

Claudia Rapp / Yannis Stouraitis (eds.)

Microstructures and Mobility in the Byzantine World

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Mutual Interest Groups in a Provincial Context

In his seminal work *People and Power in Byzantium*, Alexander Kazhdan suggested that research on Byzantium needed to escape from studying the institutions and shift to the people within them.¹ In the same year, he proposed a number of ‘microstructures’ that need to be examined for their significance in the context of Byzantine society. He defined these as groupings that worked below the surface of Byzantine history and could have influenced the evolution of Byzantine society or might have contained at least a part of the identity, beliefs, self-expression, and self-representation of people that belonged to the lower social strata: family, confraternities, monasteries, and villages or towns may be seen as such ‘microstructures’.² Byzantium indeed inherited from antiquity a society that was multi-faceted, organised in groups or circles of people that partly overlapped each other. These worked as satellites around the main institutions and provided people with the necessary options for organising their daily and social life according to volition, ability, and perhaps social standing. Professional corporations, particular cults, expanded family networks, and clientele networks, are groupings that can be detected in the sources. While social position per se is important for the type of individual social self-projection, these circles that were inherent in, or interwoven with, ancient ways of life provided ancient societies with mobility below the surface and empowered individuals to pursue their interests and goals despite the apparent rigidity of the institutions and social stratification of the Roman empire.³

The present study focuses on groupings that have observed in non-urban Byzantine settings, whether in villages or rural towns outside Constantinople: namely, the village itself, the *phratriai/fatriai*, confraternities, and monasteries or churches built by individuals or communities. These are examined as clusters

1 Kazhdan and Constable, *People and Power*, 17.

2 Kazhdan, *Microstructures*, 3–11; *ODB*, s.v. *Microstructures*, 1371 (M. Bartusis).

3 The best treatise on Roman society is still Alföldy, *Römische Sozialgeschichte*, supplemented by Aries and Duby, *History*. Peachin, *Social Relations*, is a good starting point for understanding basic Roman social structures.

where particular bonds were forged among the participants, resulting from their common responsibilities, services or goals, and beliefs. The study is far from exhaustive – the absence of the main social unit, the family, is conspicuous, but impossible to address in a single paper. The information collected from the source material about social life in the provinces is both scanty and complex. Therefore, in order to avoid generalisations, the research presented here will take into consideration material about such mutual interest groups that concerns their operation in Constantinople, including legislative and sigillographic material. Although testimonies from the provinces are the starting point, the internal organisation of these groups, the rules or principles that regulated their formation, function, placement and role within a wider social context dominated by the centralised state, and the position of individuals within them, are the main areas focused on in this analysis. To achieve this, the present study attempts instead to interpret the complicated source material, and to suggest methods of approach that might be useful for future research.

The village: mutual interest groups in an agrarian context

The village (*chorion*) is the dominant grouping in the provinces. As a fiscal unit, the village is well known from the various archival, legal, and narrative sources.⁴ However, as a small settlement with a small population, the village is a social microstructure as well, and a variety of relationships develop among its inhabitants. Because of this unity, the peasants (called *choritai* in the sources) are primarily obliged to exploit the lands and the natural resources belonging to the village and for this reason they enter into various relationships with their co-inhabitants, whether relatives or non-relatives. Thus, the *chorion* in reality fosters the growth of multiple links among the peasants, which develop outside the family. This observation explains why the state sees the village communities not only as macrostructures facilitating the collection of revenues, which is obvious in tax registers and *praktika*, but also as microstructures that contain a vast array of relationships, which are the subject of close examination in legislative sources, because they are important for social coherence.⁵

4 Kaplan, *Les hommes*, 95–101; Laiou, *Byzantine Village*, 31–54; Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society*, 33; Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 37–38, 41, 76f.; Kyritses and Smyrlis, *Villages*, 439–445; Cheynet, *Le monde byzantin* 2, 235–238. The most succinct definition of the *chorion* is found in Dölger, *Finanzverwaltung*, 126, but Lefort, *Rural Economy*, 236–240, 275f., 281f., reassesses the research of the past few years and the direction it has taken.

5 See, for example *Novels of the Macedonian Emperors*, ed. Svoronos and Gounaridis, no. 4, esp. lines 80–90. This Novel of Constantine VII deals generally with social differences found inside villages and is rife with social terminology.

The state is not interested in the social roles of individuals and the relationships among them *per se*, but in their legal roles. This is apparently the reason why we find such information in the sources. For the state, a village is not simply inhabited by individuals, but by legal persons (*prosopa*) with an attached legal capacity according to their position, i. e. owner, dependent cultivator, slave.⁶ The village itself is a juridical person, which acts collectively and lays claims to other persons, inside or outside the community, or other villages. The best-known example of such legal and collective action is the purchase of *clasmatic* land (fallow land, abandoned for over thirty years) from the state by the village of Hierissos in Chalkidike, dated to before 942. This affair, which lies at the origin of the foundation of Mt. Athos as a monastic community, caused multiple administrative complications, and some aspects relevant to this study will be discussed below.⁷ However, even before the tenth century, the Farmer's Law makes provision for the possibility of dispute among entire villages, or with a single owner, over land exploitation. In these cases, the village itself is a community with legal agency.⁸ In 995, the inhabitants of the *chorion* Siderokausia, close to Hierissos in Macedonia, dragged the monks of Kolobou monastery to the court of the *krites* of the theme of Strymon and Thessaloniki. In the document they are called *to koinon olon* (the entire community), or *koinotes* (community), or *to plethos* (the crowd), because so many of them had complaints against Kolobou.⁹

The disputes were solved with the aid of witnesses, who were normally chosen from among the elder or more trustworthy village dwellers. The settlement was quite often an affair of oral communication, negotiation, and agreement.¹⁰ In the Farmer's Law, there is no hint that the assistance of legal experts called *nomikoi*, who were normally attached to a church or a bishopric, was required. Even when our documentation increases (tenth to eleventh centuries), it is far from certain that the rural communities had the assistance of a *nomikos*, or that there was easy access to a bishopric where legal assistance could be found. The free settlement of disputes between the implicated parties would at least spare them from the cost of appealing to the authorities. In these cases, the agreements took the form of an 'understanding among gentlemen'. Upholding them was predicated on the re-

6 Oikonomides, *Fiscalité*, 54. Oikonomides observes that in later times the *prosopa* are identified in documents with the rich and/or *dynatoi* (the powerful). However, the distinction and characterisation into *prosopa* is of Roman provenance and indicates the legal capacity of individuals. See Ragia, *Social Group Profiles*, 324–327.

7 *Actes du Protaton*, ed. Papachryssanthou, nos. 4.9–11, 5.1–4, 11–13; Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 162. On the handling of the *clasmatic* lands by the state, see Oikonomides, *Verfalland*, 161–168. Neville, *Authority*, 94–98, sees the villages as 'collections of households'.

8 Ashburner, *Farmer's Law*, 98, nos. 2 and 7.

9 *Actes d'Iviron I*, ed. Lefort *et al.*, nos. 9.4, 23, 26, 28, 46. See Laiou, *Byzantine Village*, 47; Lefort, *Rural Economy*, 280, 284; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, 193–194, 201.

10 Papadatou, *Επιλόγη*, 40–43.

spect of the parties involved for each other and the witnesses, and, in addition, the acknowledgement of the validity of the process. Such settlements could also be in a written form, whereby the documents are called ‘assurance’ (*asphaleia*) or ‘resolution’ (*dialysis*). These documents are common for ending private disputes, and are binding for all participants, but belong to the private sphere (they are not public acts produced in public procedures, e.g. in courts).¹¹

A good example of such an *asphaleia* comes from the archive of the monastery of Megiste Lavra and dates from 1008. The document details the dispute about the use of a piece of land bought by the monastery of St. Akindynos from the peasants of Radochosta. It was drafted by a private individual, who signed with his best-known public qualification as ‘nephew of the *tourmaches* and *spatharokandidatos* Nikolaos’. The peasants placed their *signa* at the top of the document (fourteen families are represented), and at the end the witnesses added their signatures: the aforementioned *spatharokandidatos* Nikolaos, a *droungarios*, an *oikodespotes*, and three clerics. Thus, although the village apparently lacked the services of a *nomikos*, its inhabitants completed, as a community, a perfectly lawful act that reveals the co-existence and collaboration of the members of the village from different levels of its social spectrum: village commoners, title-holders, owners of property (*oikodespotai*), and clerics of the parish.¹² In the case of 942, the peasants of the village of Hierissos and the monks of Mt. Athos decided to end the dispute between them about the land they both claimed, and came together under the auspices of the archbishop of Thessaloniki. The corresponding *asphaleia* is preserved in the Protaton archive of Mt. Athos.¹³ In 1293, the peasants of Neochorion, near Smyrna (mod. Izmir) in western Asia Minor, committed themselves to never trespass on the land of the monastery of Lembos. The document begins with the names of the leading figures of the village and is characterised as ‘letter of promise’ (*hyposchetiki graphe*) by the peasants themselves.¹⁴

In modern bibliography, the common activities of the village inhabitants are given little attention in comparison with joint tax liability. While there is no way of knowing how much time and labour these activities required, it is obvious that they were very important for community life. According to the Farmer’s Law, a

11 See Papadatou, *Επίλυση*, 43–48, and 34–35, 36, regarding the terminology.

12 *Actes de Lavra I*, ed. Lemerle *et al.*, no. 14; Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 164–165; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, 194; Neville, *Authority*, 96. With this document the village confirms the purchase of land close to the castle by the monks of St. Akindynos and proceeds to its delimitation (*periorismos*) because it had not been applied before (which was the reason of the dispute). See generally Kaplan, *Les hommes*, 198–203, on the significance of the most distinguished inhabitants of the village as agents for legal actions, and specifically Laiou, Peasant as Donor, 117–118.

13 *Actes du Protaton*, ed. Papachryssanthou, no. 4; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, 193.

14 *MM IV*, 231–232, no. 145. The case is dated to 1293.

village could claim as community property buildings that had been erected by individuals on their own initiative on community land, on condition that the *choritai* would reimburse the owner for his expenses. As is explicitly stated, this practice led to *koinonia*, which means that the community effectively became partner, or co-owner, of the asset.¹⁵ From the documents of the archives of Mt. Athos, we learn that the peasants, based on ancient custom, also claimed the co-exploitation of land allotted to monasteries. In this case, they made certain that their right was recorded in official documents. Around 920, the peasants of Hierissos had collectively rented land of two thousand *modioi* from the monastery of Kolobou. In the village of Dobrovikeia in Macedonia, two mills are indicated as community installations.¹⁶ In this context, apart from pasturelands, wine and oil presses would have been very important, but our evidence is scanty. The Farmer's Law mentions that undivided, free (therefore communal) land could at some point be divided and allotted to farmers.¹⁷ The farmers also claimed access to springs and rivers, and reacted strongly when the use of water was restricted by the intervention of other individuals or villages. In these cases, the law supported the farmers; there are at least three cases concerning the use of water which record sentences passed against the initiatives of individuals and monasteries which were harmful to communities: in Siderokausia (close to Hierissos), in Crete, and in the Strymon area.¹⁸ Conversely, the Farmer's Law contains no restriction with relation to the building of such installations, on condition that the *choritai* would not suffer. The community could divide, and allocate to peasants, common land belonging to the *chorion*, and the new owners could erect mills on their plots without risking the danger of other peasants raising claims based on the former, common status of the land.¹⁹ Thus, in Siderokausia the community, *to plethos*, decided to allow the priest of the parish to rebuild his mill on the land that was given to the village, after his claims were rejected by the monks of Kolobou.²⁰ The procedures relating to the ownership of the little monastery of Spondai on the island of Kos suggest that the peasants used the water that belonged to it when the monastery was abandoned. Later,

15 Ashburner, Farmer's Law, 107, no. 81; Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 43–44.

16 *Actes de Lavra I*, ed. Lemerle *et al.*, no. 2; *Actes d'Iviron I*, ed. Lefort *et al.* no. 1, 30.26, 31. See Lefort, Rural Economy, 280, 308. In *Actes de Lavra I*, ed. Lemerle *et al.*, no. 3, the sale of *clasmatic* land is secured on condition that the ancient rights of the farmers be maintained.

17 Ashburner, Farmer's Law, 102, no. 32.

18 *Actes d'Iviron I*, ed. Lefort *et al.*, nos. 9.46–47; *MM VI*, 95–97 no. 23 (1118); *Actes de Chilandar*, ed. Petit, 167–168 no. 76, 238–239 no. 115. See Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society*, 62, and, specifically on the case of Chilandar monastery: Laiou and Simon, *Of Mills and Monks*, 1–50. On the management of waters see: Gerolymatou, *La gestion de l'eau*, 195–205.

19 Ashburner, Farmer's Law, 108, nos. 82, 83; Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 43. According to stipulation 83, if a mill damages the fields, its function should be suspended.

20 *Actes d'Iviron I*, ed. Lefort *et al.*, nos. 9.55–58; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, 205.

they made sure that Spondai was given to the monastery of St. John Theologos of Patmos. Presumably, the monastery would be a better landlord than the local bishop or a random owner. Among the documents pertaining to this complicated affair, we find a *deesis* (petition) of the peasants to the emperor. This remarkable document begins with the signatures of no fewer than eighty-three farmers, clerics, and officials of Kos.²¹

Thus, there can be no doubt that common agrarian exploitation fostered the growth of solidarity within village populations. However, separate units also develop within populations, because of social differentiation and inequality. Notwithstanding any factors encouraging solidarity, social difference was indicated above in the case of the village of Radochosta, where people of different social positions came together in the role of witnesses. Social and civic aspects of communal life, such as legal procedures, were organised by state officials and also by churches, the latter usually possessing the staff responsible for these tasks. The leading witnesses were always people from the upper social stratum and the elderly of a *chorion*. Therefore, their social position and old age enhanced their credibility, as the legislation required, and they signed first.²² But the numerous signatures which appear below those of the notables involve a wide range of individuals of specific social standing in procedures that had to be recognised by co-villagers, neighbours, and the state itself. Already in the Farmer's Law there is mention of the *martyres* (witnesses) or the *akroatai* (witnesses, or judges), without further specification. Their involvement in cases of civic law is necessary for validating the procedures.²³ The title of the aforementioned *deesis* of the inhabitants of Kos declares that it is made by 'the inhabitants of the island of Kos, the military and the entire community (*to koinon tou laou*), and the servants and slaves' of the emperor, which neatly corresponds to the distinction of these groups in the order of signatures.²⁴ In 1296, the inhabitants of Kometissa were required to attest to the boundaries between lands belonging to the monasteries of Vatopedi and Chilandar. The most important among them (twenty-one individuals) are mentioned by name, and two of them were signaled because they were over seventy years of age. As in the aforementioned cases, the farmers are differentiated as 'the priests, the elders (*gerontes*), the proprietors (*oikodespotai*),

21 *Patmos Inscriptions* 2, ed. Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, no. 75. See in detail Gerolymatou, *Origines*, 387–399.

22 See Ragia, *Social Group Profiles*, 324–327, 330–331, with references. When the 'upper social strata' are discussed in such a limited context, aristocratic provenance is not an essential condition. See also Laiou, *Byzantine Village*, 47–48; Kyritses and Smyrlis, *Villages*, 445–446; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, 193–194.

