

THE EARLY PALAIOLOGAN COURT (1261-1354)

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ABSTRACT

The complex phenomena ‘court’ and ‘court society’ have received increasing interest in academic research over recent years. The court of late Byzantium, however, has been overlooked, despite the fact that assumptions have been made about the influence of Byzantine court ceremonial on ceremonies in the late Medieval and Early Modern West and about the imitation of the Byzantine court as an institution in the early Ottoman empire. In the discussion of these influences late Byzantine sources were left untouched, a neglect that underlines the need for a comprehensive study of the court in this period. The aim of the present thesis is to fill a part of this gap in our knowledge through an examination of the core of the court in early Palaiologan Byzantium (1261-1354).

The methodology used is inspired by studies of Western royal and princely courts and approaches the early Palaiologan court in an interdisciplinary way. It aims to investigate the main palace of the Palaiologan emperors and the residents of this palace (the imperial family, their servants and their guards), or in other words the imperial household. The court is therefore seen from a spatially and socially restricted viewpoint, while social interaction is used as the main differentiating tool. On a larger scale the present thesis aims to address questions about the interrelation between space and social interaction.

Although the absence of an actual surviving palace and of imperial household ordinances makes it hard to investigate the late Byzantine court, this thesis presents a picture of the core of the early Palaiologan court by combining various late Byzantine sources, each of which provides us with snippets of information about the palace and (individual) members of the imperial household.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The present thesis is for a great part based on the study of Byzantine Greek texts. The decision whether to give a translation only, to use transliteration or to quote the Greek with the translation has been made on an individual basis. Sometimes the Greek is given in the text because my translation and interpretation particularly matter to support my argument or because the Greek is unclear. In all other cases the Greek is given in the footnotes. All the translations are my own unless stated otherwise. In some cases I use transliterations, like *aule*, to point at particular Byzantine terms. Likewise, I have transliterated Byzantine court offices, such as *parakoimomenos*, but in the case of the Despot I have followed Dimiter Angelov and have capitalized the title: the Despot was the second highest office and certain autonomous rulers titled themselves Despot, see Dimiter Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204-1330* (Cambridge 2007), xi. As is common practice in the field of Byzantine studies, I have transcribed Byzantine names and have not Latinized them; Kantakouzenos and not Cantacuzenus.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BHG	Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca
BMGS	Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies
BRP	British Rencesvals Publications
ByzF	Byzantinische Forschungen
BZ	Byzantinische Zeitschrift
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis
CFHB	Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae
CSHB	Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae
DOP	Dumbarton Oaks Papers
EEBS	Ἐπετηρίς Ἐταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν
EHR	English Historical Review
ESG	Erotici Scriptores Graeci
IMB	International Medieval Bibliography
JÖB	Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik
JRS	Journal of Roman Studies
LBG	Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität
MM	Miklosich-Müller
ODB	The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium
OCP	Orientalia Christiana Periodica
PG	Patrologia Graeca (Patrologia Cursus Completus Series Graeca)
PLP	Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit
REB	Revue des Études Byzantines
RESEE	Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes
RHM	Römische historische Mitteilungen
TLG	Thesaurus Linguae Graecae
TM	Travaux et Mémoires
VV	Vizantijskij Vremennik

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the long existence of the empire, Byzantine authors never felt the need to define the imperial court. Perhaps the closest to an attempt comes the famous passage of Symeon the New Theologian, who made his thoughts on service to the emperor explicit while asking rhetorically: “Who, would we say, are those who truly serve the earthly emperor? Those who spend time in their own houses, or those who follow him everywhere?”¹ Yet, even in this sermon written around the year 1000 Symeon was not really concerned with the court, but rather with the question of true service to the heavenly king, for which he used service to the emperor as a comparison. Partly due to this general lack of interest of Byzantine authors in expressing their thoughts about court society, the Byzantine court has received little attention in modern scholarship.² There was no Byzantine Castiglione or Saint-Simon to excite present-day historians, nor do archives of the imperial household survive, and the only sources that could take up a similar stimulating role – the renowned tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies* and a less well known fourteenth-century compilation of court ceremonial, commonly referred to as Pseudo-

¹ Τίνας λέγομεν εἶναι τοὺς τῷ ἐπιγείῳ δουλεύοντας βασιλεῖ; Τοὺς ἀναστρεφόμενους ἐν τοῖς ἑαυτῶν οἴκοις, ἢ τοὺς συνακολουθοῦντας αὐτῷ πανταχοῦ; (Jean Darrouzès, *Syméon Le Nouveau Théologien. Traités théologiques et éthiques*, 2 vols. (Paris 1967), vol. 2, Or. 7, 166.133-135) (hereafter Symeon the New Theologian, *Oration* 7). The translation is by Paul Magdalino in: Paul Magdalino, 'Court Society and Aristocracy', in John Haldon (ed.), *A Social History of Byzantium* (Chichester 2009), 212-232, 223 (hereafter Magdalino, 'Court Society and Aristocracy').

² Rather, many Byzantinists focused on the history of government and bureaucratic institutions without paying attention to the court: John Bagnell Bury, *The constitution of the later Roman Empire* (Cambridge 1910) ; Louis Bréhier, *Les institutions de L'empire byzantin* (Paris 1949) ; Ernest Stein, *Untersuchungen zur spätbyzantinischen Verfassungs- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (Hannover 1925, reprint Amsterdam 1962) (hereafter Stein, *Untersuchungen*) ; Léon-Pierre Raybaud, *Le gouvernement et administration centrale de l'empire Byzantin sous les premiers Paléologues (1258-1354)* (Paris 1968) ; Nicolas Oikonomides, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles* (Paris 1972) ; Friedhelm Winkelmann, *Byzantinische Rang- und Ämterstruktur im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert* (Berlin 1985).

Kodinos – are complex pieces of writing which are still being examined in terms of authorship, dating, nature and audience.³

Another reason for the neglect of the Byzantine court in modern scholarship could be that in the wider field of history the court has only been recently considered a serious research topic. Until the appearance of Norbert Elias' *Die höfische Gesellschaft* around 1970, many twentieth-century historians took the existence of the 'court' for granted.⁴ They associated the court mainly with frivolity and flattery – a view derived from a literary perspective – or with household service, which was considered insignificant. The sociologist Elias, however, saw the early modern court as an important stage in the process of European civilization. His theory gained wide following but also prompted critics to find other ways to approach pre-modern royal courts.⁵ Consequently, over the last twenty years the topic 'court' has taken up a more important place in the historiography of Western societies and several volumes on particular courts have been published.⁶

³ For the *Book of Ceremonies*, compiled by emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos in the tenth century: Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Le livre des cérémonies*, ed. Albert Vogt, 2 vols. (Paris, 1935-1939) and Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Constantini Porphyrogeniti imperatoris de cerimoniis aulae Byzantinae libri duo*, ed. J. J. Reiske (CSHB; Bonn 1829) (hereafter Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *De Ceremoniis*). New editions, translations and commentaries are being prepared in French and English. For the fourteenth-century ceremony book see the edition and French translation of Jean Verpaux, *Pseudo-Kodinos. Traite des offices. Introduction, texte et traduction* (Paris 1966) (hereafter Pseudo-Kodinos). An English translation and commentary is being prepared by Ruth Macrides.

⁴ Norbert Elias, *Die höfische Gesellschaft. Untersuchungen zur Soziologie des Königtums und der höfischen Aristokratie* (Neuwied / Berlin 1969). The English translation appeared in 1983.

⁵ Having taken the court of Louis XIV as a case study, Elias designed a model of the court in which an absolute ruler cultivated the nobility and thus paved the way for European modernity. His model, the court as a golden cage for power play, was criticized heavily – mainly for Elias' assumed link with European civilization (an important critique is Jeroen Duindam, *Myths of Power. Norbert Elias and the Early Modern European Court* (Amsterdam 1995)) – but is in essence still used. Some present-day historians seek Elias' cultivating aspect in other, ie. earlier, European courts in order to attack his hypothesis that this civilizing process was taking place in early-modern times or they try to investigate the applicability of Elias' model to courts in completely different periods and societies (for the first approach see Malcolm Vale, 'Ritual, Ceremony and the 'Civilising Process': The Role of the Court, c. 1270-1400', in S. Gunn and A. Janse (eds.), *The Court as a Stage. England and the Low Countries in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2006), 13-39 ; for the latter see the different contributions in Anthony Spawforth (ed.), *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies* (Cambridge, 2007)).

