnene Laskarina Kantakouzene Palaiologina Branaina, as well as the offspring of the marriage of Theodora to John Angelos Doukas Synadenos and their descendants, among with her siblings and part of their offspring were depicted in the Typikon, with an enlistment

542 Akropolis referred to Michael VIII Palaiologos only as Komnenos, probably to flatter the emperor by emphasising his imperial lineage. Pachymeres referred to almost all the aristocrats and the emperor by strictly mentioning only one family name, except from the cases that he wanted to clarify if the name was of matrilineal descent in the case of Alexios Philanthropenos or wanted to be more precise as in the presentation of Nostongissa Tarchaneiotissa, daughter of Nikephoros Tarchaneiotes by his first marriage, probably to a Nostongissa.
of all the family names used by each member. Men usually had three to four surnames, while women bear up to six; among them was also the family name of their husband. Even the inscriptions of the portraits in the Typikon and the reference to the names inside the text differ, giving probably the long and short versions of the surnames used.

The family names of the early Palaiologan aristocracy did not follow a specific pattern; one could use each of the surnames declaring patrilineal or matrilineal descent, as long as they were to be found in his ancestry. This can be traced in several cases where two siblings were using different surnames of their family’s lineage, such as the sons of Theodora Synadene, Theodore and John, who were known probably either as Theodore Komnenos Doukas Synadenos Palaiologos and John Komnenos Doukas Synadenos, or in a simplification of their names, possibly by themselves, as Theodore Synadenos and John Palaiologos. Moreover, there is also the case were a young aristocrat preferred to bear his maternal grandfather’s name rather than that of his father, even though he was also a well-known aristocrat. The example is that of pinkernes Alexios Doukas Philanthropenos, who was known by the surnames of his homonymous grandfather. Alexios, originally a Tarchaneiotes, had chosen for unknown reasons those names, possibly to honour his grandfather, who was a glorious military commander.

Women could also bear as many surnames as they wanted, declaring their family ancestry. They could also pass their surnames to their children, who could have been really proud of their mother’s ancestry. Among their family names, the female aristocrats added also that of their husbands. If their husband’s family was more illustrious that their own, then they were mostly known by his surnames.

However, the surnames are not the only indicators of an aristocratic family that follow a specific pattern. The first names of the members of the families of the high aristocracy could also pass from one generation to the other. The most famous names were those of the founder or the most prominent person of the family – who sometimes could be the same person– from the time that the family came to forefront. A first name could not only reveal the kinship ties or the family to which someone belonged, but also a bond of spiritual relationship such as the spiritual parenthood. A telling example is the case of Eudokia Komnene Doukaina Palaiologina Synadene (Mouzakiotissa), wife of Theodore Doukas Komnenos Palaiologos Synadenos, who is known by her husband’s surnames and not her father’s, Theodore Doukas Mouzakios.

For more on the name patterns see R. Macrides, The Byzantine Godfather, in R. J. Macrides,
tenth century, members of the great Anatolian aristocratic families were using specific names that were passing mostly from grandparent to grandchild and could be indicators of each family such as the names Bardas and Nikephoros for the Phokas family, Bardas and Constantine for the Skleroii, Leo and Pothis for the Argyroi\textsuperscript{545}. The same could be observed in the Komnenian era, with some specific first names to be preferred by the Komnenoi and Doukai, such as Alexios, John, Andronikos and Isaakios for men and Eirene and Anna for women\textsuperscript{546}.

In the early Palaiologan period, the same can be noticed in the families of the high aristocracy, mostly in the Palaiologoi and the aristocratic families who had ties of kinship with them. Among men the names Andronikos, Constantine and John are the most popular. Andronikos was the name of Michael’s VIII father, Andronikos Palaiologos; Constantine and John were names revealing probably a kinship to the Komnenoi and Doukai. Michael, the name of the founder of the dynasty was also widespread in the aristocratic circles; interesting is the fact that the names George and Nikephoros, first names of the first known members of the Palaiologoi in the Komnenian era were not used widely among the aristocracy of the time. Women were usually named after the empress Theodora, wife of Michael VIII; other chosen names were Eirene and Anna; Eirene was honouring Eirene Angelina, the daughter of Alexios III Angelos, who gave to the Palaiologoi the first right to ascend to the imperial throne. Both Anna and Eirene were quite popular in the family of Komnenoi and Doukai, as already mentioned and it is no surprise that they were used to such a degree by the Palaiologan aristocracy; the majority of the families constituting the high aristocracy of the time claimed their ancestry from the Komnenos – Doukas clan. First names such as Euphrosyne and Thomais were probably personal choice or had a special story behind them, like the name Simonis of Andronikos’ II daughter\textsuperscript{547}; Eudokia on the other hand,