23 Ashburner, *Farmer's Law*, 98, nos. 3, 7; 106, no. 67.

24 *Patmos Inscriptions*, ed. Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, no. 75.α-β.

and the rest of the people (*loiapos laos*)', or, inclusively 'the younger and the older' (*mikroi kai megaloi*).²⁵

Communal feeling ultimately legalises these actions, and places the legal procedures and even the economic activity in a community framework. However, as the tax burden of abandoned land and its exploitation was shared by the village community, it is not surprising that economic and social activities overlap at least partly within a *chorion* and in the context of joint fiscal liability.²⁶ For example, members of the same family could expect a share in the inheritance, but if they did not divide it among themselves, they were effectively co-owners of their farms. Transmitting property from generation to generation could over time result in an accumulation of legal rights on small parcels of land. The division of the properties tied to supporting military service illustrates this process.²⁷ The cartulary of the Theotokos of Lembos monastery near Smyrna (mod. Izmir) also contains related evidence dated to the thirteenth century. John Chante, with his brothers Michael and Basil (and Basil's wife and son) and his sisters Maria and Kale, sold twenty-two olive trees; Kale Tyrannina and five co-owners alienated a significant plot of land. In Priene, a piece of land was sold by its seven co-owners, who placed their *signa* at the top of the sale contract along with those of their wives, brothers, sons, and daughters; only two of the owners have the same surname. Had the document not been mutilated it might have been similar to that found in a document of Lembiotissa regarding a mill: 'because there are too many of us and we are not able to put to good use the functions of the water mill and we have strife among ourselves, we abandoned it and it was ruined'. In this case, it was fifteen co-owners belonging to at least three families, including children, brothers, and sons- and daughters-in-law, who decided to sell the mill and end the strife. When such accumulation of rights occurs, alienating the property seems indeed to be the only solution.²⁸

When there is information about communal resources – i.e. the exploitation of fallow land, or natural water springs – questions relating to cooperation practices and labour issues among the villagers independent of familial ties also emerge. In the Farmer's Law, the communities are made up of owners, lessees or *paroikoi*, and the poor, but they are all indiscriminately called *georgoi* (farmers)

25 *Actes de Vatopédi*, no. 26.

26 The fiscal process relating to abandoned land and its fiscal obligations is ancient and was known as *epibole*. In later sources, we find the term *ἀλληλεγγύως* referring to joint tax liability. See Dölger, *Finanzverwaltung*, 128–130; Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 7–8, 79–80; Oikonomides, *Fiscalité*, 55–56; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, 188.

27 Ragia, *Social Position*, 148–151, 159–160.

28 *MM IV*, 64–65, no. 19; 174–175, no. 98; 196–197, no. 113; *Hiéra-Xérochoraphion cartulary*, ed. Wilson and Darrouzès, 39, no. 14. See Laiou, *Byzantine Village*, 49–52; Lefort, *Rural Economy*, 244–245, 247–248; Kyritses and Smyrlis, *Villages*, 447–448.

because what binds them together is the cultivation of the village lands.²⁹ Multiple stipulations concern paid workers who found employment as shepherds (*poimen misthotos*), and slaves (*douloi*); these categories apparently make up the lower social strata in a *chorion*.³⁰ In the monastic archives of the tenth to eleventh centuries, we find examples of cooperation among farmers that are not predicated upon social equality within the *chorion*. In 1076/7, the monastery of Peristera in Thessaloniki agreed to buy the vines the *paroikoi* had planted on lands that Peristera claimed for itself. Interestingly, a total number of thirty peasants signed with their *signa* at the beginning of the document as co-owners of the vines and guarantors of the agreement with the monastery. It has been suggested that the number of the individuals involved in this sale represents the total number of the inhabitants of the *chorion*. However, it only relates to part of the village, since the priests appear on behalf of the inhabitants.³¹ Similarly, in the *asphaleia* of the Protaton (942) that we have seen above, the ‘hegoumenoi [of local monasteries] with the peasants on behalf of the entire community of the country [of Hierissos]’ proceeded to this arrangement with the monks of Mt. Athos regarding the fallow lands of Hierissos.³² It is impossible to know whether the land mentioned in the act of Protaton is the same land as that bought by thirteen peasants of Hierissos before 942. These peasants were not of equal social status, and their plots varied from fifty to two hundred and fifty *modioi*. Nonetheless, the administrative case involving them was one and the same. Apparently, the peasants had bought the land by paying a lump sum to the state and divided the plots among themselves according to their financial situation.³³ Thus, within the communities themselves, there are elements that break the unity and create separate circles of co-operation and solidarity according to shared interests, which may only partly overlap in the context of a *chorion*.

The introduction of the institution of *pronoia*, along with the expansion of estate exploitation, favoured such mutual interest groups that were effectively separate from the *chorion*, and diluted social differences within the land grants of the *pronoia* holders. The village of Bare, with its attached *proasteia* close to

29 Ashburner, *Farmer’s Law*, 98, nos. 2, 9, 10; in nos. 11, 12, 14, and 18, poor farmers are mentioned (*ἀπορήσαντος γεωργού*, ‘impoverished farmer’). This category is not the same as the well-known *penetes* (poor) of the tenth century, a category that was defined by law. See Ragia, *Social Group Profiles*, 326–331, 341–348, with bibliography.

30 Ashburner, *Farmer’s Law*, 102, no. 34; 103, nos. 45–47; 106, nos. 71, 72. Shepherds guarding cows and oxen are called *agelarioi*: *ibid.*, 101, nos. 23–29.

31 *Actes de Lavra I*, ed. Lemerle *et al.*, no. 37; Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 165.

32 *Actes du Protaton*, ed. Papachryssanthou, no. 4.7–8. Four peasants from Hierissos and one from Ravenikeia along with the abbots of three local monasteries represented the community.

33 *Actes de Xéropotamou*, ed. Bompaire, no. 1. In 956, the plots were given to the monastery of Xéropotamou because the land had been sold at half its price. See Oikonomides, *Verfalland*, 165–166.

Miletus in Asia Minor, was granted to Andronikos Doukas in 1073. Only fourteen families were registered in the *praktikon* as inhabitants of the *chorion* of Bare. The remaining cultivators lived either in the *proasteia* (estates, of which six were granted to Doukas) or in the surrounding villages, and were listed separately. It is telling that the *proasteion* of Prinos was ‘found uninhabited’, but the village of Prinos, to which the *proasteion* had originally belonged, was not part of the grant.³⁴ Thus, although the economic engagement of the peasants appears to divide them and form into clusters according to the *proasteion* they inhabited and cultivated, they are still seen as an entity that served the particular financial interests of Andronikos Doukas specifically. The examples, of course, multiply in the thirteenth century, as the *praktika* (registers of properties and workforce) of the Athonite monasteries begin to increase. Although entire villages had been granted to the great monasteries, the cases where village unity broke down because the farmers were given as a workforce to different beneficiaries are more telling. The monastery of Xenophon only had four *paroikoi* in the village of Hierissos, which belonged primarily to the Lavra, but also partly to Iviron; and Esphigmenou only possessed half the village of Portarea before the emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos also granted it the other half. In the *pronoia* system, farmers from different settlements worked for a single beneficiary, who could change in the course of time. The succession of *pronoia* beneficiaries resulted in the reshuffling of the agrarian workforce and the re-formation of those clusters of cooperation among the farmers.³⁵ Thus, the importance of social boundaries among the peasants decreased, because their workforce only mattered in the context of each allocation. While the village remained a stable social unit, the *pronoiai* were made, but also regularly dissolved, and the farmers of new *pronoiai* often came from different villages. Therefore, the unity of the village broke down in favour of the financing of the *pronoiai*, and the separate interest groups formed among the peasants served different ends that transcended the limits of the *chorion*.³⁶

Several examples illustrate the theoretical framework described above. In an agrarian context, the process of exploiting or claiming land is almost a natural phenomenon. The farmers tended to expand their activities. The most noted cases of mutual interest groups with the purpose of expansion are those of the Sampsenoi (*paroikoi* of the Sampson estate in western Asia Minor) and the tax

34 *Patmos Inscriptions* 2, ed. Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, no. 50. See Lefort, *Rural Economy*, 305. On the villages of Bare and Prinos, see Ragia, *Κοιλάδα*, 141–142, 198, and 408–409, 450–451 on the *episkepsis* of Alopekai.

35 *Actes de Xénophon*, ed. Papachryssanthou, no. 12; *Actes d'Ésphigménou*, ed. Lefort, no. 6. Many more examples can be detected in the archival material of the period. See Ragia, *Agrarian Policy*, 513–515, 519–520.

36 C.f. Cheynet, *Le monde byzantin* 2, 222–225, 238–241 and Lefort, *Rural Economy*, 240–243.

contributors of the *pronoiai* Syrgares, near Smyrna. Both date from the beginning of the thirteenth century. I have dealt extensively with the Sampson case elsewhere. In 1211, the Sampsenoi were condemned by the court for their unauthorised expansion outside their own fields.³⁷ Some of the tax contributors of Syrgares, who came from the village of Potamos and occupied the location Sphournou for more than twenty years (c. 1212 until 1235/6), were partially vindicated in their claim to the land. Their case was examined on multiple levels. Upon completion, the related acts formed a separate dossier in the Lembiotissa archive, which shows that farmers could become particularly assertive when it came to claiming their own rights and protecting their own interests. It is worth noting that the farmers of the neighbouring villages, Rouze and Drous, testified against them, apparently because they too claimed the same piece of land. Some of them – if not all – were even *paroikoi* of Syrgares.³⁸

In the *pronoia* system, the income allotted to the *pronoiai*, which is established by a *praktikon* of delivery, comes from sources that usually display a narrow geographical dispersion. The *pronoiai* themselves were usually not of aristocratic provenance. Most of them came from a middle social stratum, but they differed fundamentally from the agrarian population, because they were in the service of the Byzantine state. Therefore, their social standing was quite different from that of the farmers.³⁹ In reality, then, the expansion of the funding system of the *pronoia* in the twelfth century consolidated the protection that the privileged beneficiaries of a *pronoia* income, such as Syrgares, could offer to the farmers, and framed it in a context different to that of the *archontike prostasia*.⁴⁰ In the eleventh century, before the expansion of the *pronoia* system, Kekaumenos described this form of *prostasia* and the cases where an *archon* (to be understood better as a member of the aristocracy rather than a person of authority) might intervene. In Kekaumenos' work, the aristocratic descent of the *archon* is taken for granted, but he describes the relationship of an *archon* with 'the people' (*o*

37 *Cartulary of St Paul, Latros*, ed. Gastgeber and Kresten, 46–71 no. 1; Ragia, *Αάτρος*, 165–190. Also see below.

38 *MM* IV, 32–43, no. 7. On the parties involved see esp. *MM* IV, 34, no. 7.3; 38, no. 7.4. The decision is in accordance with a stipulation of the Farmer's Law. See Ashburner, *Farmer's Law*, 100, no. 21; c.f. Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 179–180. In the final decision of the metropolitan bishop of Smyrna, the right of the farmers to claim reimbursement was acknowledged and Lembos was obliged to concede the allotment of a parcel of land where the Potamenoi could re-erect their huts.

39 Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 222f. Still valuable is Ahrweiler, *Concession*, 103–114, esp. 109–112 about this type of reimbursement and its distinctions. The relatively recent monograph of Bartusis, *Land and Privilege*, collects all the information, scrutinises the evolution of the institution, and analyses the different grants.

40 Saradi, *Prostasia*, 69–117, 314–351; Ragia, *Social Group Profiles*, 331–341, with references. Also see, in a different spirit, Kyritses and Smyrlis, *Villages*, 447.

laos tes choras), not with the *paroikoi*.⁴¹ The *pronoiarioi*, however, were not aristocrats, and the *pronoia* created bonds of a legal-economic nature between the peasants and the *pronoia* holder, which was not a necessary condition in the previous period. On the contrary, from the twelfth century onwards, the *pronoiarioi* were called to represent and defend the taxpayers whose taxes had been included in their grant of land. Asia Minor again offers eloquent examples. Irene Botaneiataina Doukaina Komnene, beneficiary of the Sampson estate in the twelfth century, was called upon by the abbot of the monastery of Hiera to restrain her *paroikoi* from trespassing on the land of the monastery; Irene Brannaina was called to adjudicate in the Sphournou case; the uncle of Michael VIII Palaiologos, George Angelos, rushed to represent his own *paroikoi* against the monastery of Patmos. When one of the peasants of Bare, close to Smyrna, appealed to Syrgares regarding the exploitation of a significant number of olive trees, the latter duly called upon ‘the most prominent landholders of his *pronoia*’ (*tous oikodespotas tes pronoias autou*) to come to a decision. It is interesting that the expression employed here is almost identical to expressions of the tenth to eleventh centuries, but it is applied in the context of a *pronoia*, meaning within the framework of a simple *praktikon* relating to income delivery, not in connection with a *chorion*.⁴² We also see the contributors to the *pronoiai* of different beneficiaries, those of Syrgares and the governor (*prokathemenos*) of Smyrna, Konstantinos Alopas, acting as witnesses in the same process.⁴³

It becomes clear, then, that the allotment of *pronoiai* resulted in mobilisation of farmers, enabling an increase in cultivation. The result of this type of mediation is particularly evident in the case of the Sampsenoi. The following comment, found in the acts relating to their affairs, is unique in the Byzantine sources: ‘the *paroikoi* of the Sampson estate have always been powerful because they have been supported, dominated, and commanded by important people and relatives of the emperors’.⁴⁴ The involvement of the notables in such cases of trespass did not alter the outcome of the processes, nor did they replace the state and its

41 Kekaumenos, *Consilia et Narrationes*, ed. Spadaro, 182 ch. 133. See Ragia, *Social Group Profiles*, 336–337.

42 *MM IV*, 81–85, no. 38 and c.f. 239–244, no. 150; *Hiéra-Xérochoraphion cartulary*, ed. Wilson and Darrouzès, 31–34 no. 9; *Patmos Inscriptions 1*, ed. Vranouse, no. 30. Another soldier, Kalegopoulos, was forced to renounce the claim of his own *paroikoi* on the exploitation of the river. See generally Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society*, 62–63, although the author makes no distinction between village inhabitants and farmers paying their taxes to *pronoiarioi*. Of all these documents, only that of Hiéra is a private document drafted by one of the estate managers of Sampson on the orders of Anna Botaneiataina; the rest were drafted after the corresponding public procedures. See Ragia, *Koιλάδα*, 422.

43 *MM IV*, 38, no. 7.IV.

44 *Hiéra-Xérochoraphion cartulary*, ed. Wilson and Darrouzès, 13–15, nos. 1, 2; 19–20, no. 5.12–14; Ragia, *Koιλάδα*, 455–457; Ragia, *Didyma*, 142.

employees, or even the peasants who could plead their own case. Nonetheless, it emboldened the peasants, although the interest groups formed only represented one part of the community to which they belonged; specifically, the part which had been allocated to the beneficiaries.