⁶ See for example: John Adamson (ed.), *The princely courts of Europe: ritual, politics and culture under the Ancien Régime: 1500-1750* (London 2000). Malcolm Vale, *The Princely Court. Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe* (Oxford 2001) ; Catherine Cubitt (ed.), *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages. The Proceedings of the First Alcuin Conference* (Turnhout 2003) ; Jeroen Duindam, *Vienna and*

Recently eminent Byzantinists also found the Byzantine court worthy of chapters in collective studies.⁷ They agree that a court existed in Byzantium, but unfortunately their treatment of the topic is brief and only touches the surface. This is surprising, not in the least because the Byzantine court is often seen as a gateway for ceremonial to the West⁸ and a possible model of court organization for the Ottoman court.⁹ Therefore, the phenomenon 'Byzantine court' deserves a deeper understanding.

A problem for Byzantinists is that thus far the concept 'court' has mainly been studied and defined within a Western context. Applying the term 'court' and similar or derivative terms ('courtier' and the like) unthinkingly to Byzantium may cause confusion

Versailles. The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals, 1550-1780 (Cambridge 2003) and the publications from the *Residenzen-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen*. Recent publications show an interest in the court in non-western societies: Anthony Spawforth (ed.), *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies* (Cambridge 2007) ; Jeroen Duindam, Tülay Artan and Metin Kunt (eds.), *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires* (Leiden 2011) and Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung (eds.), *Court Cultures in the Muslim World, Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries* (London / New York 2011).

⁷ Alexander Kazhdan and Michael McCormick, 'The Social World of the Byzantine Court', in Henry Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204* (Washington D.C. 1997), 167-197 (hereafter Kazhdan and McCormick, 'The Social World'); Michael McCormick, 'Emperor and Court', in Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins, and Michael Whitby (eds.), *The Cambridge Ancient History* (XIV, Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, A.D. 425-600; Cambridge 2000), 135-163 (hereafter McCormick, 'Emperor and Court') ; Magdalino, 'Court Society and Aristocracy'.

⁸ An example from the field of Byzantine studies: Michael Featherstone, 'Emperor and Court', in Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon, and Robin Cormack (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies* (Oxford, 2008), 505-517. And how the paradigm appears in Western historians' articles: Malcolm Vale, 'Courtly ritual and ceremony: some pre-Burgundian evidence (England and the Low Countries, 13th-14th centuries)', in Werner Paravicini (ed.), *Zeremoniell und Raum. 4. Symposium der Residenzen-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, veranstaltet gemeinsam mit dem Deutschen Historischen Institut Paris und dem Historischen Institut der Universität Potsdam. Potsdam, 25. bis 27. September 1994* (Sigmaringen, 1997), 83-89, esp. 83-84. Also: Martin Scheutz, "'Der vermenschte Heiland". Armenspeisung und Gründonnerstags-Fußwaschung am Wiener Kaiserhof" in S. C. Pils and J. P. Niederkorn (eds.), *Ein zweigeteilter Ort? Hof und Stadt in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Innsbruck 2005), 189-257.

⁹ The idea that certain aspects of Byzantine society served as a model for the Ottoman empire has been a much discussed issue in scholarly literature from the early twentieth century onwards. Some scholars assumed that after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 the Ottomans largely copied the Byzantine institutions including their extensive court ceremonial (see for a bibliography Speros Vryonis Jr., 'The Byzantine Legacy and Ottoman Forms', *DOP* 23-24 (1969-70), 253-308, 254 n. 5), while others argued that the Ottoman court ceremonial was Islamic in its origin (Mehmed Köprülü, *Some Observations on the Influence of Byzantine Institutions on Ottoman Institutions*, trans. Gary Leiser (Ankara 1931) and Konrad Dilger, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Osmanischen Hofzeremoniells im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Muenchen, 1967)). The discussion came to a standstill and since the 1970s no one touched the problem in the way that Dilger and Vryonis had done, although the topic did not disappear from scholarly literature. Gülru Necipoğlu, for example, suggested that the Byzantine idea of imperial seclusion and the sanctity of the ruler must have had impact on the fifteenth century Ottoman court in Constantinople (Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power. The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge Mass. / London, 1991), 16).

and will not do justice to profound differences between the Byzantine world and the West. At the same time, any attempt to strip these terms of their Eurocentric connotations and redefine them within a (late) Byzantine context requires thorough understanding of that same context – something which we do not yet possess. A way out of this vicious circle is to explain the terms ‘court’ and ‘courtier’ in a generic way.¹⁰ In fact, this comes very close to the definition used by the Byzantinist Paul Magdalino: ‘the sum of people who lived in or frequented the imperial palace’.¹¹ This somewhat basic definition includes domestics and menials, and does not focus only on a cultural, elitist aspect often associated with the court, nor is it linked with a particular western tradition. Magdalino bases his definition on the groundbreaking chapter of Michael McCormick and Alexander Kazhdan, which appeared in the volume *Byzantine Court Culture from 829-1204*. Although the chapter only presents ‘a provisional sketch’ of the court society in the ninth and tenth centuries, it forms an important starting point for any investigation of the social structure of the Byzantine court.¹² In their conceptualizing beginning of the chapter they define the court rather vaguely as ‘the human group physically closest to the emperor, a social world in which the emperor’s household and his government overlapped, and a social world structured by the emperor’s decisions’.¹³ They also state that it was the palace that primarily shaped the Byzantine court.¹⁴ Their argument is one *ex silentio* since it is mainly based on their assumption that there was no Byzantine equivalent of the term ‘court’, but

¹⁰ This is supported by the recent volume *A social history of Byzantium*, in which the editor John Haldon states that historians should not hesitate to use social anthropological terms (‘society’, ‘social system’ and ‘social formation’) as long as they are defined in relation to a specific set of questions – only in this way can we avoid the pitfall of endless semantic debates about terminology, see John Haldon, *A Social History of Byzantium* (Chichester 2009). For an anthropological deconstruction of the notion ‘society’ see Fredrik Barth, ‘Towards greater naturalism in conceptualizing societies’, in A. Kuper (ed.), *Conceptualizing Society* (London / New York, 1992), 17-34.

¹¹ Magdalino, ‘Court Society and Aristocracy’, 213.

¹² Kazhdan and McCormick, ‘The Social World’, 167.

¹³ Kazhdan and McCormick, ‘The Social World’, 167.

¹⁴ Kazhdan and McCormick, ‘The Social World’, 175.

that Byzantine authors use the words for palace, *palation* and *aule*. Or, as Magdalino explains, Byzantine authors use the word *aule* when referring to the court, which was largely interchangeable with the word for palace, *palation*.¹⁵

Courtiers, then, can be seen as all people inhabiting and frequenting the imperial palace, and not only as ambitious flatterers circling around the ruler. McCormick and Kazhdan see a courtier in a wide sense as ‘a person directly connected with service to the ruler or the ruler’s household’.¹⁶ This generic definition, again, is based on the absence of a Byzantine word for courtier. The literal term for courtier would be *aulikos* (‘of the court’), which rarely appears, and when it is used we find it in texts of the late period that have a strong link with the West. For example, we come across *aulikos* in the fourteenth-century vernacular romance *Phlorios and Platzia Phlora* in reference to ‘courtiers’:

Florios left and went to Montoris;
he greeted the courtiers (τοὺς αὐλικοὺς) and the *archontes*,
he hit the road and went away.¹⁷

Because this text is related to the Old-French *Floire et Blancheflore* we should wonder whether the occurrence of the word *aulikos* is significant and points at a Byzantine concept or implies that the word merely exists in Greek translation from Western concepts. Although the word for courtier is otherwise never used in Byzantine sources, Byzantine authors reveal in other ways that the court cannot only be defined in terms of palaces or spatial forms of rulership. One can argue that *aule* also comprised a social element, like the English word ‘court’. In late Byzantine texts the word does not occur often, but we come across cases in which authors could only have meant to use the word in a social sense, as in

¹⁵ Magdalino, ‘Court Society and Aristocracy’, 213.