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\textsuperscript{545} CHEYNET, Pouvoir et contestations 268-269.

\textsuperscript{546} This could be explained by the history of those two families that were connected through the marriage of Alexios I Komnenos and Eirene Doukaina. Alexios was the founder of the dynasty, John was either way a common name in Byzantium, probably especially in Asia Minor. Moreover, Andronikos was a name used mostly by the Doukai and Isaakios was the first of the Komnenoi who became an emperor. Manuel was also another popular name among the Komnenoi, in the memory of the eldest son of John Komnenos and Anna Dalassena, who was a general of Romanos IV Diogenes. Eirene was common among women in honour of Eirene Doukaina; many women of the Komnenoi – Doukas family were also named Anna after the mother of Alexios I, Anna Dalassena.

\textsuperscript{547} Simonis was named after Saint Peter. Before her birth, Andronikos II had with his wife, Eirene many daughters born, who had not survived infancy. When Simonis was born, the emperor followed a folklore practice to assure that this daughter could survive. He lightened a candle for each of the twelve Apostles;
a name widely spread among the female aristocrats, was also to be found among the Komnenoi.

The Role of Women in the Marriage Strategies

As already mentioned, women played a significant role in the marriage strategies of the high aristocracy and the imperial family, since their marital unions could prove extremely beneficial for their kin. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that those aristocratic families with many female members were ‘privileged’, since they could accomplish more intermarriages within their social group. Moreover, women were in the enhanced position of being conveyors of lineage. From the twelfth century onwards, their progeny could enlist their surnames and possibly glorify more the female lineage by using their family names, if their family was more illustrious than the one of their husbands.

Of great importance is also that special titles were applied through marriage to male relations already from the ninth century, since the husband of a daughter, sister or sister-in-law was a gambros, son-in-law. In the case of the imperial daughters, the kinship by marriage could grant to the husband himself or their offspring the right to raise claims to the throne, especially when the direct male line of the imperial dynasty was possibly extinct.

Although women could be bearers of family lineage, it is impressive that among the intermarriages of the early Palaiologan period examined in the present thesis, there are several cases where the first names or the surnames or the lineage of the female aristocrats are not known. The wives of John Komnenos Palaiologos, brother of Michael VIII, and Michael Palaiologos Tarchaneiotes, nephew of the aforementioned emperor are only two examples among many. Their first names remained unknown, although the sources mention that they were the daughter of Constantine Tornikes and the daughter of megas domestikos Alexios Doukas Philanthropenos respectively; they were obviously coming from two illustrious families of the high aristocracy of the period. The second case is even more interesting, since the daughter of the couple is

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548 RAPP, Brother-Making 212.
549 Such as the cases of Eirene Angelina and Anna Angelina, described already above.
also not known either by name or surname; it is only known that she was married in the family of Raoul. Another telling example is the wife of Theodore Boilas Mouzalon, who was mentioned in the sources as a ‘Kantakouzene’, without any further information. The fact that she was a member of the Kantakouzenos family did not make the sources to try to be more detailed, when talking about her and inform us about her parents or other kinship ties. The family of Asan has also some telling examples, when it comes to the wives of the sons of Eirene and John III; all of them are not known neither by their first name nor their family name, leaving us wonder if their family names could be possibly traced through the enlisted surnames of their offspring. The only exception is Theodora Palaiologina Arachatlun, wife of Isaakios Komnenos Palaiologos Asan.