Violence, agrarian communities, and the soldiers

Another aspect that needs to be addressed in the context of agrarian communities is the question of the expanded family and its ties, and its relation to the existence of soldiers and the exercise of violence in the community. Romanos I Lakapenos' Novel of 928 signals the existence of violence coming not from the powerful, but from the *synchoritai* (co-villagers). Either themselves, or through the actions of their relatives, the peasants are noted for their occasional violence against their neighbours. According to the law, these actions were even 'pre-meditated' (*ek pronoias*).⁴⁵ As there is no corroborating evidence about this assertion from the same period, we have to wait for the archive of the Lembiotissa monastery, which dates from the thirteenth century and contains precious information regarding the violence that might develop in the context of agrarian communities. When the monastery was renovated by John III Vatatzes in the 1220s, it was found that the peasants of the village Prinovaris claimed a field of the neighbouring village of Bare, which had been allocated to the Lembiotissa. They found a suitable opportunity to usurp it in the abbot's absence and 'came with bows and many weapons and sowed the field with all the oxen pairs of their village in a single day'.⁴⁶ In a similar fashion, Soterichos Pothos and his brother-in-law Manteianos, who were family to a certain Konstomares, and 'their relatives', threatened the monks of Lembiotissa with murder if they dared go into the disputed plots and vineyards. While there is no evidence that they ever realised their threats, it is by such means, after they had sowed the fields and planted vines, that they managed to hold on to the land apparently from 1235 to at least 1260. In 1256 the emperor noted in an *horismos* that 'other locals' had also seized the opportunity and tried to seize other assets of the monastery.⁴⁷

The most blatant case of violence in the agrarian communities of Smyrna concerns the *paroikoi* of the *parakoimomenos* Konstantinos Doukas Nestoggos,

45 *Novels of the Macedonian Emperors*, ed. Svoronos and Gounaridis, 66.55–60 (no. 2). The Novel essentially re-establishes within a logical legal context the rights of relatives and neighbours regarding estates in the alienation process (the *protimesis*), on which see Pagianni, *Protimesis*, 1071–1982.

46 *MM IV*, 187–189, no. 107, esp. 188. The document dates to 1228.

47 *MM IV*, 247–248, no. 154. Documents no 120–125 (*MM IV*, 206–213) also concern the same case and somewhat clarify the kinship among the members involved in this dispute.

a very powerful man in Michael VIII Palaiologos' government. The farmers beat up the monks; killed a horse worth eighteen gold coins; broke into the monastery's warehouses and stole oil, olives, and wheat; destroyed a load of the monastery's olive oil by breaking the vessels; stole cheese; let their livestock free in the pastures at night; and, just before harvest in August of the year 1276, burned the monastery's vines. In the reports a murder is also mentioned, and life-threatening situations involving a lance and the drawing of a knife as well. This may be considered yet another example of a type of solidarity developed under the influence of a powerful man, but it is also an example of the kinds of actions to which conflicting economic interests could lead farmers. This makes the remarks of emperor Romanos I Lakapenos seem relevant still in the late thirteenth century. We do not learn anything about the punishment of the *paroikoi*, but Nestoggos himself, to whom the monks initially appealed, did not care enough to chastise his *paroikoi*, perhaps because he was protecting his farmers' interests.⁴⁸

In the context of the village community, soldiers are recognised as potentially powerful and even dangerous, as is explicitly stated in Novel 4 of Constantine VII.⁴⁹ The soldiers of the middle Byzantine period live in their villages; they are practiced in the use of weapons, enjoy tax reliefs, receive reimbursements and awards for their service, and have a share in the spoils of war. In the tenth century, many soldiers present themselves to the army together with their *hyperetoumenoi*, who are to be understood as assistants or squires. According to Constantine VII, there was a distinction between soldiers who were attached for operational reasons to the service of the military commanders and officers, and those who came from outside the army, in particular those who 'belonged to a village community' (*tes koinotetos*), who were simple peasants.⁵⁰ At about the same time, Nikephoros II Phokas, in *De velitatione bellica*, stated that 'the soldiers' households and those of the soldiers serving them [*tōn hyperetoumenōn autois*] and everyone about them should enjoy complete freedom' from the payment of taxes.⁵¹ The soldiers' status, their social position, and their image in the sources, is certainly a complicated issue, but it is clear that Nikephoros Phokas claimed soldier status for the *hyperetoumenoi*, who Constantine VII explicitly thought that they belonged to the village communities. These hints suggest the creation of obligations and possibly the establishment of clientele

48 *MM IV*, 257–260, nos. 163–164. See Ragia, *Agrarian Policy*, 542–543.

49 *Novels of the Macedonian Emperors*, ed. Svoronos and Gounaridis, 102.82–83 (no. 4), and no. 5, which establishes well the social and economic differences among soldiers. It is worth underscoring the fact that by 947 the soldiers of the *Scholae* or *Tagmata* (professional corps) were included among the *dynatoi* (the powerful). See *Novels of the Macedonian Emperors*, ed. Svoronos and Gounaridis, 120.39–40.

50 *Novels of the Macedonian Emperors*, ed. Svoronos and Gounaridis, 126.149–157 (no. 5).

51 Dennis, *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, 216.37–39.

networks in the provinces, which may connect either the *choritai* to soldiers within the community, or soldiers of the community with officers outside of it.⁵²

Analysing the bonds created among the soldiers of the region of Smyrna based on the archive of Lembiotissa is a subject in its own right. It is, however, worth underscoring that bonds of collegiality among soldiers or even with the peasants because of their profession were usually strengthened by marriage. Therefore, it is not surprising that they appear to form strong groups within their villages and to belong to the notables of the province. Often, groups of soldiers act as witnesses to procedures, while it is implied or even stated that they belong to the decision-making group in the investigations. This was the case when the monasteries of Lembiotissa and Stylos decided to settle a dispute between themselves in 1266. In 1280, the soldiers made up a group distinct from the landowners of the village of Mantaia in the settlement of the dispute of a certain Phokas with the monastery. Violence is also attested in the case of the soldier Varycheir, Nikephoros Pharissaios, and their relatives, who rejected the settlement with the Lembiotissa and even ‘drew their swords’ against the monks over a piece of land. The documents relating to this affair, which has a long history, are dated to 1259, but we find Pharissaios among the judges of the dispute of 1280, along with a person we have already seen above, also in connection with acts of violence, George Manteianos.⁵³

But it is a single piece of advice to an abbot, dated to the twelfth century, that exemplifies what Constantine VII reports in tenth century. The soldiers settled in the lands allotted by the *sebastokrator* Isaakios Komnenos to the monastery of Kosmosoteira in Thrace had apparently exhibited shameless and disobedient behaviour, ‘emboldened, perhaps, by their military calling’. Isaakios, however, advised the abbot to treat them politely and even invite them to his table, because ‘with their support he should be strong enough to drive off those who have settled themselves around our villages and wish out of greed to attack them with violence [...]. For these soldiers are capable of being of assistance to the monastery, and of warding off evildoers, and are extremely beneficial’.⁵⁴ Obviously, these soldiers trusted in their own position and the use of their weapons, and solidarity among them was strengthened by the fact that Isaakios first, and then the monastery, substituted for the state as collectors of their taxes.⁵⁵ Isaakios readily realised that they could serve the monastery by using their strength and their weapons. This is in fact an example of social interdependence in the making.

52 Ragia, Social Position, 165–166.

53 *MM IV*, 93–94, no. 38; 128–129, no. 60; 153–157, nos. 62–64.

54 *Typikon of the Kosmosoteira*, ed. Papazoglou, 145.2004–218; Thomas and Hero, *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents* 2, 846.

55 Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 237–238. The author implies that the soldiers were landowners themselves.

The *phratrīae/fatrīae*

In the *Life of St. Euthymios the Younger* (tenth century) we read: ‘His parents were of good family (*eupatrides*) and righteous at the same time, and urged each other on in virtue to such an extent that each was competing to see which one would carry off the first prize of virtue from the other; for they did not envy each other’s advancement (*anabaseos*), but zeal spurred them on, and their rivalry was a positive one (*eris... agathe*) and a group (*fatria*) formed around them that was spiritually beneficial and desirable not only for those who lived in the same village, but also for those who had as their lot a life and property far away’.⁵⁶ The uniqueness of the extract lies in the fact that the author frames the military or social-military targets of the family (*anabasis*, promotion, or social advancement in a more general sense) in an ancient context (*eupatrides*, *fatria*). Further on in the *Life* it is specified that Euthymios’ family is in fact subject to the military *strateia*.⁵⁷ As a term, *anabasis* characterises those rising through the ranks in the military or civil administrative offices.⁵⁸ The question whether the *fatria* refers to the nuclear family of St. Euthymios or to his extended family living in the same village or in the wider area is open to interpretation. The doubt derives from the fact that in antiquity the *phratrīa* was a family-based religious association, which united extended families around a particular cult,⁵⁹ while the competition described in the *Life of St. Euthymios the Younger* concerns two different fields of social distinction, the military and the religious. It is hard to believe that this competition would be even remotely commendable within an exclusively familial context; on the contrary, it appears that this particular family was apparently an example for the inhabitants of Galatia because it strove for the military and social distinction for itself and its surrounding *fatria*.

The *phratrīa/fatrīa* in Byzantium is an interesting research topic, mostly because of the interweaving of the ancient Greek, family-based *phratrīa* with ancient Roman concepts which include notions of clientele relationships and political subversion, and in particular the Roman *factio*. As such, the *fatria* can be found all over the empire, although it is not exclusive to aristocratic contexts. We shall even see below that the problem is also related to the Roman *collegia*, whose subversive activities were condemned by Roman laws. For this reason, the term is

56 *Life of Euthymios the Younger*, ed. Petit, 16.20–26; Greenfield and Talbot, *Holy Men of Athos*, 9–11. I have removed the description from ‘advancement’ to conform with the military and social (not spiritual) connotations of the extract.

57 *Life of Euthymios the Younger*, ed. Petit, 16.28–29.

58 C.f. Procopius, *Historia arcana*, ed. Haury and Wirth, 151.30–152.17; Psellos, *Chronographia*, ed. Reinsch, 119–120 ch. 29.13–16, 219 ch. 28.7–8. The term is rather rare and the *Life of Euthymios the Younger* provides one of the few examples.

59 Pollucis, *Onomasticon*, ed. Bethe, 171.9–14.

ambivalent in almost all sources and environments in which it appears. The *factio* is addressed, for example in the sections of the *Basilica* relating to crimes, where the term is directly translated from the *Digesta*, but is also recognised by Canon Law: ‘the crime of conspiracy or *phratria* is also punished by secular laws’.⁶⁰ The sentence for ‘conspiracy or *phratria*’ is in most cases death – for example, for cases occurring in the army,⁶¹ or against a member of the senate. In these cases, it is combined with property confiscation and also affects the descendants of those convicted.⁶²

The ambivalence and inconclusiveness of the sources regarding the correct interpretation of the term *fatria/phratria* also appears in the Lexica. In Hesychius’ Lexicon, the *phratores* are recognised as relatives, but they are also called *hetairoi* or *symmachoi* (comrades, allies), although the *fatria* is qualified as *syntagma* or *systema* (corps or corporation, guild).⁶³ Hesychius was probably the source for Photius’ *Lexicon*, the *Suda*, and other sources, where the *symmoría* (crew, or even gang) is explained as *syntagma* or *fatria*.⁶⁴ Stephanus Byzantius, however, is much more analytical and explicit: according to his entry, *phratria*, *phratriazo*, signified the wider family and included its common meals, which took place in honour, commemoration, or remembrance of its common origin and religious background.⁶⁵ For the Romans, nevertheless, the name also signified a *kinema* (movement, conspiracy, or even revolt). This difference between the ancient Greek and Roman perceptions of the value of the wider family is recorded in Cassius Dio. It is possible that his text influenced later interpretations by abandoning the attempt to distinguish between the wider family and conspiracy, as he combines the *phratriai* with the *hetaireiai*, *adelphotetes*, and *systemata*.⁶⁶ Apparently, already by the fourth century the term *fatria* had

60 *Digesta*, ed. Krueger, 48.19.11; *Basilica*, ed. Scheltema *et al.*, 60.51.11; *Acts of Chalcedon*, ed. Schwartz, 161.24–25. The *Ecloga*, ed. Burgmann, contains an entire chapter, no. 17, titled *περί φατριαστών*.

61 Maurice, *Strategikon*, ed. Dennis and Gamillscheg, 94.19–22.

62 *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, II, ed. Krueger, 9.8.5; *Basilica*, ed. Scheltema *et al.*, 60.36.19.

63 Hesychius, *Lexicon*, ed. Latte *et al.*, Φ no. 234: *φατρία· σύνταγμα, σύστημα*; no. 848: *φράτορας· τοὺς τῆς αὐτῆς μετέχοντας φρατρίας, συγγενεῖς*; no. 849: *φράτορσιν· εταίροις, συμμάχοις*. Also see no. 880: *φρήτηρ· ἀδελφός*, and c.f. nos. 233 and 882.

64 *Synagoge*, ed. Cunningham, 450 σ. 296: *συμμορία· σύνταγμα ἢ φατρία*; C.f. 495, φ. 59: *φατρία· σύνταγμα*. C.f. Photius, *Lexicon*, ed. Theodorides, 583 nos. 289, 290; 584 no. 291; *Suda*, ed. Adler, 704.11–20 (Σ 136).

65 Stephen of Byzantium, *Ethnica*, ed. Billerbeck and Neumann-Hartmann, 48–49 no 99.

66 Cassius Dio, *Historiae Romanae*, ed. Boissevain, 10.1–6: *λέγονται δὲ καθ’ ἑλληνας αἱ κουρίαι φρατρίαί καὶ φατρίαί, οἷον εταίρειαι ἀδελφότητες συναλλάγματα συστήματα, παρὰ τὸ τοὺς φρατριάζοντας φράζειν ἢ φαίνειν ἀτρέπτως καὶ ἀφόβως ἀλλήλοις τὰ ἴδια βουλήματα· ὅθεν καὶ φράτορες οἱ πατέρες ἢ συγγενεῖς ἢ διδάσκαλοι, οἱ τῆς αὐτῆς φρατρίας μετέχοντες, τάχα δὲ καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς Ῥωμαϊκῆς μετηνέχθη λέξεως τοῦ φράτερ, ὃ δηλοῖ τὸν ἀδελφόν*. Cassius Dio was known in Byzantium mostly through the *Epitome* of John Zonaras and that of John Xiphilinos. See: Kruse, Xiphilinos’ Agency, 193–223.

acquired negative connotations despite its reference to the family. This may be attributable to the influence of Christianity, which considered that the family could deter individuals from devoting themselves to God,⁶⁷ but in any case, this is a subject that requires further exploration.