¹⁶ Kazhdan and McCormick, ‘The Social World’, 167.

¹⁷ Ἐκίνησεν ὁ Φλώριος, ὑπάγει εἰς τὸ Μοντόριν· τοὺς αὐλικοὺς, τοὺς ἄρχοντας ἀπεχαιρέτησέν τοὺς καὶ τὴν ὁδὸν ἐκίνησεν ἐκείνην καὶ ὑπάγει. (F. J. Ortola Salas (ed.), *Florio y Platzia Flora: una novela bizantina de época paleológica* (Madrid 1998), 287-290).

the sentence ‘taking with him the entire imperial court’ (ἔχων μεθ’ ἑαυτοῦ τὴν βασιλικὴν αὐλὴν πᾶσαν).¹⁸ Otherwise, authors use phrases like ‘those from the palace’ (i.e. τινῶν τῶν τῆς αὐλῆς)¹⁹ indicating an awareness of certain people that inhabited or frequented the imperial palace or belonged to the palace.²⁰ In his funeral eulogy on emperor Andronikos III, who died in 1341, the fourteenth-century author Nikephoros Gregoras names certain groups of people that miss the emperor for a particular reason, e.g. soldiers for the loss of a great general, etc. Firstly, he mentions the imperial family, who mourn having lost a relative and the pride and joy of the dynasty, and secondly ‘the people frequenting the imperial court, who remember the splendour of the palace’ (οἱ τὰς βασιλείους πατοῦντες αὐλὰς, ζητήσατε τὴν τῶν βασιλείων λαμπρότητα).²¹ Who these people were, is understood. Gregoras may have been referring to title-holders or people like himself or supporters of the emperor who visited the palace during the reign of Andronikos III.

Overall, it can be safely stated that there always was a court in Byzantium, because there always was an imperial palace, an emperor living in it and people serving and attending him there. It is also inevitable that the emperor’s household, the subject under study in the present thesis, formed an important part of the whole complex entity ‘court’. As in the medieval West, or, in fact, as in every monarchical society, the late Byzantine court was foremost a residence which was inhabited by the ruler, his nuclear family and his

¹⁸ D. R. Reinsch (ed.), *Critobuli Imbriotae historiae* (Berlin 1983), 1.27.5.5.

¹⁹ Pseudo-Kodinos, 247. This and similar phrases can be found in sources from the entire Byzantine period. To name a few from the Palaiologan era: a letter from Constantine Akropolites mentions ‘to the ones from the Despot’s palace’ (τοῖς περὶ τὴν δεσποτικὴν αὐλὴν), in: R. Romano, (ed.), *Costantino Acropolita, Epistole* (Napels 1991), ep. 39.12-13. A letter from Maxim Planoudos contains the phrase ‘one of those from the imperial palace (for all these people have the enjoyment of imperial benevolence)’ (ἐνὸς τῶν περὶ τὴν βασιλείον αὐλὴν (πολλοὶ δ’ οὗτοι τῆς βασιλικῆς ἀπολαύουσιν εὐποιίας), see: P. L. M. Leone (ed.), *Maximi Monachi Planudis Epistulae* (Amsterdam 1991), ep. 67.92-93. George Pachymeres speaks of ‘someone from the palace hierarchy (τινὶ τῶν ἐκ τῆς τάξεως τοῦ παλατίου) in Albert Failler (ed.), *Georges Pachymeres. Relations historiques* V vols. (Paris 1999-2006), IV, 669.22 (hereafter Pachymeres).

²⁰ Kazhdan and McCormick, ‘The Social World’ ; McCormick, ‘Emperor and Court’ ; Magdalino, ‘Court and Aristocracy’.

²¹ I. Bekker and L. Schopen (eds.), *Nicephori Gregorae historiae Byzantinae*. 3 vols. (CSHB; Bonn 1829-1855), I, 564.4-5 (hereafter Gregoras).

staff: there were major domestic offices, whose history can be traced back to the late Roman imperial household.²²

However, we should be careful in assuming that the Byzantine imperial household was practically identical with the court. This would be based upon the misunderstanding that the imperial household was of equal importance to the royal household in the medieval West, which ‘played a fundamental part in giving substance to the idea of ‘the court’’.²³ The importance of the household for Western courts is reflected by the fact that all the major court offices were in origin domestic functions. In his Weberian article on the ideal type of the medieval court Aloys Winterling distinguishes four main organisational bodies which formed the backbone of Western medieval courts since the Carolingians: chamber, table, cellar and stable.²⁴ The heads of these departments, respectively the *camerarius* (chamberlain), the *seneschalcus* (seneschal), the *buticularius* (cupbearer) and the *comes stabuli* (marshall), were managing the ruler’s household. Even in the later Middle Ages and early modern era, when these offices had turned into honorary titles – with at most an occasional ceremonial service attached to them, the household remains visible as the underlying structure of the court. Also, it was the court that formed the royal hub of power and overlapped with the government. Subsequently, the commonly used definition for ‘the court’ in Western European history is ‘the extended household of a ruler’.

In the case of Byzantium it is clear that the imperial household was only one of the structures underlying the court. Since early Byzantium remained strongly connected with

²² The institutional historian Rodolphe Guiland spent much painstaking work searching for the offices and titles in sources from the late Roman period until the end of the Byzantine Empire: Rodolphe Guiland, *Recherches sur les institutions byzantines*, 2 vols. (Berliner byzantinische Arbeiten; Berlin / Amsterdam 1967) (hereafter Guiland, *Recherches*).

²³ Malcolm Vale, *The Princely Court. Medieval Courts and Culture in North-West Europe* (Oxford 2001), 15.

²⁴ Aloys Winterling, ‘Hof’. Versuch einer idealtypischen Bestimmung anhand der mittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Geschichte, in Reinhard Butz, Jan Hirschbiegel, and Dietmar Willoweit (eds.), *Hof und Theorie. Annäherungen an die historisches Phänomen* (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna 2004), 77-89, 83.

its late Roman past, the imperial court was in many ways formed by other traditions. In the early days of the empire, in the fourth century, the establishment of the imperial palace in Constantinople as the definite main residence of the emperor of the Eastern Roman empire was the driving force behind the realization of a stable palace milieu in the capital.²⁵ With the concentration of the bureaucracy and the aristocracy around the palace, it is not surprising that the organisation of the imperial court was also shaped by at least two other factors than the palace itself: the chief institutions of government and the elite (the emperor's family/the aristocracy).²⁶ For example, the Roman senate was maintained – although its function was changing – as were the Roman military positions.²⁷ The existence of all these elements around the emperor had a great impact on the formation of a court society in early Byzantium.

The Byzantine court in its earliest stages was made up of military, bureaucratic and domestic components. Rowland Smith notes that in the fourth-century *Notitia Dignitatum* and the *Theodosian Code* the collective court personnel is formally known under the denominator *sacer comitatus*, *domus sacra* or *domus aeternalis*, while the famous fourth century historian Ammianus Marcellinus refers to court society simply as *comitatus* (company, retinue, body of followers). Basing himself on these sources, Smith divides the *comitatus* in four basic parts. Firstly, the fourth century court was a military affair: elite troops, palace guards, and personal bodyguards were in number by far the largest part of

²⁵ Sam Barnish, A.D. Lee and Michael Whitby, 'Government and Administration', in Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins, and Michael Whitby (eds.), *The Cambridge Ancient History* (XIV, Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, A.D. 425-600; Cambridge 2000), 164-206, 164 (hereafter Barnish et al., 'Government and Administration').

²⁶ McCormick, 'Emperor and Court', 135.