Unnamed remained also those women, with whom emperors and aristocrats had their illegitimate children. A huge question has been raised about the social group to which they belonged, especially when the only emperor’s mistress known by her name in this period is Diplobatatzina, mother of the first illegitimate daughter of Michael VIII, Maria, and probably a member of the Batatzes family. Michael VIII had one more illegitimate daughter, Euphrosyne; his son, Andronikos II had also two illegitimate daughters, Eirene and Maria, also by unknown mothers. Another question is whether their pregnancy outside marriage was accepted by the Byzantine society and what kind of reactions had their families and social entourage. Impressive is also the fact that the offspring of their children could marry into the high aristocracy; the daughter of Maria, Lady of the Mongols, Theodora Arachatlun had married a legitimate son of the illustrious family of Asan. However, not only the emperors could have illegitimate children as the cases of John Komnenos Palaiologos and Constantine Porphyrogennetos attested. The first had an illegitimate daughter of unknown mother and married the ruler of Iberia; the latter had between his two marriages his own illegitimate son by a female servant.

The matter of female agency is a further topic to be examined. In the early Palaiologan period it was possible for women to make their own choices, as specific cases could reveal. Eudokia, sister of Andronikos II refused a second marriage to a man she did not want to marry, and she refused to go to the Serbian court. However, the

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550 Her brother is the famous *pinkernes* Alexios Doukas Philanthropenos (Tarchaneiotes).
551 See above for the presumptions about the families that the wives of Asan belong.
reasons for her vehement refusal against the emperor’s wishes should be examined carefully. Eudokia was of some age and she could express her opinion; she was the widow of the emperor of Trebizond and her firstborn son had already ascended his father’s throne. Therefore, her refusal may have been connected to her wish to return to Trebizond after a while. During her presence in Constantinople, Eudokia had also become an intermediary between the two imperial courts. On the other hand, Eudokia Neokaisaritissa Palaiologina was a married aristocrat who chose to refuse an extramarital affair with the son of the emperor, whom she loved, in order to stay faithful to her moral values. Consequently, she was praised for her virtue by Gregoras, along with her physical beauty and intelligence

Moreover, among the female aristocrats of the time one can find extremely intelligent and educated women, such as Theodora Raoulaina and Eirene Choumnaina, who corresponded with many scholars of their time. Those two, together with Theodora Synadene and Maria of the Mongols are only some of the cases of windowed aristocrats entering monasteries. It was actually a common phenomenon for members of the high aristocracy to take the monastic vows, after the death of their spouses or when they wanted to abandon the world and live a peaceful life. As was mentioned earlier, Theodora Synadene had founded the Monastery of Bebaia Elpis, where she had withdrawn along with her daughter, Euphrosyne; their example seemed also to have followed and other female relatives of the family. Additionally, Maria, Lady of the Mongols, who had also taken part in a diplomatic expedition arranged by her brother to the lands of her dead husband, had founded a nunnery, where she resided as a nun with her daughter Theodora; the latter married probably after her mother’s death.

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552 Nikephoros Gregoras, Ρωμαϊκή Ιστορία I (293-294 SCHOPEN–BEKKER). Gregoras got to the point to compare her with the Pythagoragian Theano and Hypatia of Alexandria.


Examining the marriage strategies of the high aristocracy, one should probably mention the spouses’ age. The allowed age of marriage was twelve to thirteen for girls and fourteen for boys. Whenever the age of the future bride is mentioned in the sources, something rather rare–she was reaching or was already in puberty. With the exception of the marriage of the underage Simonis Palaiologina to Stephan II Urōs Milutin, it seems that the age limitations were quite strict. This fact could also be supported by the source evidence; it is known that several times the arranged marriage or betrothal could take place prior to the proper age and according to the Byzantine tradition the woman moved to her husband’s house. However, the couple did not consummate the marital union, until both had reached the proper age, as can be deduced by the dates of marriages and dates of their first children’s birth. This matter was of great significance for women, since an early sexual intercourse could lead to irreversible damages to the uterus and the capability of bearing children. Impressive is also the fact that aristocratic women practiced their first marriage already in puberty, contrary to men, who could also reach the age of thirty and married then for the first time.