Casual references found in the Byzantine sources refer to both meanings of *fatria*. Among them the *hetairiotis fatria* of Caesar Bardas stands out; this refers to his fearsome armed retinue.⁶⁸ Specific references to *fatriai* within the Byzantine army are rare, but the Byzantines were well aware of this phenomenon. The Continuator of Skylitzes mentions that the soldiers originating from Capadocia deserted the battle of Mantzikert ‘in *fatriai* and *symmorai*’.⁶⁹ In the case of the Turks looting Asia Minor the same author relates that their ‘*fatriai* and squadrons’ acted in the manner of ‘thugs and thieves’.⁷⁰ However, the *fatria* which concerns the family is undoubtedly a feature of the nobility. We have seen above that St. Euthymios’ parents are specifically characterised as *eupatrides*, nobles.⁷¹ At about the same time, a different text, also from the ecclesiastical environment, makes mention of the ‘*fatria* of the so-called Skleroi’.⁷² Niketas David qualifies the relations inside this type of formation by noting that St. Eugenios was an associate by ‘homeland, family, and *fatria*, and indeed by familiarity growing from friendship’ with St. Eustratios.⁷³

From the tenth century onwards, when the social and political dominance of the aristocracy solidifies the references to the *fatriai* of the nobles multiply. The most interesting among them are undoubtedly John VI Kantakouzenos’ reference to his own ‘glorious *fatria* of relatives and friends’,⁷⁴ and the extensive comparison of Nikephoros Botaneiates’ lineage with that of Nikephoros Bryennios by Michael Attaleiates: the ancestors of Bryennios were ‘unknown’ and Bryennios himself was of ‘base’ origin compared to the ‘noble’ emperor, whose nobility was founded on many generations of service in the higher military

67 See *Catenae patrum*, ed. Cramer, 159.29–160.2: Θεόδωρος δὲ φησι· τινὲς πατριὰν ἀνέγνωσαν, οὐ συνιέντες τὸ κείμενον. ἔστι δὲ φρατρία. Πατριὰ μὲν γὰρ ἡ συγγένεια λέγεται, φρατρία δὲ τὸ σύστημα. ἐν δὲ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς συγγένεια οὐδεμία, συστήματα δὲ καὶ πολλά.

68 *Life of Basil*, ed. Ševčenko, 64.20.

69 *Skylitzes Continuatus*, ed. Tsolakis, 149.25–26.

70 *Skylitzes Continuatus*, ed. Tsolakis, 138.26–139.1: ...καταλιπὼν ἕτερον λαὸν ὅπισθεν διὰ τὸ καὶ ἐτέρους Τούρκους καταληΐζεσθαι τὴν ῥωμαϊκὴν γῆν κατὰ φαρίας καὶ μοίρας διαιρουμένων καὶ κατατρέχοντας λωποδυντῶν τρόπον καὶ κλεπτῶν καὶ τὸ προστυχὸν ἅπαν ἀφανίζοντας καὶ ληΐζοντας. C.f. Attaliatae, *Historia*, ed. Tsolakis, 107.28.

71 See Ragia, *Social Group Profiles*, 348–350, on the meaning of the term *εὐπάτριδες*.

72 *Chronicle of Monemvasia*, ed. Kislinger, 202.59–60, and 40, 47 (commentary).

73 Halkin, *Éloge*, 139: πατρίδος καὶ γένους καὶ φαρίας καὶ δὴ καὶ τῆς κατὰ φιλίαν οἰκειότητος πάνν τῷ Εὐστρατίῳ κοινωνῶνς ᾗν.

74 Kantakouzenos, *Historiae*, ed. Schopen, 2, 313.22–23. In this extract, Kantakouzenos admits that he could boast in everything that made a man proud, ‘illustrious descent, wealth, glory, people to serve him, fair offspring, *fatria*, and relatives’.

offices. Attaleiates goes as far as to claim that Bryennios' ancestors weren't even worthy of 'taking the position of servants' of Botaneiates' ancestors.⁷⁵ Without doubt, then, the existence of the *fatria*, meaning the extended family, including relatives by blood and marriage, as well as supporting networks that existed or were created over time, was one of the features of the aristocracy.⁷⁶ The extent of the *fatriai* of the nobles and the importance attached to them in the sources corresponded not only to the social level of the families, but also to the social depths to which they could reach and the expansion of their influence throughout the social and political fabric of the empire.

The phenomenon of the *fatria* was, then, well known in Byzantium, despite the fact that the source material is rare, inconclusive, and even ambivalent. Two leading Byzantine jurists, Zonaras and Balsamon, both indicate that oath-giving was a constituent element of any conspiracy, which is thus neatly to be distinguished from a typical *fatria*. 'A conspiracy is when some scheme against others and are bound together by oath', wrote Zonaras, but 'a *fatria* is malicious consultation (*kakothēles diaboulion*), when some agree to do criminal acts'. But Zonaras adds that 'the civil law punishes the *phratriastai* and the conspirators alike'.⁷⁷ The discussion, then, essentially concerned these aristocratic social networks and their potential concurrence with conspiracies, and in this context the line between them, which for the law is the act of oath-giving, fades away as any attempt to legalise these networks remains unsuccessful.⁷⁸ Balsamon himself provides us, fortunately, with an example of how such ambivalence could be put aside when it came to the constituent element of a true conspiracy, oath-giving. It appears that at the end of the twelfth century it was indeed discussed whether those *fatriai* formed for a beneficial purpose, e. g. for aiding in the defence against an enemy, should be handled with leniency. Balsamon ruled that all conspiracies should be condemned; however, the decision of Alexios II Komnenos regarding the amnesty granted to those who had formed a *fatria* for the protection of his kingship was a 'special case' and warranted the exercise of 'royal mercy'.⁷⁹ Despite the severity of Balsamon's verdict, even the instance he is referring to demon-

75 Attaleiates, *History*, ed. Tsolakīs, 221.14–27.

76 See in general and with a different perspective Beck, *Byzantinische Gefolgschaftswesen*, 3–32.

77 Rhalles-Potles, *Σύνταγμα* 1, 264. See generally Bourdara, *Καθοσίωσις*, 137–138.

78 On the importance of oaths, see Cheynet, *Foi et conjuration*, 265–279. Also see Rapp, *Brother-making*, 25–26.

79 Rhalles-Potles, *Σύνταγμα* 1, 382–383. For handling such cases, Balsamon quotes *Basilica*, ed. Scheltema *et al.*, 60.36.3, which deals with conspiracy against senators. See for the movements against Alexios II: Cheynet, *Pouvoir*, 110–111, 427–430; Brand, *Byzantium*, 34–37 and 324 note 14. Brand noted that Andronikos I officially forgave Maria Komnene and all the conspirators against Alexios II when he first came to power. The document of Balsamon apparently refers to the affair of the Porphyrogennita's conspiracy and the rioting of the mob in Constantinople.

strates the tolerance of the Byzantine government to aristocratic practices. It would seem, as the events of the period show, that it was possible to use one's own *fatria*, enlarge it, and direct its actions to serve specific political ends, and still be acquitted from the charge of conspiracy – if, of course, one was on the winning side, or if the emperor decided for any reason (philanthropy or political gain) to show his lenience, mercy, and magnanimity. In any case, the last quarter of the twelfth century is riddled with internal strife and politically subversive movements, both in the capital and in the provinces.

Lastly, one of the most interesting testimonies about the *fatriai* comes from the fourteenth century. Kantakouzenos reports that the *demos* of Didymoteichon was divided into *fatriai* for taking care of the moat and preparing the city for the eventuality of attack. This piece of information may be regarded as implying that a form of social organisation by *fatriai*, seen as distinct groups within a larger social setting, was well established and accepted in the provinces by the fourteenth century.⁸⁰ It seems, then, possible that a similar reference by Nikephoros Gregoras to the *fatriai* of the *demos* of Thessaloniki does not relate to political parties per se, but to social groupings which, because of the circumstances, had acquired a political role in events. In other words, Gregoras' information may imply that the political content attached is a secondary constituent of a *fatria*, which pre-exists any political goals that might be adopted at some point because of some specific pursuit of its leading members or because of particular circumstances.⁸¹ A similar expression, 'into *demoi* and *fatriai*' found in the text of Niketas Choniates relating to the events of 1204 in Asia Minor confirms that this kind of atypical organisation was common in the provinces, outside the Byzantine capital.⁸² But, unlike the case of Didymoteichon where they joined forces for a common cause, the *demoi* and *fatriai* in Asia Minor, according to Choniates' opinion, prevented the population from forming a united front against the Latins.

80 Kantakouzenos, *Historiae*, ed. Schopen, 2, 289.13–15: διανενομένης δὲ τῆς τάφρου κατὰ πατρίας παντὶ τῷ δήμῳ, ὥστε ἀνορύττειν, καὶ τοῖς ἐν τῷ κλήρῳ τῆς ἐκκλησίας πᾶσι παρείχετο μερίς.

81 Gregoras, *Historiae*, ed. Bekker and Schopen, II, 658.17–20. The *fatria* in the context of a *demos* may be connected to professional corporations, as indicated by Choniates, *Historia*, ed. van Dieten, 524.71–72, trans. Magoulias 287–288, which relates the episode of Kalomodios. When Kalomodios was arrested, the 'people of the market' (*agoraiοi*) gathered their *fatriai* and demanded his release from patriarch John Kamateros.

82 Choniatae, *Historia*, ed. Van Dieten, 625.33–34: κατὰ δήμους καὶ πατρίας διέστησαν...; trans. Magoulias, 343: 'they divided into parties and factions'.

Confraternities

Although it is generally believed that confraternities existed in Byzantium, the evidence about them is scarce, and the problem much more complicated than it appears at first.⁸³ Confraternities were well known in the west and were quite common in the Greek provinces under Italian and French rule.⁸⁴ Since the research on this subject is relatively new and only a niche research topic, the absence of clear references in the sources makes it necessary to limit discussion to observations and questions, rather than providing clear-cut answers. The questions arising relate to the characteristics of these groups, e.g. their goals and how the ‘confraternities’ functioned. Even more obvious questions arise about the terminology that indicates their existence, and their identification in the sources.⁸⁵ In fact, the material is so difficult to identify and interpret, and its chronological range so wide, that it must be kept in mind from the onset that in all the questions and answers that follow, we must always be cautious when evaluating the evidence and conservative in our interpretations.

A number of terms found in the sources indicate the organisation of such groups or the members participating in them: *philoponoι/philoponia*, *spoudaioi*, *syntrophoi*, *philikoi*, *diakonia/diakonos*, and the rarer term *adelphotes*. In the Middle Byzantine period we also find *presbeia*, which is specifically connected with religious processions of miracle-working icons and will also be discussed below. We also need to be aware that the origin of these terms is different. The first two terms are quite common in the context of civic evergetism,⁸⁶ and there are number of Roman inscriptions mentioning the *spoude* and *philoponia* (σπουδή καὶ φιλοπονία) of important city benefactors.⁸⁷ The term *adelphotes* in

83 See Beck, *Kirche*, 138–139; Angold, *Church and Society*, 387–391; Baun, *Tales*, 373, where the evidence is summarised; Kazhdan, *Microstructures*, 6; and ODB, 494, s.v. Confraternities (M. Bartusis and A. Kazhdan).

84 Panopoulou, *Συντεχνίες*, 13–20; Wipszycka, *Confréries*, 257–258; Horden, *Confraternities*, 25–31; Rapp, *Brother-making*, 17–21.

85 Only a fraction of this is treated by Wipszycka, *Confréries*, 259.

86 Hesychii, *Lexicon*, ed. Hansen and Cunningham, Φ no 520: φιλοπονία· σπουδαία ἔργα; no 521: φιλοπόνος· φιλεργός, σπουδαῖος. On evergetism, see primarily Brown, *Making of Christianity*, 53–71; Brown, *Poverty and Leadership*, 1–44. Brown primarily suggested that the evergetism of the rich and noble of the Roman Empire was channelled to the Church when Christianity was legitimised in the fourth century.

87 What follows is a random selection: *Priene Inscriptions*, ed. Blümel *et al.*, nos. 57.4, 5, 70.33, 72.7, 74.21; *Smyrna Inscriptions II.1*, ed. Petzl, no. 603.14; *Ephesos Inscriptions Ia*, ed. Wankel, nos. 6.17, 33–34; *Ephesos Inscriptions III*, Engelmann *et al.*, nos. 614.b12, 690.10; *Ephesos Inscriptions VII.2*, ed. Meriç *et al.*, nos. 3728.10, 3853.7. The inscriptions date from the second century BC onwards and contain expressions such as: φιλόπονον ἑαυτὸν παρεχόμενος (Priene), σπουδαῖον ἐπαινέσθαι τε καὶ τῆς καθηκούσης ἀξιῶσαι τιμῆς (Priene), τὸ περὶ τὴν πόλιν σπουδαῖον, γονέων σπουδαίων περὶ τὴν πατρίδα (Ephesos). Σπουδή in a civic context may be found together with ἐπιμέλεια, πρόνοια, or similar expressions. Σπουδή is also often found in legal contexts

Byzantium normally signifies the relationship that leads to social bonds (*koinonia*), a situation that involves important legal bonds and obligations. For this reason, the term *adelphotes* appears only rarely in the sources to indicate something other than monastic communities.⁸⁸ The *syntrophoi* and *philikoi*, on the other hand, appear to come from the alleged Roman ‘precursor’ of the confraternities, the *collegia*. While groups described with these terms function in many cities, belonging to such a group is not commonly part of the public image of individuals and this distinctly differentiates the *spoudaioi* of early Byzantium from those of the previous era, where the *polis/civitas* honoured these individuals for their services. Indeed, I have only found one inscription referring to two *spoudaioi* who financed the construction of a tomb apparently for themselves and for a third person in Tyriaion in Galatia. The funerary monument itself evidently had nothing to do with their benefactions in Tyriaion.⁸⁹

It is rather far-fetched to believe that none of these terms indicates a ‘confraternity’. However, these observations draw a neat distinction between the Byzantine ‘confraternities’ and their alleged Roman precursors, the civic *collegia* and the *fatrae*, which exhibited a well-documented public group projection in a civic setting, notwithstanding the fact that in this context the terms *philo*, *phratores*, and even *hetairoi*, *hetaireia* are common. *Diakonia*, on the other hand, is a generic Greek word for providing services or performing duties. Therefore, it is quite widespread and, in my opinion, should be examined and interpreted every time it occurs in the context in which it is found.⁹⁰ Laurent calls the *diakonia* ‘an organisation for helping the destitute and the weak’.⁹¹ In his commentary on the *Lives of Eastern Saints*, Brooks noted that a *diakonia* or deaconry is ‘a house established by the church for the care of the sick and poor under the superintendence of the deacons’.⁹² According to Baun, ‘the Late Antique and medieval confraternity [...] most usually functioned as a devotional and burial society for its members’.⁹³ Magdalino observed that ‘the *diakonia* would thus seem to have been a para-monastic, urban lay confraternity similar in compo-

relating to litigations with other cities and embassies (which I have not included here). In Priene and Smyrna benefactors are hailed for transcribing public records in ‘leather books’ (first century BC).

88 C.f. *Basilica*, ed. Scheltema *et al.*, 12.1.61: Τοῦτο γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ φυσικοῦ δικαίου ὤρμηται λογισμοῦ διὰ τὸ τὴν κοινωνίαν ἔχειν ἐν ἑαυτῇ τρόπον τινὰ ἀδελφότητος δίκαιον. Also see *Rule of St. Basil*, PG 31, 1000 B: ποταποὺς χρῆ ἐῖναι τοὺς τὰ πρὸς τὴν χρεῖαν οἰκονομοῦντας ἐν τῇ ἀδελφότητι.