²⁷ For Late Roman emperorship and officials see also Christopher Kelly, 'Emperors, Government and Bureaucracy', in Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey (eds.), *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. XIII, *The Late Empire*, A. D. 337-425 (Cambridge, 1998), 138-183.

the fourth century court.²⁸ Apart from a military component, the *comitatus* consisted of a consistory, which was a private council supported by secretaries (*notarii*). This consistory was made up of high officials and had an advisory and judicial function, although it turned into a formal and ceremonial body in the fifth century.²⁹ Apart from the *notarii* of this – initially – governmental body there were four main palatine ministries (*officia*) who made up the bureaucratic part of the court. The men serving these ministries were, like the guards, great in number.³⁰ Lastly, the domestic component (*sacrum domesticum*) was subdivided into three parts: the *cubicularii* (eunuch chamberlains), the *castrensiani* (household menials) and the *silentarii* (ushers).³¹

Although relatively limited in numbers, the influence of some members of the domestic staff was significant. One reason for this is that eunuchs, who held the most important household offices, were in service for as long as the emperor pleased, unlike officials in other sectors of the court, who held their office for a limited period of time. The dominant household office in the fourth century was the *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, a eunuch who was in charge of all the personal attendants of the emperor. Other important eunuch offices were the *primicerius sacri cubiculi* (the head of the bedchamber), the *comes sacrae vestis* (the head of the wardrobe) and the *castrensis*, who was in charge of the household menials (non-eunuchs). Eunuchs had already been serving the Roman emperors before the establishment of the court in Constantinople, but during the course of the fourth and fifth centuries they gained in influence and got hold of more high offices in court; the *spatharius* (the captain of the emperor's personal bodyguard) became for example a

²⁸ About half, reckons Rowland Smith, see Rowland Smith, 'The imperial court of the late Roman empire, c. AD 300-c. AD 450', in Antony Spawforth (ed.), *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies* (Cambridge 2007), 157-233, 197 (hereafter Smith, 'The imperial court').

²⁹ Smith, 'The imperial court', 198.

³⁰ In the *Theodosian Code* the number adds up to about 2500 people in the Eastern Empire. Smith, 'The imperial court', 199.

³¹ Smith, 'The imperial court', 198.

eunuch post, as well as the *sacellarius* (the keeper of the emperor's personal treasury). Eunuchs were not only able to hold honourable positions but also to gain the emperors trust and become immensely wealthy and influential. From the emperor's point of view they may have been useful in controlling certain sections of the elite – or in other words certain other parts of the court.³²

The stabilization of court life in the capital continued well into the fifth and sixth centuries. The permanent establishment of a Byzantine court is perhaps best reflected in a shift of linguistic usage. Had fourth-century authors preferred the word *comitatus* as the emperor's following, the fifth and sixth century witnessed a preference for the word *palation* (palace).³³ With the establishment of a more complex palace structure under Justinian (r. 527-565) and the following seclusion of the emperor, not only the bureaucracy (the emperor became in fact a bureaucrat himself) and the imperial family, but also the household became more important. Apart from members of the imperial family, court eunuchs were able to access the imperial chambers or *cubiculum*, giving them a position of trust, which could compete with the one of bureaucrats and generals. In the palace they took care of the members of the imperial family, who each lived with their 'own personal domestic staff, including slaves, bodyguards and a cellarer'.³⁴ The growing power of eunuch household officials is exemplified by the case of the *sacellarius*. He did not only come to supervise the emperor's private purse, but under Justinian was able to fund warfare and pay soldiers. Later, under the new governmental system which was introduced by emperor Maurice (r. 582-602), the eunuch *sacellarius* conducted land surveys and tax

³² Smith, 'The imperial court', 202-209.

³³ McCormick, 'Emperor and Court', 136.

³⁴ McCormick, 'Emperor and Court', 141.

reassessments. This does not only imply the growth of influence of eunuchs at court, but also the difficulty in distinguishing between private and public imperial resources.³⁵

The seclusion of the emperor and the transfer of some bureaucratic or military tasks to eunuch officials increased the complexity of the household organization and consequently the complexity of the entire court. According to Michael McCormick, the fragmented organization of the imperial household in sixth century Byzantium reflected ‘the institutions of late-Roman government, where power was partitioned among competing and compartmentalized bureaucracies’.³⁶ For example, several palace corps emerged, each headed by high officials, some of whom were eunuchs. This system of rivalling institutions and organisations, whether belonging to the eunuch led imperial household or to the bureaucracy or army, meant that the court organization became – at least structurally – highly inefficient. But the diffusion also gave the emperor the opportunity to, as McCormick nicely put it, ‘weave together disparate organizational strands with the thread of kinship’ by making members of the imperial family part of rivalling departments.³⁷ In this way, ambitious sons, nephews and uncles could enter the court hierarchy or military and be kept under the control of the emperor. Bureaucrats and military men were in turn rivalled by the eunuchs who were not of high social background but had the advantage of being literally close to the emperor. Overall it seems that the social picture of the Byzantine court at this stage can be characterized as diverse and complex, as a balance between household, bureaucracies, the army and the imperial family.

This changed in middle Byzantine times. Firstly, it should be noticed that in this period the social world was dominated by court precedence. In their study of the court

³⁵ Barnish et al., ‘Government and Administration’, 136, 175-176.

³⁶ McCormick, ‘Emperor and Court’, 150.

³⁷ McCormick, ‘Emperor and Court’, 151.

society between the ninth and twelfth centuries, Alexander Kazhdan and Michael McCormick have to rely on sources like banquet lists to find out which socio-institutional groups existed in Byzantine court society of the ninth and tenth centuries and although some domestics occur on such precedence lists, many others are left out. However, they notice that the fifth- and sixth-century tendency to entrust eunuchs with more responsibilities continued well into the tenth century. The most important household group was formed by the palace eunuchs (eunuchs of the *cubiculum*, or *koubouklion*, chamber), who, by the ninth century, were powerful enough to control imperial ceremonial, but from the eleventh century onwards significantly declined in force due to the aristocratisation of court society and the Komnenian emphasis on kinship and lineage.³⁸ Other palatine groups mentioned by Kazhdan and McCormick are the palace clergy, the palace security forces and, most importantly, the *diatairioi*, ‘the service personnel who actually ran the palace’.³⁹ Also belonging to the household were ‘institutionally invisible people’ like court jesters, entertainers, slaves and women working for the empress. Women, in fact, seem to have been segregated from the male dominated court and were part of a ‘court of women’, until, according to the authors, that eroded under the Komnenoi emperors.⁴⁰

However, all these palatine courtiers were still outnumbered by non-household staff on the banquet lists (people who occasionally visited the palace, on ceremonial occasions or at the emperor’s request): the emperor’s friends (*philoi*), the patriarch and his staff and several metropolitans, bureaucrats of the Sandaled Senate, city officials, army officials and military men, the latter outweighing ‘all other groups since they constitute more than half of all guests in the Christmas cycle’,⁴¹ heads of city welfare institutions and archdoctors.

³⁸ Kazhdan and McCormick, ‘The Social World’, 179.

³⁹ Kazhdan and McCormick, ‘The Social World’, 180-181.

⁴⁰ Kazhdan and McCormick, ‘The Social World’, 184.

⁴¹ Kazhdan and McCormick, ‘The Social World’, 181.

On the other hand, as far as the household staff and its role in court society is concerned, the body of eunuch servants, in fact the service personnel of the imperial household, 'were not marginal or inferior to the court aristocracy, but represented that aristocracy in its purest form'.⁴² The success of some eunuch high officials cannot only be attributed to their personalities, but it also reflects the importance of the household staff as a social group. This is made explicit in the fact that their position of trust aroused resentment in sources of the early and middle Byzantine periods.⁴³

Thus, the Byzantine imperial household prior to the early Palaiologan period (or prior to the changes during the Komnenian period) had a very different role from the medieval model as described by Aloys Winterling. In the first place, it was sedentary, a grand household which resided in the Great Palace in Constantinople. But the household was challenged by other court institutions and social groups. Unlike many Western centres of power, the court in Byzantium grew out of a complex system of military, bureaucratic, household and family traditions. Also, the boundaries between these compartments were blurred and responsibilities for certain tasks could easily be transferred from the one to the other. One should not be surprised to find a eunuch on the battlefield, or a member of the imperial family with only an honorary household title.