The results of Marriage Strategies

Finally, is of great significance an account of the marriage strategies of high aristocracy. In the reign of the two first Palaiologans, one can count more than fifty proposals of marriage and marital unions, mostly organised and supported by the emperors. It seems that the families constituting the high aristocracy were more than willing to take part in the marriage strategies, trying to stay in the forefront through a beneficial marriage and claim their positions in the emperor’s entourage, if they did not already belong to it.

Families such as the Kantakouzenoi, Tarchaneiotai, Synadenoi, Raoul and Asan were the most notable families of both reigns of Michael VIII and Andronikos II and

556 A telling example is the marriage of emperor Andronikos II to Anna of Hungary, which took place in 1272. Nevertheless, their first son, Michael IX was not born until ca. 1278. On the other hand, the firstborn daughter of Eirene Palaiologina and John III Asan was supposed to have been born right after their marriage in 1278, because both spouses had by far reached the proper age of marriage, since their betrothal, see above.


558 See the case of Constantine ‘Porphyrogennetos’ Palaiologos, who according to Gregoras was thirty years old, when he married Eirene Raoulaina, Nikephoros Gregoras, Ῥωμαϊκή ἱστορία I (190 SCHOPEN –BEKKER).
already included in the immediate relatives of the emperor. Obviously noticing the gradual decline of families such as the Nestongoi, who were related to Michael VIII and of the Strategopouloai, related to the empress Theodora Palaiologina, the aforementioned families decided probably to stay as active as they could. The acquisition of many children and mostly of many daughters, seemed to have helped those families to receive a dominant position next to the imperial family of Palaiologoi; it is not a coincidence that those families were basically the immediate family of the emperor, since they consisted of his siblings and offspring. The practice of endogamy between those families seemed also reasonable, considering that they were probably of equal power, even if they sometimes did not obtain high positions at court, since their kinship to the emperor was probably already recognisable among the members of the same milieu.\(^{559}\)

Among those families of the high aristocracy were also many who became extinct over time or had declined; other families, which did not belong to the high aristocracy, seem to have tried to find a way to get into the imperial family and the direct entourage of the emperor. The families of the ministers Mouzalon, Choumnos and Metochites were probably belonging to the aristocratic circle, but not to the highest one. The marriages of their daughters to members of the imperial family or relatives by blood of the emperor had opened them a way into the high aristocracy, from which for example the Metochites family had benefited.

It is obvious that the intermarriage between a member of a family belonging to the high aristocracy with a person of the same milieu was probably to the advantage of both families, who had accomplished a beneficial marriage alliance. On the other hand, it seems that when a member of an illustrious aristocratic family was married to a person belonging to a very rich family, but not necessarily an aristocratic one, the latter family could obtain probably more by this marriage. Therefore, not only the emperor but also the members of the high aristocracy were quite careful, when practicing marriage strategies.

As it might be noticed, the Komnenian system of intermarriages, as well as the Palaiologan system shared a lot of similarities. Both the Komnenoi and the Palaiologoi had risen as a dominant family from a specific circle. Nevertheless, the Komnenoi had

\(^{559}\) Constantine ‘Porphyrogenetos’ Palaiologos did not bear a title, as did also the sons of Eirene Palaiologina Asanina, who were of royal ancestry by both of their parents.
practiced the majority of their intermarriages after they had ascended to the throne; on the other hand, the Palaiologoi practiced numerous marriage strategies among the families of the same milieu long before their ascendance to the throne. In the time of the Palaiologoi, the aristocratic families had already a self-consciousness and were proud for their ancestors; they may also have shared the same distant ancestors with the imperial family of their time. Michael VIII and Andronikos II, following the example of the Komnenoi, included in their marriage policies not only their children, but also the offspring of their siblings and closest relatives. In the Komnenian era, the older aristocratic families were fading and new ones came into forefront, mostly in the capacity of the emperor’s gambreoi. During the reigns of the first Palaiologoi, many families were constantly present in the high aristocracy, others tried to claim their position in this social circle, while others who remained inactive in the intermarriages slowly disappeared.