89 *Sultan Dagi Inscriptions*, ed. Jonnes, no. 388: Τὺνβος εἰσποιδέων μακάρων ὧν τὰ ὀνόματα Φλ. Ἀλέξανδρος καὶ Αἰμῆς διακονήσης ἀνεστήσαμεν τὸν τίτλον μνήμης χάριν καὶ Μεινου (sic).

90 The concept of *diakonia* and its association with *philanthropia* has been examined by Constantelos, *Diakonia*, 1–27.

91 *Corpus des sceaux* V2, ed. Laurent, 125–126.

92 John of Ephesus, *Lives*, ed. Brooks, 669 and note 3.

93 Baun, *Tales*, 372 and 375. Note that Baun’s definition is based mostly on evidence coming from the west.

sition, organisation, and scope to other types of pious association which are known to have existed at the time: the groups of zealots (*spoudaioi, philoponoi*), whom we encounter in the world of John Moschos and his contemporaries'.⁹⁴ The editors of the *Dumbarton Oaks Seals* have recently suggested that the *diakoniar* are 'lay service organisations' attached to churches and/or charity establishments.⁹⁵

To the extent that the terminology relating to confraternities is considered to have its origins in the early Christian context, rather than in the Roman civic environment which continued uninterrupted in the early Byzantine period, and is inescapable when examining the existing material on professional groups and *fatriai*, the present analysis is different. In fact, the little that we know about the internal organisation of these groups is strikingly similar to the late Roman professional corporations when it comes to the organisation of their social life.⁹⁶ We shall also see below that the *diakoniar* were legal persons that paid taxes and received fees and bonuses, while many were associated with the great charity establishments of the capital. There is no reason to assume that all *diakoniar* are indeed 'confraternities' in the western medieval sense. In other words, the typical 'confraternity' may or may not exist as a parallel group of volunteers next to an organisation such as a *diakonia*, or a *presbeia*.

It appears that the Byzantine 'confraternities' executed their tasks so quietly that they have actually left very little evidence behind. In modern research, the subject is mostly associated with the *lousmata* (baths) of the poor, and the management of burial of the disadvantaged, the poor and the itinerant, mostly in Constantinople, which, however, complicates the issue further. In these cases, the service is specifically in return for tax exemptions, and the actual burial is not

94 Magdalino, *Diakonia*, 180.

95 See *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals* 5, ed. McGeer *et al.*, 75 and 76 regarding Blachernae and Petrou respectively.

96 Aries and Duby, *History*, 189–191; Arnaoutoglou, *Roman Law and collegia*, 28–43; Perry, *Collegia*, 499–515, esp. 508–511. A *collegium* may be a professional or religious group; there are no real restrictions regarding members' entry, but apparently no women were admitted. It is possible that every *collegium* venerated a particular deity, in the case of professionals one that was seen as a protector of the profession. But in Roman times a *collegium* could be instituted in the context of a household, notwithstanding the status of its members, free or otherwise, with the purpose of the protection of the house. The *collegia* elected their archons on an annual basis and, apart from venerating their deity, they organised common symposia and cared for the burial of their members. As a rule, the Roman authorities were cautious toward them, but eventually they became a considerable force because of their support of the archons (senators and others) of the Roman polity. The *collegia* in the east appear to have been organised mostly on a professional basis. Kazhdan, *Microstructures*, 5–6, includes the Byzantine guilds among those formations worth studying for their inner organisation, but without any link to the confraternities.

performed by the benefactors themselves, but by specialised staff.⁹⁷ In early Byzantine times, funds for burying the deceased who were too poor or had no one to care for them were provided through the system of *munera*, which aimed at the uninterrupted function of the cities. It appears that by the fourth century the Church had taken over organising this service: we see this in Ephesos and Constantinople, and we can assume that the same development took place in other cities of the empire, although we cannot be sure when this occurred. In Aphrodisias, the inscription ‘place of Loukas, philoponos’, was found just north of the inscription of ‘Tryphon, chief *decanus*’ (*archidekanou*) to the east of the church of the Archangel Michael. While the office of Tryphon points to a group, or *collegium*, of *decani*, who are known to have been undertakers,⁹⁸ Loukas’ inscription strongly suggests that he may have been working in association with them and the church of the Archangel Michael, perhaps also with regard to burials, although other tasks cannot be excluded, e.g. taking care of the sick. There is no indication of a group of *philopono*i in Aphrodisias, but it is quite probable that they were working individually. Apparently, Loukas could be found in this spot hiring out his good services.

Some of the reports found in the source material on the *lousmata* (baths) relate to this form of benefaction or service in a civic context. In the sixth century we learn of the *neoter*os *argyroprates*, Andronikos from Antioch, who participated in the ‘baths of the brothers’ (*lousmata tōn adelphōn*) along with other colleagues. The participation of only one professional group in the function of the *lousma* points to a specific charge assigned to the *argyropratai* by the city of Antioch, rather than to a ‘confraternity’, in which participation, as we shall see, is generally open, not limited to people coming from specific backgrounds. It is interesting that the wives of the *argyropratai* also took part in the service, taking care of women. In this instance, the narrative provides us with the much-wanted terminology *philoponia tou lousmatos* (the charity of the baths). The civic context where Andronikos and his wife performed this charity is further accentuated by the fact that he was one of the younger members (*neoter*os) of the *argyropratai*. Andronikos and his wife were obliged to spend three nights of the week at the *lousmata* (according to what is probably the oldest version of the text, not four, as the edited text has it). The narrative clearly places the activity in a general religious context, without connecting it with the veneration of a particular saint or feast, and qualifies it as ‘eagerness for good works’ (*spoude eis tas philoponias*),

97 Leontaritou, *Αζιώματα*, 147–160; Dagron, *Confréries*, 155–182; Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique*, 192; Dagron, *Urban Economy*, 424; Herrin, *From Bread and Circuses*, 278.

98 *Ephesos Inscriptions VII.2*, ed. Meriç *et al.*, no. 4135; *Aphrodisias Inscriptions*, ed. Roueché, nos. 187, 188 and 229, 231–232 (commentary). See Leontaritou, *Αζιώματα*, 152, 1.54–157; Horden, *Confraternities*, 36–37.

which clearly recalls late Roman inscriptions.⁹⁹ Andronikos had divided his wealth into three parts, of which he gave one part 'to the poor'. It has been suggested that the donation covered the payment of the expenses of the *philoponia*, but there is no specific information in the text regarding the economic aspect of the charity, although there is reason to believe that it was rather expensive for the sponsors.¹⁰⁰

The guild of the *argyropatai* of Antioch on the Orontes probably used public baths for performing the charity at night, when the installations were not operating for the public. In Middle Byzantine times, the baths were probably run by individuals or directly by monasteries.¹⁰¹ Some of the testimonies clarify the status under which the *lousmata* operated in tenth- to eleventh-century Constantinople. In the tenth century, a linen workshop was obliged to deliver its tax to the 'diakonia of the *lousma* of Germanos'. Apparently, then, this *diakonia* had been allotted a yearly income, which was in reality the workshop's *telos*, a tax.¹⁰² Another *diakonia* of a *lousma* which belonged to a certain Xylinites owned, or exploited, a forge and delivered its tax to a silk-trading workshop.¹⁰³ In the eleventh century, we hear of a '*douleia eis ta louma*' (sic), which was sold to an individual for 18 gold coins. This office, apparently one of the lowest, but which, however, would bring a significant income to its holder, is known because the seller regretted his decision and claimed back the office; in reaching his verdict, Eustathios Rhomaïos calculated the office's price and the expected profits per year, and included a yearly interest. The decision is included in the collection of

99 The edition dates from 1901 and the text appears to be modelled on middle Byzantine models of piety (the manuscript is dated to 993). Other manuscripts, however, from the eleventh century, retain the early Byzantine view with crucial details that have been carefully removed from the earlier manuscript because they were no longer relevant. The reconstruction of the text would be as follows (I have italicised the earlier additions): ἀλλ' ἦν αὐτῶν σπουδὴ εἰς τὰς φιλοπονίας μετὰ καὶ ἄλλων φιλοχρίστων ἀργυροπρατῶν. Κατὰ Κυριακὴν οὖν καὶ Δευτέρα [Monday is added in the Middle Byzantine version] καὶ τετράδα καὶ παρασκευὴν ἀπὸ ἑσπέρας ἕως πρωῒ ὑπήγεν ὁ Ἀνδρόνικος εἰς τὰ λούσματα τῶν ἀδελφῶν, ὁμοίως καὶ ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰ λούσματα τῶν γυναικῶν τῆς φιλοπονίας. See *Life of Daniel of Sketis*, ed. Clugnet, 47–48, 61.

100 Herrin, *From Bread and Circuses*, 281–283. On this affair, see also: Horden, *Confraternities*, 35; Magdalino, *Diakonia*, 179–180; Berger, *Das Bad*, 26–27. One part of Andronikos' assets was channelled 'to the poor' (εἰς λόγον τῶν πτωχῶν), one part 'to the monks', and the rest '[he kept as] his own holding and for his workshop'. Horden characterises the group to which Andronikos belonged as 'a guild within a guild'. On the story of Andronikos see *Life of Daniel of Sketis*, ed. Clugnet, XIX–XXII.

101 Magdalino, *Diakonia*, 165–188. Also see Berger, *Das Bad*, 56–71.

102 Oikonomides, *Boutiques*, 345 no. 2.

103 Oikonomides, *Boutiques*, 346 no. 5, 347–348, 353–354; Dagron, *Urban Economy*, 425. The fiscal function is known as *logisimon* (or *logisima solemnina*, taxes allotted in someone's favour). The full terminology is difficult to find in the sources and is sometimes simply missing altogether. See Oikonomides, *Fiscalité*, 182–185; Dölger, *Finanzverwaltung*, 146–147; Ahrweiler, *Concession*, 105–107.

judicial decisions and opinions commonly known as the *Peira*.¹⁰⁴ Yet another *diakonia*, which administered two baths, is known in Thessaloniki in the twelfth century. Emperor John II Komnenos allocated it to the monastery of the Pantokrator. The *diakonia* also received rents and owned unspecified assets. Thus, this *diakonia* was an establishment that managed a part of the imperial possessions in the city.¹⁰⁵ Again, none of these Middle Byzantine references to bath-associated *diakoniai* suggests that they were run by organised *adelphotetes*. In other words, a bath does not necessitate the existence of a ‘confraternity’. These *diakoniai* seem, rather, to have been operated by private individuals and/or monasteries, while a number of *lousmata* must have been incorporated in the public domain. Interestingly, baths belonging to the private sector (such as those of Germanos and Xylinites) and public baths (such as the one attested in Rhomaïos’ decision and that of the Pantokrator) are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, both private and public baths functioned alongside each other in tenth- to twelfth-century Byzantium. In this context, ‘confraternities’ associated with the charity of the baths of the poor may have made use of a bath, private or public, but there is no way of knowing this detail unless this particular piece of information is provided by some source, and there is no reason to assume that all baths were used by confraternities.

The earliest references of *spoudaioi* and *philoponoï* in a Christian context indicate the action of fervent Christians who are mentioned in the sources for their chaste way of living, including acts of charity to the poor and the sick, and/or their participation in processions and vigils. The *spoudaioi* and *philoponoï* always show their ‘eagerness for good works’.¹⁰⁶ They were groups dedicated to churches and/or saints, mostly in a civic framework, but distinct from early monastic groups – at least in their origins.¹⁰⁷ Eventually these groups may have developed to become actual monasteries, but there is not enough evidence to suggest that this happened everywhere, although individuals belonging to these groups may have been tonsured or joined the clergy at a later stage in their lives. They are attested to have operated in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Cyprus, and Constantinople.¹⁰⁸ In the absence of further evidence, perhaps it is in this context that

104 *Peira*, ed. Zachariae von Lingenthal, ch. 38 no. 74; Oikonomides, *Boutiques*, 352–354; Magdalino, *Diakonia*, 181–182. Magdalino suggests that it is to be identified with the ‘diakonia of the *protos*’, known from the sigillographic record, although there is no convincing argument supporting this interpretation. On the *protoi* see below.

105 *Typikon of the Pantokrator*, ed. Gautier, 121.1538–1539: ἡ διακονία τοῦ Κράμβεως μετὰ τῶν δύο αὐτῆς λοετρῶν καὶ ἐνοικιῶν καὶ λοιπῶν δικαίων.

106 Wipszycka, *Confréries*, 260–263.

107 Wipszycka, *Confréries*, 268–270.

108 Petrides, *Philopones*, 341–348; Petrides, *Spoudaei*, 225–231; Vailhé, *Philopones*, 277–278. On the monastery of the Spoudaei in Constantinople see also Janin, *Constantinople Byzantine*, 41, 429.

we can place the inscription relating to *spoudaioi* found in Tyriaion, discussed above, although there is no indication which service they performed.

John of Ephesus is thorough and detailed regarding the groups dedicated to the service of the baths and the poor instituted by Paul of Antioch. He founded such groups not only in Constantinople, but also in Chalkedon, Nikomedia, Cyzicus, Prusias, Herakleia, 'and as far as the sea of Pontus'.¹⁰⁹ According to John of Ephesus, 'the object of his zeal was to carry the poor and the old and sick persons by night and he would take them and bathe and anoint them, and mend and change the clothes of those who were in need, and take them and give them to drink each one according to what was suited for him, and he would give small coins as was suited for each one of them. And thus before daybreak in company with others who shared his enthusiasm with him he would carry him and would go and lay him in his place (and he used to do this not to men only but also to women) for a long time'.¹¹⁰ In Constantinople these groups developed into the foundation of two establishments, and Paul of Antioch appears to have been managing large amounts of money.¹¹¹ It is, however, rather doubtful that this happened in every city he visited, while the discussion as to whether the service of the baths belonged exclusively to Monophysites remains inconclusive.¹¹²

Although Paul's foundations did not survive long, the practice of providing a bath and a decent meal to the poor appears to have continued in Middle Byzantium and was probably complemented with prayers and ceremonies performed by priests. In the Middle Byzantine *Life of Theophano* the *lousma* is called *diakonia tes ptochoulousias kai diatrophes tōn penētōn* (service of bathing and feeding of the poor).¹¹³ A related prayer concerns the *lousma* of the Blachernae in Constantinople. The ceremony here took the form of a purification ceremony and the prayers chanted are a supplication for good health and the expulsion of disease. No details are included regarding the status of those bathed, but there is mention of 'the brothers who sponsor the *diakonia* (ἐν τῇ διακονίᾳ καρποφοροῦσι) and take care of the poor'.¹¹⁴ A seal dating to the tenth century may be associated with these ceremonies.¹¹⁵

109 John of Ephesus, *Lives*, ed. Brooks, 668–671, 673–675; John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, ed. Brooks, 55–56 c. 15, 16.