This sketch of the Byzantine court cannot necessarily be applied to the court in the later stages of the empire – a court which has not received scholarly attention yet. By the thirteenth century, the imperial household had undergone fundamental changes. In terms of space it had moved from the Great Palace to the Blachernai palace in the north-west part of the city, a move which was set in motion under the Komnenian emperors. Financially, it must have suffered from the shrunken tax base of the Byzantine state, which by then had

⁴² Kazhdan and McCormick, 'The Social World', 221.

⁴³ Kazhdan and McCormick, 'The Social World', 220.

lost the greatest part of its territory and was little more than a small Balkan state, despite its inheritance of imperial traditions. Concerning its social structure it is likely that the growing influence of the military aristocracy and members of the imperial family, already apparent in the twelfth century, had decreased the power of other social groups at court. Eunuchs, for example, were less prominent in the later period.⁴⁴

These changes are reflected in the disappearance of the distinction between an office and a dignity. From the Palaiologan period onwards (or perhaps already since the early Laskarid emperors⁴⁵) there were not two hierarchies anymore, that of the imperial offices and that of the dignities; only one combined hierarchy of offices and dignities remained.⁴⁶ Interestingly enough, we are well informed about the hierarchical system in the Palaiologan period through the existence of a fourteenth century ceremony book, mostly referred to as Pseudo-Kodinos, and several precedence lists. These sources name approximately eighty offices (some of which are in fact dignities) and, in addition, Pseudo-Kodinos also gives the service of most offices in his third chapter. But the precedence lists and Pseudo-Kodinos source have their limitations too. In the first place, not all offices were held at all times.⁴⁷ Nor do we know whether Pseudo-Kodinos' description of the service of the offices was a reflection of a social reality. Actual service may have depended in fact more on the personal qualities of the office holder and the political circumstances.⁴⁸ What is striking, also, is the absence of palace personnel in Pseudo-Kodinos. Gone are the *diaitarioi* or other institutionally defined service groups of the imperial household. People who were serving the emperor on a daily basis are mainly to be found in passing. Thus,

⁴⁴ For late Byzantine eunuchism see Niels Gaul, 'Eunuchs in the Late Byzantine Empire ca. 1250-1400', in Shaun Tougher (ed.), *Eunuchs in Antiquity and Beyond* (Swansea 2002), 199-219.

⁴⁵ Demetrios S. Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass.: unpublished doctoral thesis, 1997), 22 (hereafter Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*).

⁴⁶ Guiland, *Recherches* II, 281. See also Stein, *Untersuchungen*, 29-31.

⁴⁷ For a prosopography of the office holders during the early Palaiologan period, see Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*, 395-408.

⁴⁸ For thoughts about the service of the office holders see: Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*, 32-53.

first and foremost the precedence lists and Pseudo-Kodinos' ceremony book shows that there was just one unified group involved in court society: office holders, who were expected to be present in the palace for ceremonial reasons. The imperial household is to a certain extent taken for granted in these sources. The question for a study of the court in the later Byzantine period is therefore not so much to determine the relative importance of the known institutional or social groups, for example, of the household servants vs. the military officials, or family members vs. bureaucrats, but rather to answer basic questions about the court first. Who belonged to the residential court, ie. to the imperial household? Who were the occasional attendants?

In this thesis the late Byzantine court will be looked at from this rudimentary angle, something which has not been done so far. Because the scope of this thesis is limited, only the inner court or the core of the court society will be examined, that is the palace, the main residents and their servants, whereas the occasional members of the court will not be included. In other words, the questions to be dealt with are: who belonged to the core of the court in the early Palaiologan period and how were these people organized? In what ways were they able to gain access to the emperor?⁴⁹ The chapters of this thesis will be

⁴⁹ In fact I am using social interaction as a main differentiating tool, see for the theoretical framework: Niklas Luhman, 'Interaktion, Organisation, Gesellschaft. Anwendungen der Systemtheorie', in Niklas Luhman (ed.), *Soziologische Aufklärung* (Opladen 1975), 9-20, 10. See also Niklas Luhman, *Soziale Systeme* (Frankfurt am Main 1984), 560ff. I am not the first to use social interaction as differentiating tool for a study of the 'court'. In the volume *Hof und Theorie* we find Jan Hirschbiegel's attempt to conceptualize the court after Niklas Luhmann's theory of social systems (. However, his attempt is not so much a model based on historical evidence, but more an abstract mixture of different social theories with a touch of Weber and Elias. Luhmann's input in this model is its emphasis on communication: court societies are defined as nodal points of communication, places where several communication wires come together, with the ruler at its centre. With this in mind Hirschbiegel designs several highly complicated charts to show how court communication could have worked. He concludes that these well ordered macro historical structures should be filled with and tested by micro historical case studies. To me this does not necessarily seem compatible with historical practice. From a historian's point of view one could wonder whether it is useful to design complicated structures based on sociology first, while the aim of one's court study is to understand an historical phenomenon, which may eventually not fit the framework. See Jan Hirschbiegel, 'Hof als soziologisches System. Der Beitrag der Systemtheorie nach Niklas Luhmann für eine Theorie des Hofes', in R. Butz, J. Hirschbiegel, and D. Willoweit (eds.), *Hof und Theorie. Annäherungen an ein historisches Phänomen* (Cologne, 2004), 43-55.

divided on the basis of the three major groups who made up the residential court, as well as on the residence that held them together: one chapter concerns the palace, the second chapter examines the main residents or imperial family, the third chapter investigates their domestic staff and the last chapter is dedicated to the security staff. Although the absence of household ordinances makes it harder to pin down some of these social groups of the court, it is possible to sketch a picture of the structure of the imperial household by combining various late Byzantine sources, each of which provides us with snippets of information about the (individual) members of the imperial household.

To name the most important sources: first and foremost there is Pseudo-Kodinos, the aforementioned work on hierarchy and court ceremonial, of the mid fourteenth century. This text, compiled by an anonymous author, provides a list of the existing offices (this precedence list can be compared with other precedence lists from the period), a description of their function and ceremonial dress and the protocol for a limited amount of ceremonies. However, it is a complicated treatise and its nature shifts from being descriptive to prescriptive, from historical to ceremonial.⁵⁰ Some scholars spotted the influence of the emperor John Kantakouzenos (r. 1347-1354) in the realization of the work, for example because the office of *megas domestikos*, which Kantakouzenos held for many years before he became emperor, figures prominently in the treatise.⁵¹ As mentioned before, Pseudo-Kodinos is important because it pictures the part of court society which existed for ceremonial reasons and mentions in passing certain features of the palace and some

⁵⁰ See the introduction by Verpeaux in Pseudo-Kodinos, 23-123 and Ruth Macrides, "The reason is not known." Remembering and Recording the Past. Pseudo-Kodinos as a Historian', *L'Écriture de la Mémoire. Littérature de l'historiographie. Actes de IIIe colloque international philologique Nicosie, 6-7-8 mai 2004* (Nicosia 2006), 317-330.

⁵¹ It is also known that Kantakouzenos held a particular interest in ceremonial. See for Kantakouzenos' connection to the ceremony book: Niels Gaul, 'The Partridge's Purple Stockings: Observations on the Historical, Literary and Manuscript Context of Pseudo-Kodinos' Handbook on Court Ceremonial', in Michael Grünbart (ed.), *Theatron. Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter / Rhetorical Culture in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Berlin / New York 2007), 69-103 (hereafter Gaul, 'The Partridge's Purple Stockings').

members of the household staff as well as the guards. It also shows that this hierarchically ordered part of court society was of utmost importance in Byzantine eyes.