An interesting fact is that in the Komnenian era the aristocrats who held the most important positions in the court, participated as well in the intermarriages with the emperor’s relatives. By contrast, families like the Nestongoi or the Kaballarioi might have held high positions in the military, but they did not take part in intermarriages. The titles were also essential for the relatives of the emperor in the Komnenian period. The relatives of the Palaiologoi might have not be known by their titles, but mostly by their kinship to the emperor. The aristocracy of the Komnenian era had mostly a military character and the emperor’s sons and daughters-in-law were descendants of those families. In the early Palaiologans, were mentioned the marriages of the emperor’s offspring with members of aristocratic families belonging to the administration.

To sum up, the present thesis presented the marriage strategies of the high aristocracy of the early Palaiologan period. It has been shown with an enlistment of the marriage proposals and the marital unions, as well as with a detailed analysis of the marriage policies that the members of the high aristocracy concluded marriage alliances with families of the same milieu, mostly under the influence of the emperor’s wishes. Through those practices, they aimed at remaining in the emperor’s entourage and their social circle or at entering into the high aristocracy. Therefore, the Palaiologan system of intermarriages had established a great network of kinship among the families of the high aristocracy.
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I. PRIMARY SOURCES


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ABSTRACT

The present thesis focuses on the marriage strategies of the Byzantine aristocracy in the early Palaiologan period. It aims at analysing the marriage policies of the aristocratic families in the entourage of the early Palaiologan emperors, as well as the reasons the marriages among aristocrats were either contracted or not, and the degree of the imperial interference in them.

At first, it presents the historical frame and the sources. The first chapter offers a definition of the aristocracy and its function within the Byzantine society, as well as a list of the families of the early Palaiologan aristocracy with a presentation of their history. In the second chapter, which is the main chapter of this research, are presented the marriage strategies of the aristocracy as a social group already from the tenth century until the evolution of the Komnenian system. Then, follow the marriage policies prior and after the Fourth Crusade. This is an introduction to the world of the marriage policies of the aristocracy, since it demonstrates the continuity of patterns in action. Subsequently, the chapter focuses on the marriage strategies of the aristocracy until 1259, with the rise of the Palaiologoi to the throne. The study turns then to the marriage policies during the reigns of Michael VIII Palaiologos and his son, Andronikos II, which demonstrate high rates of intermarriage activity. Finally, in the conclusions several aspects of the marriage strategies of the aristocracy are analysed.

APPENDIX

I. Excel Lists

The Excel lists include the aristocrats that participated in the intermarriages of the early Palaiologan period, their offspring and their ancestors, when necessary. They are listed with their names as they appear in PLP, with the PLP numbers also included. Next to every marriage proposal or concluded marriage is listed also the name of the emperor, under whose reign the wedding took place.