110 John of Ephesus, *Lives*, ed. Brooks, 672.

111 John of Ephesus, *Lives*, ed. Brooks, 675: '...he also bought clothing and brought it out and distributed it... while not neglecting to send money to other cities round Sycae also for the expenses of that ministration...'.¹¹²

112 *Corpus des sceaux* V2, ed. Laurent, 125; Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique*, 192; Dagron, *Confréries*, 176–178; Horden, *Confraternities*, 40; Janin, *Églises de Constantinople*, 551–552.

113 *Life of Theophano*, ed. Kurtz, 18. C.f. Magdalino, *Diakonia*, 180; Herrin, *From Bread and Circuses*, 282.

114 Dmitrievskij, *Opisanie* II, 1043 f., 1048. The baths of the Blachernae were built in the sixth century and renovated in the tenth century under Basil II; Janin, *Constantinople Byzantine*,

When it comes to icon worship, the references are clear. The information comes from the *Miracles of St. Artemios* and the *Typikon* of the confraternity of Thebes, and from the Byzantine versions of the text relating to the Maria Rhomaia icon. The texts do not use the same terminology: the following of St. John the Baptist is called *philikon* in the *Miracles*, while that of Theotokos Naupaktitissa of Thebes is called *adelphotes* and also *hieros choros* or *syntagma*.¹¹⁶ The confraternity of Maria Rhomaia of Constantinople is mentioned as *diakonia adelphōn*, and among its members we find the ‘*spoudaioteroi* of the orthodox’. The icon and the confraternity itself are traditionally associated with that of the Theotokos Hodegetria.¹¹⁷ According to the narrative, Empress Theodora and the patriarch (Methodios or Ignatios) instituted the procession of the icon of Maria Rhomaia together with that of Hodegetria every Tuesday,¹¹⁸ and thus the two traditions about the icons seem to blend into one. The procession of the Hodegetria was impressive. The clerics and the women following wore their best silken clothing, as is well depicted in the unique mural painting in the church of Blacherna in Arta. But there is good evidence to suggest that even icons as important and celebrated as that of the Hodegetria could be used in honour of individuals or families.¹¹⁹ Interesting details about the Hodegetria are known from the *Typikon* of the Pantokrator monastery. In the *Typikon*, Emperor John II Komnenos orders that the procession of the Hodegetria should honour the official commemoration ceremonies of the members of the imperial family. The ceremony would begin with an extended supplication while the icon would be

218; Magdalino, *Diakonia*, 177. Janin draws attention to the emperor’s ceremonial bath that also took place at the Blachernae, although perhaps in another location. The ceremony included prayers and the emperor took holy water from the pool. The text is preserved in the *Book of Ceremonies: Book of Ceremonies*, ed. Dagron *et al.*, 75–81 (II.12). According to Laurent, the seal belonging to the ‘*diakonia* of the return of Blachernae’ may be relevant to this ceremony. Another seal of this type mentions the ‘return of the Holy Apostles’ (without any reference to a *diakonia*). See *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals* 5, ed. McGeer *et al.*, no. 31.2; *Corpus des sceaux* V2, ed. Laurent, nos. 1203, 1205. See generally on these processions: Berger, *Processions*, 73–87; Janin, *Processions*, 69–88.

115 *Corpus des sceaux* V2, ed. Laurent, no. 1222: Θεοτόκε βοήθει τοῖς διψοῦσι τῆς διακονίας // τοῦ λούσματος λῦτρον ψυχῆς ὁ ἴδιος πλοῦτος. Translation: ‘Mother of God help those who thirst for the *diakonia*. The salvation of one’s soul with the *lousma* is one’s own wealth’.

116 *Typikon of the Naupaktitissa Confraternity*, ed. Nesbitt and Wiita, 364.5, 34, 366.90.

117 Von Dobschütz, *Maria Romaia*, 202.23.4–5; Patterson-Ševčenko, *Servants*, 549; Patterson-Ševčenko, *Icons*, 51. On the Theotokos Hodegetria, its worship, and its association with Maria Rhomaia, see especially Angelidi and Papamastorakis, *Μονή Οδηγών*, 373–387, with further bibliography. On the financial aspect of icons, see generally Oikonomides, *Holy Icon*, 35–44.

118 Von Dobschütz, *Maria Romaia*, 201–202.

119 Acheimastou-Potamianou, *Βλαχέρνα*, 73–74, 81–93; c.f. Patterson-Ševčenko, *Icons*, 47. On the Komnenoi and Hodegetria in particular, see: Angelidi and Papamastorakis, *Μονή Οδηγών*, 379–380.

placed close to the tombs and stay there the whole night throughout the vigil and in the morning during the liturgy and the second supplication. Upon completion, the fees, amounting to a total of fifty gold coins, were distributed: six gold coins to the icon, twenty-four to the men holding the twelve *koudai* (fire brands), two coins for each man carrying the icon (*bastagarioi*) and the rest of the workers (*douleutai*), and what remained was to be distributed to the men holding the *signa*.¹²⁰ Thus, the imperial sarcophagi were surrounded during the entire ceremony by twelve brands burning brightly through the night and by the *signa* of the church and veneration of the Hodegetria while those joining the ceremony at whatever stage would witness its magnificence. Attending the ceremony at the tombs of the Komnenoi must have been a grand sight and a unique experience indeed.

It is no wonder then that the worship of the icon of Theotokos Naupaktitissa was modelled on that of the Hodegetria, and it so happens that the charter of its confraternity is one of two charters saved. The confraternity's task was to carry the icon of the Theotokos Naupaktitissa in procession to a different parish community every month. A brother of the confraternity took up the task of preparing its new abode (*stasis*) each time. The monastery of the Naupaktitissa, where the icon was initially placed in the church of the Archangel Michael, was in all probability a *metochion* of the monastery of Steiris, because the abbot of Steiris was to be commemorated in the liturgies of the church.¹²¹ The members of the *adelphotes* placed their signatures at the end of the charter, thus displaying an atypical provincial social hierarchy. The first was the priest of the monastery of Daphni near Athens, Dionysios, followed by *presbyteroi*, by Christophoros Kopsenos who is well-known from the archive of the monastery of Patmos, and by other priests and private individuals, among whom we find only three women, which is to be expected in a purely provincial context. The family names, toponyms, and epithets mentioned in the document betray the provenance of its members from the wider region of Thebes, Athens, and Euboea. Distant prov-

120 *Typikon of the Pantokrator*, ed. Gautier, 81.883–83.900. It appears that this use of the word *κοῦδα* is unique in the Byzantine sources, but fortunately there is one more mention in a popular poem from post-Byzantine Crete, which clarifies its meaning: see *Anonymous Cretan Poem* ed. Panagiotakes, 76.2500–2502: 'Ἀπείτις ἐγαστρώθηκε ἡ μάννα του τοῦ Ἰούδα, εἶδε κι ἐγέννησε δαυλὸ μὲ τὴ μεγάλη κούδα· ἡ κούδα ἐλάβριζε φωτιά, τὸ σπίτι ἐκεντήθη. Translation: 'since Juda's mother conceived, she dreamt that she gave birth to a torch with a large *kouda*; and the *kouda* burned bright, the house was adorned'.

121 *Typikon of the Naupaktitissa Confraternity*, ed. Nesbitt and Wiita, 364.23–32, 38–365.44, 373–374, 376 note 23. The hegoumenos of Steiris was commemorated after the metropolitan bishop of Thebes, and was followed by the mother superior of the monastery of the Naupaktitissa. Detailed prosopographical notes follow the edition of the text. See Baun, *Tales*, 375, 377; Neville, *Authority*, 89–90; Patterson-Ševčenko, *Servants*, 550; and Cutler and North, *Service*, 207–213, on the iconographic type of the icon.

enance from Asia Minor (Phygela, Anatolikon, Cappadocia) is perhaps also implied.¹²² It is noteworthy that neither the abbot of Steiris, nor the abbot of Daphni, nor the mother superior of the Naupaktitissa signed as members of the confraternity, but this seems reasonable considering that their duties would not have allowed them to leave their monasteries. In this case, Dionysios might have been a representative of Daphni, but there does not seem to be a representative of Steiris in the confraternity.

These texts provide hints about such manifestations of public piety becoming a regular phenomenon in the middle Byzantine period, but it is important to note that most of the confraternities would not have performed their tasks under the auspices of the emperor. However, everything we see in the Hodegetria and the Naupaktitissa is already found in the *Miracles of St. Artemios*, even if the term employed – *philikon* – betrays the late Roman influence. In Miracle 18, the clothing of the hero of the story was stolen from his house and because of this he would not follow the vigil of St. John the Baptist. According to the narrative, St. Artemios appeared to him and reproached him for this failure: ‘why did you not meet [the procession] and escort the holies (*ta hagia*) with your candle, as it is customary for you, the people of the vigil?’¹²³ This story indicates that the people actively involved in carrying ‘the holies’ may have had a ‘dress code’. This is suggested also by the depictions of the Hodegetria procession in Arta and elsewhere. It appears that at least the men carrying the icon (the *bastagarioi* of the Pantokrator Typikon) were dressed in brownish-red tunics with long sleeves.¹²⁴

The third confraternity we know well is described in Theodore Studites’ Letter 13. Studites calls it *systema* or *adelphotes*,¹²⁵ and the scribe of the manuscript calls it *diakonia tōn apronoetōn* (of the destitute). The group centred its charitable activity on the burial of the poor and the foreigners of the capital (e.g. travellers); its members were obliged to participate in commemorations and meals held on specific days of the year, and visit the sick and the imprisoned and provide comfort to them.¹²⁶

122 *Typikon of the Naupaktitissa Confraternity*, ed. Nesbitt and Wiita, 366.96–368.169; Cutler and North, *Service*, 214; Neville, *Authority*, 72–73. Neville suggests that more women may have been members of the confraternity through their husbands, and thereby also ‘sisters’ of other members, but certainly objections can be raised to this generalisation. She also identified a fourth female member, Manachos tou Phygellete, which I take to belong to a man coming from Phygela because of the persistent use of genitive throughout the list of signatures.

123 *Miracles of St. Artemios*, ed. Crisafulli and Nesbitt, 114–118. See: Efthymiadis, *Lonely Bachelor*, 5–12.

124 Patterson-Ševčenko, *Servants*, 550–551; Patterson-Ševčenko, *Icons*, 48; Acheimastou-Potamianou, *Βλαχέρνα*, 88; Angelidi and Papamastorakis, *Μονή Οδηγών*, 379.

125 Theodore the Studite, *Epistulae*, ed. Fatouros, no 13.10, 19, 45.

126 Theodore the Studite, *Epistulae*, ed. Fatouros, no 13.17–24, 37–38. See Dagron, *Confréries*, 162–164, 179–181; Baun, *Tales*, 375–376.

From all these texts mentioned above we may derive details concerning the internal organisation of these groups and the participation of the members and their obligations, but further questions arise. It has been hinted above that the members of these groups were somehow rewarded for their services. Wipszycka has highlighted this aspect based on evidence from Egyptian papyri, where it appears that these ‘rewards’ could take the form of distributions in kind. This, then, might have provided a particular motive for participation. Participation in such groups was voluntary, and those recruited were of varied social and professional provenances, if social provenance is discussed at all in the sources.¹²⁷ John of Ephesus, interestingly, highlights this aspect in the story of the *protector* Isaac: ‘for God’s sake, and not as a man in need’¹²⁸ Isaac joined the ‘ministering office of those who bathe the sick at night’, and at the same time he ‘hired himself out in it [in a *xenon*, hospital], as an attendant of the sick. And he took off all his clothes and sold them and gave to the poor’.¹²⁹ In the *Miracles of St. Artemios*, one of the followers of the *philikon* was a money changer, and another probably belonged to the staff of the eparch of Constantinople.¹³⁰ The same text indicates that the more distinguished participants in these groups appeared in vigils and ceremonies with their servants or retainers, called in the text ‘free service’ (*eleftheriki hypourgia*).¹³¹

Despite their service, the participation of individuals in such charity groups did not have the same consequences for their public image as the participation of individuals in icon processions, and thus the issue of conviviality raised by Horden regarding the groups of Early Byzantium¹³² becomes problematic in Middle Byzantium. Devotees of vigils and icon processions might have been proud to appear in public holding candles or torches. But the baths of the poor were something entirely different. The *protector* Isaac, for example, lived in Antioch, and abandoned everything to devote himself to the charity of the baths; from this ‘he began to be known and honoured by many’.¹³³ On the other hand, the most distinguished followers of Paul of Antioch made sure to cover their faces

127 Horden, *Confraternities*, 40–44; Wipszycka, *Confréries*, 267–268, 275–278; Oikonomides, *Holy Icon*, 40; Herrin, *From Bread and Circuses*, 282–283; Caseau, *Objects*, 630–632. It should also be noted that the distribution of various goods (such as wine or wheat) is ancient practice.

128 John of Ephesus, *Lives*, ed. Brooks, 671: ‘...in the exercise of discretion and humility for God’s sake, and not as a man in need, he had submitted to minister to the sick’.

129 John of Ephesus, *Lives*, ed. Brooks, 669.

130 *Miracles of St Artemios*, ed. Crisafulli and Nesbitt, 116.22, 120.11–13.

131 *Miracles of St Artemios*, ed. Crisafulli and Nesbitt, 102.19.

132 Horden, *Confraternities*, 26–27, 43–44.

133 John of Ephesus, *Lives*, ed. Brooks, 669.

and conceal their social position during their service at the baths.¹³⁴ This does not mean that they were embarrassed, but that the service was diametrically opposed to the Late Roman way of living, which was often pompous and ostentatious in the context of public life. In Middle Byzantium, a rare piece of evidence suggests that the service of the *lousma* may have been passed down from generation to generation and kept within families, but it was possible to send a slave or servant instead of appearing personally. This is what the *protospatharios* Michael did because he ‘thought the baseness of the thing as inconsequential’.¹³⁵ But it is for the *lousma* that we have unique information regarding the admission of a member to the *diakonia*. It is a ‘supplication for making a brother (εὐχὴ εἰς τὸ ποιῆσαι ἀδελφόν) in the holy lousma’, where it is said ‘I have not come [here] to be served (διακονηθῆναι), but to serve (διακονῆσαι)... give him the [strength] to perform the observance of the poor impeccably’.¹³⁶ With this piece of information, which encapsulates the personal will and commitment of individuals to perform their duties, we are already in the late fourteenth century.

With regard to the internal organisation of the confraternities, there is no convincing evidence about the existence of a real leadership. Rather, it appears that these groups functioned much more on collegiality and mutual respect among the members, even if some of them were recognised as leaders of their group. This is true in spite of the seals that belonged to *protoi* of the *presbeia* (supplication or procession), of which one referred specifically to the Blachernae and one to the Hodegetria, while a third is not specified but presumably also referred to the Hodegetria. The first two seals belonged to patricians and the third to the *protoproedros* Nikolaos Skleros.¹³⁷ In my opinion, the seals are confusing. By mentioning the head of the *presbeia* they indicate a hierarchical organisation, but the term *diakonia* or *adelphotes*, which would indicate this organisation or group, is missing; instead, the term *presbeia* refers to the actual religious procession. Another seal of the ‘*diakonia* of the church of Blachernae’, which belonged to a certain Ioannes, seems to verify that *presbeia* and *diakonia* were

134 John of Ephesus, *Lives*, ed. Brooks, 673: ‘For many even of the great and eminent men of the city, having put off their apparel (σχῆμα) and hoods that concealed their heads and faces, would thus put straps on the necks and carry the chairs of the sick and the poor, and old men and women, and perform all the ministration to them’.