For the individuals holding titles, for the imperial palace and its residents, and for people who were of lower rank or were household menials, we will have to rely on other sources. Important work has been done by Erich Trapp and his research group in Vienna, who composed a prosopographical lexicon of the Palaiologan period (PLP).⁵² Together with Pseudo-Kodinos' treatise, the PLP forms the starting point for research on court society in the early Palaiologan period. For background information on these individuals, as well as for the palace and social groups working in it, however, one should turn to the histories of this period. Luckily, events in the early Palaiologan period are reported by several well informed historians and their works provide an important personalization of Pseudo-Kodinos' anonymous titles and ranks and of other people involved in court, as well as the most extensive information about the imperial residence and the imperial family. The first important historian of this period, George Pachymeres, is considered a reliable witness of the people and events he described between the years 1260-1308.⁵³ As a historian he was relatively objective and clear about his likes and dislikes. He obtained a position both in church and in court,⁵⁴ but did not hesitate to go back on some of his superiors – the patriarch and emperor Michael VIII (r. 1259-1282). Unfortunately, his style is archaic and at many points incomprehensible, while his chronology is inconsistent. For the period after 1308 we have two histories which complement each other: the work of

⁵² Erich Trapp, *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit* (Vienna 1976-1996) (hereafter PLP).

⁵³ I have used the edition (and translation) of Albert Failler, see footnote 19.

⁵⁴ His court title of *dikaiophylax* is not mentioned in Pseudo-Kodinos' precedence list, but does occur in others, of which an edition appears in the appendices of Jean Verpaux's edition and translation of Pseudo-Kodinos.

Nikephoros Gregoras (extending to the year 1359),⁵⁵ and the one by emperor-historian John Kantakouzenos (covering the period 1320-1356).⁵⁶ The histories of Gregoras and Kantakouzenos should be read with care, but together they give a pretty accurate description of events and people in the violent first half of the fourteenth century. Gregoras was initially a supporter of emperor Andronikos II (r. 1282-1328), and thus an opponent of John Kantakouzenos, who had joined the faction around the emperor's grandson Andronikos III (r.1328-1341). This means that Kantakouzenos' biased but precise memoirs, in which he justifies his own actions and presents himself as a heroic figure, can be compared with Gregoras' more objective work and vice versa.

Poetry, literature and epistolography also provide information about the people who formed court society. For example, many individuals appear in the poems of Manuel Philes. Philes (ca. 1275-1345) held close ties with the imperial court and is a good source for a prosopography of the early fourteenth century. Then there are important statesmen, influential churchmen or famous *literati* whose writings reveal information about court life.⁵⁷ Their work can be complemented with information from literary sources in which allusions to the imperial court can be found. These sources, romances for example, do not really give us insight in the actual make-up of court society or the palace, but provide an

⁵⁵ I. Bekker and L. Schopen (eds.), *Nicephori Gregorae historiae Byzantinae*. 3 vols. (CSHB; Bonn 1829-1855) (hereafter Gregoras). A German translation is available in Jan Louis van Dieten, *Nikephoros Gregoras. Rhömäische Geschichte*, 5 vols. (Stuttgart 1979) (hereafter Gregoras/Van Dieten).

⁵⁶ L. Schopen (ed.), *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris historiarum libri iv*. 3 vols. (CSHB; Bonn, 1828-1832) (hereafter Kantakouzenos). The first books are translated into German by Georgios Fatouros and Tilman Krischer, *Johannes Kantakouzenos. Geschichte* (Stuttgart 1982-) (hereafter Kantakouzenos/Fatouros). Part of the fourth book is translated into English by Timothy Miller: Timothy Miller, *The History of John Cantacuzenus (Book IV)* (Washington, 1975) (hereafter Miller, *The History*).

⁵⁷ For example the letters of patriarch Athanasios I, Maximos Planoudes or Michael Gabras (Athanasios I, *The correspondence of Athanasios I, Patriarch of Constantinople : letters to the Emperor Andronicus II, members of the imperial family, and officials / an edition, translation, and commentary by Alice-Mary Maffry Talbot* (Washington D.C., 1975) ; Michael Gabras, *Die Briefe des Michael Gabras (ca. 1290-nach 1350)*, ed. Georgios Fatouros, II vols. (Vienna, 1973) ; Maximos Planoudes, *Maximi Monachi Planudis Epistulae*, ed. P. L. M. Leone (Amsterdam, 1991). For more references see the bibliography.

idea of how Byzantines perceived a court.⁵⁸ In this respect, the short poem *Poulologos* (Book of Birds) deserves special attention.⁵⁹ This fourteenth-century satire ridicules court society by representing its members as birds. The story commences with the emperor (Eagle) summoning all birds to come to the wedding of his son. Upon arrival certain pairs of birds start to debate each other's qualities, which is only ended by the emperor's threat to send in Falcon and Hawk. Interestingly enough, the poem does not only mirror general aspects of fourteenth century court society, but also contains allusions to particular courtiers of that time. It has been suggested, for example, that the *paragialites* (flamingo?) represents the *nouveau riche* Alexios Apokaukos, who successively held the court title of *parakoimomenos* and *megas doux* and was a major player in the upheavals of the first half of the fourteenth century.⁶⁰ The *Poulologos* belongs to the genre of *Rangstreitliteratur*, which also encompasses the fourteenth century short stories *Tale of the Quadrupeds*, the *Porikologos* (Book of Fruit) and *Opsarologos* (Book of Fish).⁶¹ These epics mock a meeting of the imperial court through their representation of the actors as respectively four-footed animals, fruit/vegetables or fish. Niels Gaul noticed about the Fruit and Fish Books that they 'ridicule Pseudo-Kodinos' strict system of precedence' and 'clearly satirize late Byzantine legal procedures'. He also points at a striking similarity with Pseudo-Kodinos' ceremony book when the Fruit and Fish Books conclude with the

⁵⁸ For example, in translation: Gavin Betts, *Three Medieval Greek Romances* (New York / London 1995) ; Elizabeth Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels* (Liverpool 2012). For more references, see the bibliography.

⁵⁹ Isavellos Tsavare (ed.), *Ὁ Πουλόλογος* (Athens 1987).

⁶⁰ Georgios Makris, 'Zum literarischen Genus des Pulologos', in Nicolaos M. Panayotakis (ed.), *Origini della Letteratura Neograeca. Atti del Secondo Congresso Internazionale "Neograeca Medii Aevi"* (Venezia, 7-10 Novembre 1991) (Venice 1993), vol. 1, 391-412, esp. 396-411.

⁶¹ As argued by Günter Prinzing, 'Zur byzantinischen Rangstreitliteratur in Prosa und Dichtung', *RHM* 45 (2003), 241-286 ; Helma Winterwerb (ed.), *Porikologos. Einleitung, kritische Ausgabe aller Versionen, Übersetzung, Textvergleiche, Glossar, kurze Betrachtungen zu den fremdsprachlichen Versionen des Werks sowie zum Opsarologos* (Neograeca Medii Aevi VII, Cologne, 1992) ; Nick Nicholas and George Baloglou (eds. and trans.), *An Entertaining Tale of Quadrupeds* (New York / Chichester, 2003).

ceremonial acclamation ‘many years’ in a way similar to one described by the protocol.⁶² Evidently, the genre is strongly linked with late Byzantine court society and as such adds valuable information to the above mentioned ceremony book, grand narratives or letters.

Other interesting witnesses of late Byzantine court society are the accounts of foreign visitors to the court. The sources are not extensive, but they offer an outsider’s view which can prove important for our understanding of court society. There are accounts of several Western travellers or chroniclers,⁶³ but also descriptions of Russian pilgrims⁶⁴ and the famous explorer Ibn Battuta.⁶⁵ Lastly, for the chapter on the palace valuable evidence can be extrapolated from material sources. Although the Byzantine palace used by the Palaiologan emperors has not survived, there are still some remains of the walls of the complex left. My survey of the Balat neighbourhood in Istanbul, in Byzantine times the Blachernai area, where the imperial residence was situated, led to interesting discoveries concerning the topography and outline of the palace complex.