II. Tables

The tables refer to the intermarriages of every aristocratic family in the early Palaiologan period. Therefore, the second or third marriages of some aristocrats are not presented, since they were not concluded during the chronological limits of this thesis. In every family are presented mostly the children that took part in the marriage strategies of the period, even though occasionally names of childless members of the family or aristocrats that took monastic vows or even died in infancy are included. Sometimes there is not a presentation of the offspring of the family as a whole, but only indicatively a reference of children as an explanation of the sequence of the family names and lineage or the participation in the marriage policies. The way that the offspring are presented is mostly by order of birth. Finally, the illegitimate children of emperors and aristocrats are connected to the family trees by intermittent lines.
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<td>Tornikina Komnene</td>
<td>29138</td>
<td>Angelos, John I Doukas</td>
<td>Michael VIII Palaiologos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tornikina, Maria Komnene Akropolitissa</td>
<td>29140</td>
<td>Akropolites, Constantine</td>
<td>Michael VIII Palaiologos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philanthropene, Theodora (?)</td>
<td>29743</td>
<td>Philanthropenos, Alexios Doukas (1294)</td>
<td>Andronikos II Palaiologos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philanthropenos, Alexios Doukas (Tarchaneiotes)</td>
<td>29752</td>
<td>Philanthropene, Theodora (?)</td>
<td>Andronikos II Palaiologos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philes, Alexios</td>
<td>29809</td>
<td>Kantakouzene, Maria (1259)</td>
<td>Michael VIII Palaiologos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philes, Theodore</td>
<td>29812</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Table 1. Intermarriages of the Palaiologoi (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marriage</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael VIII + Theodora</td>
<td>Illegitimate children (not shown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Palaiologos + daughter of Constantine Tornikes</td>
<td>1. Maria Palaiologina + Abaqa, Khan of Mongols 2. Euphrosyne Palaiologina + Nogai, Khan of the Mongols of the Golden Horde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantine + Eirene Branaina</td>
<td>Andronikos II Palaiologos + (1) Anna of Hungary (2) Yolanda - Eirene of Montferrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Doukas + Eudokia Angelina Doukaina</td>
<td>John Kantakouzenos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Palaiologos + Martha Palaiologina + Nikephoros Tarchaneiotes</td>
<td>Nikephoros Tarchaneiotes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eirene Palaiologina + John Kantakouzenos</td>
<td>Illegitimate children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantine ‘Porphyrogennetos’ Palaiologos + Eirene Raoulaina</td>
<td>Theodore Palaiologos + daughter of Libadarios</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 2. Intermarriages of the Palaiologoi (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marriage</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Daughter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Anna of Hungary + Andronikos II Palaiologos</td>
<td>Constantine ‘Porphyrogennetos’ Palaiologos + (1) Eudokia Mouzalonissa (2) Eudokia Neokaisareitissa</td>
<td>John Palaiologos + Eirene Choumnaina</td>
<td>Demetrios Palaiologos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Michael Katharos</td>
<td></td>
<td>Simonis Palaiologina + Stephan II Urōs Milutin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Michael IX Palaiologos + Rita- Maria of Armenia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Eirene-Yolanda of Montferrat</td>
<td>Andronikos III Palaiologos + (1) Adelheid -Eirene of Braunschweig- Grubenhagen</td>
<td>Anna Palaiologina + (1) Thomas I of Epirus (2) Nicola Orsini</td>
<td>Theodora Palaiologina + Theodore Svietoslav</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manuel Palaiologos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 3. Intermarriages of the Tarchaneiotai and the Akropolitai
Table 4. Intermarriages of the Kantakouzenoi
Table 5. Intermarriages of the Palaiologoi and the Synadenoi
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demetrios Tornikes + cousin of Andronikos Palaiologos</th>
<th>John Petraliphas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constantine Tornikes + Raoulaina</td>
<td>Tornikina + Theodore Petraliphas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theodora Petralipha + Michael II Doukas Angelos of Epirus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tornikina Komnene + John I of Thessaly</td>
<td>Helen Angelina + Manfred of Sicily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demetrios (Michael) Koutroules + Anna Palaiologina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andronikos Palaiologos Constantine Palaiologos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anna Angelina + Guillaume II de Villehardouin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Isabeau de Villehardouin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marguerite de Villehardouin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Intermarriages of the Tornikioi, the Petraliphai and the Doukai-Angeloii of Epirus

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Table 7. Intermarriages of the Laskareis

(2) Constanza of Hohenstaufen + John III Doukas Batatzes + (1) Eirene Laskarina

Theodore II Laskaris + Helen Asan of Bulgaria

- Eirene Laskarina + Constantine Tich of Bulgaria
- Theodora Laskarina + Matthieu de Véligourt
- Maria Laskarina + Nikephoros I of Epirus

- daughter + Svyetoslav of Vidyne
- Eudokia Laskarina + Guglielmo of Ventimiglia
- John IV Laskaris

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alexios Strategopoulos</th>
<th>Michael Glabas Tarchaneiotes + Maria Doukaina Branaina Tarchaneiotissa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constantine Strategopoulos + Strategopoulina, daughter of Isaakios Doukas</td>
<td>daughter + Andronikos Branas Palaiologos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Strategopoulos + Anna Raoulaina</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8. Intermarriages of the Strategopouloi and the Glabades**
Table 9. Intermarriages of the Asan

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