135 *Life of Theophano*, ed. Kurtz, 19: ὁ πατήρ τὴν διακονίαν πληρῶσαι τῷ υἱῷ ἐνετείλατο· ὁ δὲ τισὶ φροντίσιν ἐτέραις περιασχοληθεὶς, τὴν πατρικὴν διάταξιν διὰ τίνος οὐκέτου γενέσθαι προσέταξεν, οὐ τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς καταφρονῶν διάταξιν, ἀλλὰ τὴν εὐτέλειαν τοῦ πράγματος εὖς οὐδὲν λογισάμενος. See Berger, *Das Bad*, 68, 69.

136 Dmitrienskij, *Opisanie* II, 1051. C.f. Rapp, *Brother-making*, 27–29.

137 *Corpus des sceaux* V2, ed. Laurent, no. 1200–1202. The seals date to the eleventh to twelfth centuries. See Angelidi and Papamastorakis, *Μονή Οδηγών*, 377.

distinct.¹³⁸ Ioannes did not specify his qualification on his seal; he could have belonged to the clergy of Blachernae or he could have been a layman associated with the *diakonia*. Of the other seals preserved, only one can with any certainty be identified as bearing a similar title, that of a *protos* of the *diakonia* of Petrou.¹³⁹

It may be of some significance that these are all seals of Constantinopolitan *diakoniai*, because the establishments in the capital were large and complicated.¹⁴⁰ In the *Life of St. Andrew of Crete* we read that the saint was appointed administrator of the orphanage and the Eugeniou. The author calls the Eugeniou a *diakonia* and *euages oikos*; it was a *gerokomeion* or *ptochion* (for the old and the poor). Establishments such as this may well have relied on lay groups for the performance of their philanthropic activities, but creating a separate space of worship would not be needed, although the possibility cannot be excluded. In any case, its seal appears to confirm that the *diakonia* belonged to the establishment of the Eugeniou, not to a separate lay confraternity.¹⁴¹

These seals range chronologically from the sixth to the twelfth centuries. A cleric of the Blachernae church was *praefectus* in one of the *diakoniai* established by Paul of Antioch in the late sixth century.¹⁴² The confraternity of Theodore Studites in the early ninth century was under the guidance of the *prokathegoumenos*; in this case, Theodore himself. The members were expected to follow a particular code of moral behaviour during the ceremonies and the exercise of their duties; if the code was breached, the abbot would impose an *epitimion* and a fine. The confraternity was also obliged to honour the passing of their own

138 *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals* 5, ed. McGeer *et al.*, no. 31.1; c.f. the older editions in *Corpus des sceaux* V3, ed. Laurent, no. 1921; *Byzantine Lead Seals*, ed. Zacos and Vegler, no. 2008. Also see Janin, *Processions*, 88.

139 *Corpus des sceaux* V2, ed. Laurent, no. 1217; *Byzantine Lead Seals*, ed. Zacos and Vegler, no. 1135. *Corpus des sceaux* V2, ed. Laurent, no. 1213 also mentions a *protos* but the reading is uncertain.

140 *Corpus des sceaux* V2, ed. Laurent, nos. 1206, 1207–1211, 1214–1216, 1218–1221; *Byzantine Lead Seals*, ed. Zacos and Vegler, nos. 317, 1127, 1128, 1281, 2008; *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals* 5, ed. McGeer *et al.*, nos. 29–30, 32–34. It is interesting that some of these *diakoniai* are associated with imperial complexes, possessions, or quarters of the capital, such as the Berou, the Eugeniou, or the Maurianou. One of them belonged to the *presbeia* of St. Panteleemon, another to the monastery of St. Theodore. Another ‘seal of the *loutron* of hegoumenos Sabas’ seems very peculiar and, judging from its phrasing (*loutron* instead of *lousma*) does not indicate a larger group. See Laurent, *Corpus* V2, no 1223.

141 *Life of St. Andrew of Crete*, ed. Papadopoulos Kerameus, 174. See Magdalino, *Diakonia*, 187, no. 9 and 188, no. 9; also Laurent, *Corpus* V2, no. 1212; Oikonomides, *Organisation*, 138–141; Detorakis, *Άγιοι της Κρήτης*, 160–190. In the eleventh century, the *orphanotrophos* was a very important administrative dignitary: Oikonomides, *Listes*, 319. On the Eugeniou see Janin, *Églises de Constantinople*, 566–567; Janin, *Constantinople Byzantine*, 349. Interestingly, it was the *gerokomos*, director of the Eugeniou, who gave the emperors a blessing as they exited the Blachernai *lousma*. See *Book of Ceremonies*, ed. Dagron and Flusin, 81.106–107.

142 John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Brooks, 56 ch. 16.

adelphoi with propriety and solemnity. In the *philikon* of St. John the Baptist, the *arcarios* (treasurer) imposed and collected the fines and supplied the materials needed for the procession. He was a simple money changer and had no affiliation with the church of St. Artemios. In the *adelphotes* of the Naupaktitissa there is no internal hierarchy apart from that followed in the signatures. There was a general moral code, which was not nearly as strict as that of Theodore Studites, but there was no authoritative figure to impose a penalty of any kind, apart from giving a private and public admonition. This confraternity was also obliged to provide a solemn burial ceremony for its members and hold the customary commemorations.¹⁴³ It is obvious that in this context the senior and most revered members would have been accorded more authority and prestige. But it is also worth noting that these stipulations are almost identical to those we know to have been followed by the Roman *collegia*.¹⁴⁴

From the evidence gathered here, it has become obvious that there may have been a significant economic aspect to the activities of a *diakonia*. We have seen that Paul of Antioch managed large sums of money, apparently depending a lot on donations and benefactions. The mere existence of an *arcarios* of the *philikon* of St. John the Baptist means that he managed the finances of the *philikon*. Upon being ordained metropolitan bishop of Crete (eighth century), St. Andrew built a church which he consecrated to the Theotokos of Blachernae. 'And he had a *diakonia* constructed and had water pour into the nipter [basin], securing with his own money the fulfilment of the needs of the place as if pouring from vessels'.¹⁴⁵ Here again, the *diakonia* was endowed with considerable assets by its founder. In the case of the charter of Theodore Studites, the names of the members of the *adelphotes* were followed by the amount of the donation. The 'confraternity', nevertheless, possessed a sum derived *para theo*, which was presumably larger than the contributions of its individual members. This may well have come from private or imperial donations, or both.¹⁴⁶ In the *adelphotes* of the Naupaktitissa we have to assume that the member who took up the task of transferring the icon to a new parish in procession was also the one who covered the expenses. This would be a basic financial arrangement. We should expect then that the internal structure and economic management of the *diakonai* would become more complex according to the type of the service and its location – the provincial Naupaktitissa is admittedly much simpler than the *diakonia tōn apronoetōn* of Studites, while, as we have seen, the financial relations among the

143 Theodore the Studite, *Epistulae*, ed. Fatouros, no. 13.25–57; *Miracles of St Artemios*, ed. Crisafulli and Nesbitt, 116.21–26; *Typikon of the Naupaktitissa Confraternity*, ed. Nesbitt and Wiita, 365.51–79. See Baun, *Tales*, 373–374.

144 See Perry, *Collegia*, 506–508.

145 *Life of St. Andrew of Crete*, ed. Papadopoulos Kerameus, 176.

146 Theodore the Studite, *Epistulae*, ed. Fatouros, no. 13.15, 59.

separate *diakoniai* of Constantinople could become very complicated. Another piece of evidence comes from the *adelphotēs* of the Hodegetria in Thessaloniki. The confraternity owned *katallaktika ergasteria* (money-changing workshops) which it exploited under *emphyteotic* lease. Under the condition that they be turned to *myrepsika ergasteria*, it leased them to another lessee, and thus we have the unique document that bears testimony to this transaction, which comes from the year 1400. The representative of the confraternity was its *oikonomos tes adelphotetos*, who was, at the same time, *megas oikonomos* of the metropolis of Thessaloniki.¹⁴⁷

Lastly, it would be appropriate to suggest here that in some cases the circle of benefactors may have coincided with the members of the confraternity. Still, large confraternities, found in great cities, would not display the same characteristic. The question of numbers, of members, benefactors, and people helped by this activity, is disappointingly beyond our reach based on our meagre information. The same is true about the employees: were the people working for the *diakoniai* – e.g. the *douleutai* and the *bastagarioi* of Hodegetria – members of the *diakonia*? If so, was their employment in the *diakonia* their only one, or did they have a profession they practised when not engaged in it? We might answer in the affirmative or in the negative, according to our assessment of the evidence, but, in conclusion, we should be careful about our interpretations of the material.

Monasteries and churches

In Early Byzantium, the existence of social clusters such as those of the *spoudaioi* and the *philoponoi* bears witness to the fact that ceremonies and rituals were very important as expressions of togetherness in a public context, or even, taking the apparent secrecy of some of these organisations into account, in the context of Christian communities. The churches and the monasteries became the actual meeting points for Christian activities and accommodated a significant part of public and religious life in Byzantium. These buildings provided common space

147 *M.M.* 2, 525–527. See Janin, *Centres*, 369, 377–378, 382; Patterson-Ševčenko, *Servants*, 549–550. The church of the Hodegetria in Thessaloniki is not to be confused with the Acheiropoietos, but the icon itself was closely connected to both the Acheiropoietos and St. Sophia. Angold, *Church and Society*, 388, followed by Baun, *Tales*, 373, 374, suggested that there was also a confraternity of St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki. However, the *paides* mentioned in the discourse of Eustathios of Thessaloniki about the capture of the city by the Normans refer to novices who belonged to the clergy of the church of St. Demetrios, not to a confraternity. See Eustathios of Thessaloniki, *Capture of Thessaloniki*, ed. Kyriakidis, 95.24–25, and 142.3–21 for the *adelphotēs*, where the full narration of a miracle performed by the icon is found. This, however, does not mean that there was no such confraternity of St. Demetrios, but only that we need more evidence about it.

for the needs of the confraternities, for bringing people together in common religious rituals that are related to, but do not coincide with, everyday religious rituals and practices.¹⁴⁸ This becomes amply clear in the case of the icon of the Theotokos Naupaktitissa, which was transferred to a different parish and village on the first day of every month. In the charter, there is even provision that, if the weather conditions were not suitable, the icon would be carried there the next day. On that day, then, the members of the confraternity and the peasants probably celebrated the mass together, while special liturgies were held every Wednesday and Friday.¹⁴⁹ The procession, the ceremony of reception, and the liturgies that followed were not just spiritual events for the pious, but also social events for all the inhabitants of the countryside, where expressions of public life were limited or altogether lacking. Such events could even bring together peasants from the surrounding villages, thus reinforcing bonds that already existed because of localism and the propensity to transcend the narrow limits of village settlements.

Therefore, as a building, the village church is a point of reference for the population of agrarian communities. We have seen in the first part of this paper how the inhabitants of a village took responsibility for settling their affairs within the community. The guarantors of the various transactions were normally the personnel of a church, priests and *nomikoi*, who provided their services to the church and the communities. We have to assume, although it is rarely stated, that in these cases most of the transactions took place inside the churches or church complexes. One of these rare references concerns the examination of a dispute that has already been mentioned above. In the Nestoggos case, dated to 1277, the parties involved gathered in the church of St. John the Baptist in the village of Prinovaris. The trial brought together the representatives of Nestoggos; those of another magnate, Komnenos Raoul; 'many locals' of Prinovaris; high clerics of the metropolis of Smyrna; monks of the Lembiotissa monastery; and many *paroikoi* of Nestoggos and Raoul.¹⁵⁰

An even more explicit testimony from the archives of the monastery of Patmos dates to the beginning of the thirteenth century. The dispute was between a monastery of Latros, St. John of Batos,¹⁵¹ and the family of Lampones, who disputed the donation of a field. The investigation of the case was delegated to the metropolitan bishop Manuel by the grand duke Theodotos Phokas. The duke's representative in the procedure was John Pissites, who was local, while the *praktor* John Eudaimonitzes represented the state apparatus in the area. Appa-

148 Horden, *Confraternities*, 27. C.f. Cutler and North, *Service*, 215–216; also Kazhdan, *Microstructures*, 7.

149 *Typikon of the Naupaktitissa Confraternity*, ed. Nesbitt and Wiita, 364.37–365.51.

150 *MM IV*, 259, no. 164.

151 Ragia, *Αάτπος*, 101–102; Janin, *Centres*, 228–229.

rently, all the clerics of the metropolis were present during the hearing: the three priests, the *ekklesiarches*, the exarch, ‘and the rest of the priests and deacons’. The local community was represented by eight landowners of the region of Miletus, or, as the bishop put it, by ‘almost the entire community’. The bishop scheduled for the hearing to be held on the first of May of 1209. When the *protopapas* (first-ranking priest) of the metropolis testified in favour of the Lampones, abbot Theodosios ‘requested that we [the bishop] put the *protopapas* under [penalty of] excommunication’, but ‘the entire community under [threat of] penance and excommunication proved the Lampones as owners [of the disputed land]’. After the testimony of John Pissites, who was ‘born and raised in Palatia’ [Miletus], the final decision was in favour of the family. According to the bishop’s final remark, ‘the people of the monastery of St. John, having been discredited, left, because they were condemned by the testimony and proof of the locals’. What is interesting in this case is the fact that the underlying background of the conflict turned out to be an ‘us against them’ affair. It is for this reason that the hearing gathered a large audience under the leadership of the local aristocracy, which is underscored several times in the decision. The monastery of St. John was seen as an outsider in Miletus.¹⁵²

In a sense, then, we might even argue that local churches affirm and enhance local identity and self-awareness by providing a common social space as well as a liturgical-Christian one. We see this very clearly when it comes to donor inscriptions that have survived, either carved on stone or painted in wall paintings. A church is not only a sacred place for religious ceremonies or a space in which transactions are carried out, but also a space for the projection of the social identity of the inhabitants of the countryside, whether they belong to the local aristocracy or to the broader peasant class. Donations given by peasants for the building or renovation of churches are a well-recorded phenomenon in Late Antiquity. Elaborate inscriptions record the names of the donors, sometimes the amount of money donated, and the mosaic surface funded by that amount.¹⁵³ However, from the sixth century onwards the inscriptions become simpler without any reference to the amounts donated or even the list of donors. One of the few examples comes from the church of St. Tryphon in Troas: ‘for the blessing of the villages and...their houses whose names God knows’.¹⁵⁴ The scarcity of inscriptional material in Middle Byzantium could indicate that this habit is lost, but this may be a far-fetched conclusion. During this period, the references in the narrative sources – mostly lives of saints – reveal the generosity of peasants when

152 *MM VI*, 153–156. On the complicated social relations revealed in this document and the individuals involved, see Ragia, *Koιλάδα*, 426–428.