The main sources that form the pillar of this thesis (the ceremony book and the histories) deal with the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century. No protocols or major narratives have survived for the period after that. This is the reason why I choose the abdication of John Kantakouzenos (1354) as a seemingly arbitrary end date. Moreover, the choice to cover only the early Palaiologan period is underpinned by historical developments. In political-economical terms the Byzantine empire especially suffered

⁶² Gaul, ‘The Partridge’s Purple Stockings’, 94-95.

⁶³ For crusade and pre-crusade chroniclers see for example Robert of Clari, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, trans. and ed. Peter Noble (British Rencsvals Publications, 3; Edinburgh, 2005) ; Odo of Deuil, *De profectone Ludovici VII in orientem*, ed. Virginia Gingerick Berry (New York, 1948). For the later period see Michael Angold, ‘The decline of Byzantium seen through the eyes of western travellers’, in Ruth Macrides (ed.), *Travel in the Byzantine World* (Aldershot 2002), 213-232. For more references see the bibliography.

⁶⁴ George P. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Washington D. C., 1984).

⁶⁵ Ibn Battuta, in translation: Ibn Battuta, *Ibn Battuta Travels in Asia and Africa (selections)*, trans. H. A. R. Gibb (London 1929).

from the mid-fourteenth century onwards: its territory had shrunk greatly, decentralization had diminished the economical importance of the state, two civil wars had exhausted the treasury, and the Turkish threat had led to a vassal-status (1371). These developments do not mean, however, that Byzantine court society ceased to exist or that the grandeur of early-fourteenth century court ceremonial abated. Even in the last decades of the empire, people frantically tried to obtain high court titles.⁶⁶ On the other hand, these developments must have had some impact on the power of the state, the emperor and thus on the court. Together with the relative lack of sources they determine rightly the *terminus ante quem* of my research.

The *terminus post quem* of 1261 may seem more obvious (the reconquest of Constantinople by emperor Michael VIII), but is in fact harder to make case for. The only argument not to include the previous years of Michael VIII's reign or the Nicean Empire is to acknowledge the importance of Constantinople – and the imperial Blachernai palace – for a study of the imperial household. From this point of view, the establishment of a new dynasty (that of the Palaiologoi) and the reconquest of the Queen of Cities seems a good starting point.

⁶⁶ Mark Philippides (ed.), *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire: A Chronicle by George Sphrantzes 1401-1472* (Amhurst, Mass. 1980), 67.

1 THE PALACE

Based upon a manuscript concordance of Niketas Choniates' History, Alexander Kazhdan and Michael McCormick state that it was the palace that primarily shaped the Byzantine court. In Choniates' narrative, the words for palace (*archeion*, *anaktoron*, *basileion*, *palation* and *aule*) denote the palace as a building, although the term *aule* seems to be distinct in the sense that it sometimes occurs 'in contexts that refer to the body of courtiers rather than the palace buildings'.⁶⁷ Also in the Palaiologan period the words for palace comprised a social element.⁶⁸ However, the spatial meaning of *aule* and other words for palace occurs more often than the social one. Thus, the semantics of the Byzantine equivalent for 'court' imply that the palace took up the most important role in shaping the Byzantine concept of court.

This chapter examines the court understood in spatial terms. The focus will be on the main residence of the Palaiologan emperors in Constantinople, the Blachernai palace, even though we know that they used other palaces too. Under Andronikos II and Andronikos III, for example, we see a frequent use of residences outside Constantinople, especially those in Nicaea, Nymphaion, Thessalonike, Adrianople and Didymoteichon. These palaces were used short-term and mostly for military reasons: in the early 1290s Andronikos II stayed in Nymphaion for a couple of years to defend and fortify the Anatolian border and later, during the first civil war, the counter-court of Andronikos III took up residence in several palaces in Thrace (primarily Didymoteichon). Moreover, in the early fourteenth century the palace in Thessalonike became the empress' residence for a while. However, all these palaces were secondary to the Blachernai palace in

⁶⁷ Kazhdan and McCormick, 'The Social World', 175.

⁶⁸ As I have argued in the introduction to this thesis, see page 5-6.

Constantinople and they were inhabited by necessity rather than by choice: the emperor (or empress) could not be in Constantinople, either for reasons of war or because of troubled relations within the imperial family. In essence, also in the Palaiologan period the court was sedentary and the emperors had one main palace: the Blachernai.

A study of the Blachernai palace is bound to encounter many problems. In the first place it should be noted that scholarly interest in the Blachernai palace has been limited and has suffered from the fact that the Blachernai palace is considered inferior to the other imperial palace in Constantinople, the Great Palace.⁶⁹ This is partially due to the description of the Blachernai palace as small by some foreign visitors. For example, the chronicler of the fourth crusade Robert of Clari pronounces the Great Palace in a rather formulaic description as more sizeable than the Blachernai. About the Great Palace he says that there 'were five hundred rooms which were all connected to each other (...) and there were fully thirty chapels both large and small',⁷⁰ whereas in the Blachernai palace 'there were two hundred rooms or three hundred' and 'there were fully twenty chapels'.⁷¹ Furthermore, our perception of the Blachernai as an inferior palace is also influenced by the accounts of two Spanish travellers of the fifteenth century, Ruy González de Clavijo and Pero Tafur.⁷² Tafur, for example, says that the palace 'must have been very magnificent, but now it is in such a state that both it and the city show well the evils which the people have suffered and still endure' and that 'inside, the house is badly kept, except

⁶⁹ This has been noted recently by Ruth Macrides in Ruth Macrides, 'Ceremonies and the City: the Court in Fourteenth-century Constantinople', in Jeroen Duindam, Tülay Artan, and Metin Kunt (eds.), *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires* (Leiden 2011), 217-235, 226-232 (hereafter Macrides, 'Ceremonies and the City').

⁷⁰ Robert of Clari actually speaks of Palace of Bucoleon, which in his chronicle may have been a *pars pro toto* for the entire Great Palace. Robert of Clari, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, trans. and ed. Peter Noble (BRP 3; Edinburgh 2005), 100-101, §82 (hereafter Clari, *La Conquête de Constantinople*).

⁷¹ Clari, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, 102-103, §83.

⁷² For their accounts of Byzantium see Michael Angold, 'The decline of Byzantium seen through the eyes of western travellers', in Ruth Macrides (ed.), *Travel in the Byzantine World* (Aldershot 2002), 213-232, 220-221 and 223-225.

certain parts where the emperor, the empress, and attendants can live, although cramped for space'.⁷³ However, that the Blachernai palace may have been overall smaller than the Great Palace and that it may have been in a bad state towards the very end of the empire, is not the only reason why we know so little about the main residence of the Palaiologoi – in fact, these visitors' accounts can be contrasted with many others which describe its magnificence.⁷⁴ The root of the neglect and misunderstanding of the Blachernai palace rather lies in the difference between the two Byzantine ceremony books which are the main sources for the information about the two palaces, the tenth century compilation *Book of Ceremonies* and the fourteenth century ceremony book known as Pseudo-Kodinos. Of the Great palace we know more, because the tenth century *Book of Ceremonies* describes numerous ceremonial itineraries through the Great Palace complex and calls all the rooms and buildings by name, whereas Pseudo-Kodinos, covering the Blachernai palace, mentions fewer ceremonies and focuses on stationary ceremonial, thereby referring to a limited amount of rooms which he calls by their generic names. Consequently, while the *Book of Ceremonies* lends itself to detailed descriptions of the Great palace buildings,⁷⁵ the nature of Pseudo-Kodinos has made us think of the Blachernai as a 'pitifully small' palace.⁷⁶

⁷³ Pero Tafur, *Travels and Adventures 1435-1439*, trans. and ed. M. Letts (London 1926), 145. Pero Tafur visited the emperor John VIII in 1437. Although his description of the palace may have been referring to the Blachernai palace, we cannot be certain. See further: Macrides, 'Ceremonies and the City', 230.

⁷⁴ For the perception of the Great Palace and the Blachernai palace in travellers' accounts see further Peter Schreiner, 'Zu Gast in den Kaiserpalästen Konstantinopels. Architektur und Topographie in der Sicht fremdländischer Betrachter', in Franz A. Bauer (ed.), *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen—Gestalt und Funktion* (Byzas 5; Istanbul 2006), 101-134.