153 Atzaka, *Επάγγελμα*, 46–55, 113–115.

154 *Alexandria Troas Inscriptions*, ed. Ricl, no. 187.

a new church or monastery was erected in their region. The most eloquent descriptions are found in the *Life of St. Euthymios the Younger* about the construction of Peristerai on the outskirts of Thessaloniki, and in the *Life of St. Nikon* about his monastery in Lakedaimon, as well as his work on Crete.¹⁵⁵ The descriptions suggest that the building of a new church was indeed a community affair, and many of the inhabitants of the countryside or village contributed to its completion.

In the thirteenth century, the habit of listing the donors by name along with their donations reappears. It is particularly evident in Lakedaimon (especially in Mani), but it is also observed in Thasos, Crete, Naxos, Cyprus, and Epirus. The donations mentioned in these cases do not only concern amounts of money, but also small land plots, olive trees, and vineyards, and thus the inscriptions also become proofs of transactions. It is interesting that in a number of instances the inscriptions mention the *prokritoi* or the *koinos laos*, the *geneai*, *kleronomoi*, and *ktetores*. Kalopissi-Verti, who has studied these inscriptions, discusses the possibility that the individuals named in them were not simply related to each other, but were extended families, ‘clans’.¹⁵⁶ In the context of the present study, one might wonder whether these monuments bear testimony to true *fatriai*, as we have seen them above, meaning families with their clientele networks in the provincial setting, where the monuments were created. In other words, we might well wonder if *geneai* is yet another term used locally for signalling the same group based on extended family ties. Be that as it may, this type of social terminology not only points to the social stratification within the communities, but also to the developing demarcation of the social classes in Byzantium, based on descent and inheritance. Thus, these small buildings become spaces for the social self-projection of the families, affirming their status and role within the local communities.

In Late Byzantine times, the names of the donors were listed in the *brebion* of a church or a monastery.¹⁵⁷ Such a *brebion* with names of individuals, without any reference to their benefaction, has come down to us from Epiros, at the end of a manuscript, dated to 1225, that contains mostly prayers and liturgical texts. In the opinion of Prinzing, who published the list of names, this indicates that a confraternity operated in the region of Ioannina. However, this suggestion cannot be maintained. The list begins with the invocation ‘remember, Lord, the

155 *Life of Euthymios the Younger*, ed. Petit, 39–41 ch. 29; *Life of St. Nikon*, ed. Sullivan, 86–88 ch. 21, 114–118 ch. 35. Donating land and assets is much more common, since countless examples are found in the monastic archives. See Laiou, *Peasant as Donor*, 107–116.

156 See in detail Kalopissi-Verti, *Collective Patterns*, 125–136. See also: Laiou, *Peasant as Donor*, 116–121.

157 A *brebion* is a simple list, an inventory of different things: persons, lands, properties, etc. See ODB, 321, s.v. *Brebion* (Alexander Kazhdan).

souls of your servants', while one of the following notes maintains the formula that we have seen in Troas: 'whose names the Lord knows; in the book of life; amen'.¹⁵⁸ The expression indicates donors whose names were grouped together in the manuscript to be commemorated during the liturgies. This function of the *brebion*, which, among other things, also listed the names of donors, is well known from an important document in the archive of the Docheiariou monastery: the donor, Manuel Deblitzenos explicitly requested that, in exchange for his generous donations, his name and those of his parents should be included in the *brebion* of the monastery, and gave specific instructions about the commemorations.¹⁵⁹ While inscriptions, whether carved or painted, are meant to be seen, not only by those participating in the ceremonies but also by those visiting the churches for various reasons, the lists of names in the *brebia* represent a more internalised commemoration of identities, located within a Christian liturgical context. In these cases, only those participating in the ceremonies would witness the commemoration of the individuals concerned.

The Novel of Emperor Basil II of 996 already discusses the ties of the population with the churches and the monasteries in their village and the surrounding area. The Novel partly concerns the diminishing of village lands and their appropriation by the local church authorities. The description of the process by which such church estates were created is of particular interest for our subject: '[...] for it happens, as they report, in many of the villages that a villager puts up a church on his own land and grants his own portion of land to it, becomes a monk himself and resides there for the rest of his life, then another villager does the same and another likewise, and in that place there are two or three monks'.¹⁶⁰ The emperor decided that the churches should remain under the bishop's spiritual authority, but that they should be community churches for the peasants.¹⁶¹ However, the monasteries that were founded in the same way would have to have at least eight monks, otherwise they would not be considered as monasteries by the law.¹⁶² It appears, then, that the foundation of such religious spaces created collectives of limited size within rural communities, and members of the same family as well as other peasants could be tonsured and live in them.¹⁶³

158 Prinzing, *Spuren*, 751–771, esp. 752–756.

159 *Actes de Docheiariou*, ed. Oikonomides, no. 58.4–8. On the Deblitzenoi and the detailed instructions, under penalty of canonical punishment, see Oikonomides, *Deblitzenoi*, 182.

160 *Novels of the Macedonian Emperors*, ed. Svoronos and Gounaridis, no. 14, 208.102–106; McGeer, *Legislation*, 122.

161 *Novels of the Macedonian Emperors*, ed. Svoronos and Gounaridis, no. 14, 208.117–119.

162 *Novels of the Macedonian Emperors*, ed. Svoronos and Gounaridis, no. 14, 209.133–150. See Lefort, *Rural Economy*, 283.

163 The most blatant cases of such clusters come from the archive of the Athonite monasteries. At the beginning of the tenth century, there were already many small communities of monks

The significance of such small religious centres for local communities becomes clear in the cases of St. Marina in the village of Genikon, and St. Panteleimon in Mantaia, both close to Smyrna. Apparently, St. Marina was a small church with some *kellia* attached, and owned perhaps some plots of land, because it is mentioned both as church and monastery in the documents. In 1252–1253, the local bishop decided to have the monasteries in his jurisdiction renovated and ceded to the monastery of Theotokos Lembiotissa. The inhabitants of Genikon consented to the donation of St. Marina and signed the act as a community, apparently because they were considered its owners.¹⁶⁴ Small monasteries like St. Marina must have been quite common in the provinces. Built either by individuals on their own estates, as Emperor Basil's Novel describes, or by a group of people, it often became difficult for them to survive unless they came under the protection of a large monastery. A similar case is known from the same archive. Alexios Tesaites inherited the little monastery of St. Panteleimon, which his father had erected on their estate. The monastery was the receiver of donations from the peasants of the village of Mantaia. Tesaites donated it to the Lembiotissa in 1232. By 1274 the mention of a 'highroad to the *panegyris* of St. Panteleimon' testifies to its annual market fair.¹⁶⁵ Thus, the small monastic establishment that was built on a peasant's initiative became a meeting point for the locals because of its fair.

Lastly, a particular aspect of the role of monasteries relates to the feeding of the poor, but this is very different from what we have seen in the case of the *diakoniai*. The feeding of the poor (*diadosis peneton*: distribution to the poor) takes place at the gates of monasteries, either regularly on great feast days, but sometimes also daily, especially in a city as large as Constantinople, and especially in times of famine.¹⁶⁶ Relevant information about this practice in the provinces concerns Thessaloniki and Lesbos.¹⁶⁷ In no other place, however, did it reach the regularity and formality that it reached in the case of the Theotokos Kosmosoteira in Thrace. In the twelfth century the founder of the monastery, Isaakios Komnenos, brother of the emperor, wrote the regulation of the monastery, where he stipulated on which feasts the distribution would take place,

living as hermits; in time, they built small churches and *kellia*, thus creating small monasteries that were then sold to the larger monasteries. See in detail Ragia, *Movés*, 1511–1541.

164 *MM IV*, 262–266 nos. 167–169; Ahrweiler, *Smyrne*, 99; Laiou, *Peasant as Donor*, 112–113.

165 *MM IV*, 56–59 nos. 15–16, 76–77 no. 25, 97–98 no. 40, 107 no. 49, 138–139 no. 70; Ahrweiler, *Smyrne*, 98; Kyritses and Smyrlis, *Villages*, 445. On market fairs, see esp. Vryonis, *Panegyris*, 196–227.

166 Caseau, *Nourritures*, 223f. Bread and wheat are mostly distributed in these cases. Also see Ragia, *Πρόβλημα ρευστότητας*, 261–262, with more source references. Most of the monastic foundation documents of Constantinople contain stipulations about the feeding of the poor.

167 *Life of Theodora of Thessaloniki*, ed. Paschalides, 164; *Lives of Sts. David, Symeon, and George*, ed. Van den Gheyn, 209–259, 224–225, 240.21–241.10.

fixed the number of the poor to at least one hundred on the day of the Dormition of Virgin Mary (August 15th) and also dictated the basic stages of the ceremony: ‘they [the poor] should be seated on the floor in a line or a circle, to partake of the food in a more dignified way. When they will be filled, [I want them] [...] to rise [...] from their places, to raise their hands and to recite for my sake the ‘Kyrie eleison’ forty times, and then to go on home. I wish that this particular action of the monks [the distribution of food] at the time of the feast never once cease, nor ever be altered, in the present age’.¹⁶⁸ In this case, there is no indication that a confraternity was involved, and Isaakios certainly did not institute one. The distribution of food was entirely dependent on the monks and the monastery’s prosperity, and the ceremony aimed at the forgiveness of Isaakios’ sins.

Concluding remarks

Based on the evidence discussed above, it appears that Byzantine society displays significant flexibility and bonding potential within its structures. While there has been a conscious effort throughout this study to avoid the well-known and rather stereotypical understanding of the family and the village as a fiscal unit, it has not been difficult to detect other groupings that either formed within them, or transcended them, to serve particular purposes of economic or social interest. The village fostered cooperation and thereby promoted growth and change. Lemerle has already described how the fiscal processes of Byzantium after the eleventh century undermined the cohesiveness of the villages, meaning primarily the joint liability of the peasants.¹⁶⁹ This study has made clear that the various fiscal practices of the state were conducive to the formation of mutual interest groups, favoured mostly by, and based on, common economic interests that the peasants could assert with vehemence and even, in some cases, actual violence.¹⁷⁰ This process made real changes to, or at least affected, the different social manifestations of status by those residing in a *chorion*, and presumably the perception of social standing in the context of the increasing self-awareness of social position that these practices also favoured. Although the various beneficiaries of imperial privileges served different economic interests, the juridical functions of the village remained in place. The parish churches provided common space, not only liturgical, but also social and juridical. In this context, the

168 *Typikon of the Kosmosoteira*, ed. Papazoglou, 45–48, esp. 47.219–48.226; Thomas and Hero, *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents* 2, 802–804, esp. 803; Ragia, *Marine Products*, 458. The abbot should decide how many poor would take part in this ceremony in other celebrations.

169 Lemerle, *Agrarian History*, 189–192.

170 C.f. Laiou, *Peasant as Donor*, 119.

social differentiation of the Late Byzantine period and the resulting social self-representation became even more pronounced, as we see in the inscriptions relating to collective donations that are explicit about the social standing of the donors. In fact, it is rather surprising that as social differentiation develops after the tenth century and people increasingly manifest their social status, nevertheless, at the same time local communities also gain in self-awareness, and structures like the villages and simple churches become areas for one's social proclamation and distinction, thus uniting what seems to be a fragmented mosaic of social status. It is a remarkable contradiction but also an interesting one that could lead to a new understanding of the social fabric of Byzantium.

It is important that these aspects of mutual interest groups growing inside villages catered to exchanges that took place within the communities and thereby projected social awareness on a local level. Living in a particular settlement defined people's sphere of social action and was an integral part of their identity.¹⁷¹ In this context, it is understandable why ancient notions of the wider family such as the *fatria* survived in the middle Byzantine period and later. The *fatria* was a vehicle for social self-definition that cut across communities and local borders. It could serve the social promotion of (extended) families and even take up political characteristics. Its potential to expand to include supporters, friends, and clients and thereby to become a large group that might dominate any provincial setting, or even affect the delicate political balances maintained in the capital, was clearly alarming to Byzantine governments. The meagre evidence we have suggests that the *fatriai* were always an inherent feature of the aristocracy, and as such they are not a factor promoting the coherence and unity of society even if they had their own internal strengths; in fact, it appears that they caused trouble to the authorities in Constantinople. However, on a local level they could lead to the self-awareness and self-assertion of the local population against the capital; and they could also provide aid when it was needed, and set up the organisation, support, and defence of local communities.

In these groupings, social equality was by no means a necessary condition, although in some it appears to have been a dominant feature, e.g. among the peasants, who cooperated to expand their areas of cultivation. The *fatriai* display a certain degree of equality among its members, which, nevertheless, could be expected to diminish the more they expand. In these contexts, clientele relations might also appear. We have seen above how the bonding between a *pronoia* holder and his *paroikoi* might have worked. Clientele relations should be considered as inherent within the *fatriai*. They cannot be excluded in the framework of the confraternities either. Nevertheless, the fact that the confraternities were so

171 See for example Kondyli, Meeting the Locals, 75–90, based on the monastic archives relating to the island of Lemnos.

low-profile differentiates them from the *fatriai*. They were both rooted in Antiquity but the confraternities discarded public self-promotion and the ancient way of living and bonding, which was interwoven into the city fabric.

It is not by chance that most of the material that we have comes from Constantinople; the Constantinopolitan *diakonai* and *presbeiai* of the eleventh and twelfth centuries were groups eager to promote the distinction of their members in the Byzantine capital, on the social, religious, or even political level. On the other hand, discretion and humility in performing their tasks, such as taking care of the poor, are essential qualities of Byzantine *diakonai*, otherwise our information would have been abundant. To the degree that they are differentiated from their Late Antique predecessors participation in them was not part of the individuals' public image. The few seals that name individuals as heads of *presbeiai* of Constantinople rather confirm that they were the exception to the rule and are explained because of the high status of their holders, while there is reason to think that *presbeiai* and *diakonai* were not unquestionably one and the same, neither were these terms interchangeable. Many *diakonai*, such as the Eugeniou, were somehow incorporated into the social and economic system of the empire. Therefore, it would be going too far to consider that each and every reference to a *diakonia* conceals a group of lay people bound together for the performance of a particular charity or religious service, as we see in the *Typika* of Thebes or of Theodore Studites.

We find few groups like these in the provinces, mostly in provincial cities, but religious processions were probably more frequent than we know, even in a country setting, although not many of them would have replicated the organisation of the Theban procession or that of the Theotokos Hodegetria. It appears that the countryside possessed, as we have seen, other modes of expression. The provincial monasteries and churches were hubs of diverse activities, from hosting legal procedures and collecting donations or organising fairs, to feeding the poor.¹⁷² Horizontal groupings such as those discussed here organised social life in a Christian framework. Even though participation was voluntary and therefore limited, their activities were directed towards the communities, and although limited participation becomes a privilege and an honour for the participants, these activities ultimately become inclusive, reaffirming the bonds of the inhabitants with their land and their community. It seems that formations such as the villages and the *fatriai*, or even the ambiguous *geneai*, were, ultimately, mechanisms of survival, because they sheltered and facilitated the expression of social differentiation and/or homogeneity in the provinces. They helped the

172 Kaplan, *Les hommes*, 197–198. In the sources, references to processions and supplications to local saints are numerous.

communities to survive, even if this meant that they needed to escape the tight control of Constantinople.

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