⁷⁵ See for example Michael Featherstone, 'The Great Palace as reflected in the *De Cerimoniis*', in Franz A. Bauer (ed.), *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen—Gestalt und Funktion* (Byzas 5; Istanbul 2006), 47-61. Moreover, part of the Great Palace complex has been excavated, see for example Ernst Mamboury and Theodor Wiegand, *Die Kaiserpaläste von Konstantinopel zwischen Hippodrom und Marmara-Meer* (Berlin 1934) and also, for a summary oft he finds and references: Jonathan Bardill, 'Visualizing the Great Palace of the Byzantine emperors at Constantinople: architecture, text and topography', in Franz A. Bauer (ed.), *Visualisierung vom Herrschaft* (Byzas 5; Istanbul 2006), 5-48.

⁷⁶ Macrides, 'Ceremonies and the City', 232.

With this in mind, the question should be raised why the Blachernai palace was the chosen residence of the Palaiologan emperors, and not the more famous Great Palace, which was still standing by the time Michael VIII entered the capital. In this chapter, attention will be paid to the benefits of living in the Blachernai palace and to the use of the palace by the Palaiologoi: why was the Blachernai palace and surroundings the preferred residence, did the Palaiologan customs and traditions fit the palace buildings, did their leisure activities suit the Blachernai palace and surroundings, did the social constellation of the Palaiologan court go well together with the palace and how did the political and economic situation of the court relate to the architecture of the palace?

Thus far, few scholars have dedicated studies to the architecture of the Blachernai palace and the appearance of the complex as a whole.⁷⁷ One might say that the lack of sources – hardly any material remains, some references to the palace in Byzantine texts and visitors' accounts – prevents a full understanding of the architecture, topography, the nature and the use of the palace, but this is only true to a certain extent. Admittedly, we will probably never be able to say anything with certainty about the topographical arrangement of the Blachernai complex until proper archeological excavations bring to light new findings. Yet, much can be said about the general appearance of the Blachernai complex and its buildings, providing we examine it in an interdisciplinary way. This

⁷⁷ The archeologists and architectural historians who studied the few material remains of the Blachernai palace, have mainly tried to locate the buildings which are well known through texts. This has led to many persistent misinterpretations, for example the identification of the prison mentioned by Anna Komnene with existing substructures (until today popularly known as Anemas prison, at the time of writing under restoration). It has also led to different suggestions regarding the contour of the palace complex and different views on a connection between, for example, the Blachernai palace and the late Byzantine palace known as Tekfur Saray, the only surviving example of Byzantine residential architecture, which is situated slightly more to the south, uphill. For a bibliography see Wolfgang Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbuls: Byzantion-Konstantinupolis-Istanbul bis zum Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen 1977), 224 (hereafter Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon*).

approach of the Blachernai palace has been lacking, certainly in recent years.⁷⁸ Moreover, no scholarly attention has been paid to the specific nature, use and character of the Blachernai palace in the Palaiologan period. By combining both textual and material evidence, it is my aim here to present an up-to-date version of previous research, enriched with my own survey of the palace complex area undertaken in the spring of 2012 and new finds from textual research, with a special focus on the appearance of the palace complex and palace buildings in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century.

Secondly, I would like to approach our knowledge of the Blachernai palace and its architecture differently by putting it in a wider context. Because of its unclear architecture and topography, the Blachernai palace has been overlooked in broader discussions about trends in residential architecture. This is a pity, since it may have been a crucial link in the development of residential architecture in late Byzantium. The general impression of the palace complex is that it had a different outlook and development from the other main palace in the city, the Great Palace. The latter has been described a sprawling complex, with 'comfortable, irregular, horizontal growth'.⁷⁹ The Blachernai palace, on the other hand, has been labeled a fortified castle, which was especially used as a residence by the Komnenoi, who build halls of great splendour.⁸⁰ However, these descriptions may not do justice to the changes and developments these palaces underwent during their long existence. For example, we know that a part of the Great Palace was enwalled and enforced under Nikephoros Phokas in the tenth century, while fortifications to the

⁷⁸ The forthcoming article of Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger may be seen as an example of this approach. I am grateful to Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger and Scott Redford for allowing me to read it. Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger, 'The Blachernai Palace and its Defense', in Scott Redford (ed.), *Cities and Citadels* (Istanbul, forthcoming) (hereafter Asutay-Effenberger, 'The Blachernai Palace').

⁷⁹ Paul Magdalino, 'The Byzantine Aristocratic *Oikos*', in Michael Angold (ed.), *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX-XIII Centuries* (BAR International Series 221, Oxford 1984), 92-111, 96 (hereafter Magdalino, 'The Byzantine Aristocratic *Oikos*').

⁸⁰ *ODB* I, 293, also for references.

Blachernai palace were completed as late as the 1330s.⁸¹ Thus, the Blachernai of the Palaiologoi may have been an enforced version of the Blachernai of the Komnenoi, which in turn may have been not so different from the fortified Great Palace in the tenth century. Moreover, what no-one has examined thus far is whether the Blachernai palace of the Palaiologoi was part of a regional tendency in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to fortify residences, in fact to create palace-citadels. This idea has been advanced by Slobodan Ćurčić, who relates the increase in fortification architecture in this period with the political and military insecurity of the last centuries of the Byzantine empire.⁸² It is worth investigating if the Blachernai palace as a whole can be seen as an example of the palace-citadel type, which was in vogue in the later Middle Ages, both in the East and West Mediterranean.

⁸¹ Magdalino, 'The Byzantine Aristocratic *Oikos*', 96.

⁸² Slobodan Ćurčić, 'Late Medieval Fortified Palaces in the Balkans: Security and Survival', *Mnemeio kai periballon*, 6 (2000), 11-41 (hereafter Ćurčić, 'Late Medieval Fortified Palaces').

1.1 THE BLACHERNAI PALACE AS THE RESIDENCE OF CHOICE

Initially, after having reconquered Constantinople in the summer of 1261, Michael VIII came to live in the Great Palace, and not in the Blachernai palace. Gregoras and Pachymeres try to explain how this decision was made. According to Gregoras, the Blachernai palace was not an option because it ‘was mostly filled with dust and ashes’.⁸³ Pachymeres elaborates that on the fifteenth of August of 1261, the exact day that Michael VIII solemnly marched into the city, while the sun was burning and the procession was well underway, it was decided to put him up in the Great Palace because

the one [ie. the palace] of the Blachernai was not ready to be an imperial dwelling; for it was full of smoke and Italian soot, with which banqueters of Baldwin, because of his total lack of education, had blackened the walls of the palace, so that the cleaning would be a major task; also it [moving into the Great Palace] was befitting for reasons of security for an emperor who entered the city for the first time, [the city] which was in a turbulent state.⁸⁴

In this passage Pachymeres gives two reasons why the emperor moved into the Great Palace. One has to do with the unsteady situation in Constantinople, although it is not clear why the Great Palace was a safer residence than the Blachernai palace. Perhaps because it was located further from the damaged city walls. The other reason refers to the condition of the palace. Apparently, the Blachernai palace had been left in a poor state by its previous inhabitant, the Latin ruler Baldwin II, and was in need of cleaning before an emperor could move in.

The fact that both Gregoras and Pachymeres feel the need to explain why Michael VIII took residence in the Great Palace and not in the Blachernai palace implies that the

⁸³ ἦν τὸ πλεῖστον γε καπνοῦ καὶ κόνεως ἐμπεπλησμένον (Gregoras I, 87.22-23).

⁸⁴ τὸ γὰρ τῶν Βλαχερνῶν οὐκ εὐτρεπῶς ἦν ἔχειν πρὸς τὴν τῶν βασιλέων κατοίκησιν· ἔγεμε γὰρ καπνοῦ καὶ λιγνύος Ἰταλικῆς, ἣν οἱ τοῦ Βαλδουίνου δαιταλευταὶ ἐκ πολλῆς τῆς ιδιωτείας ἐκείνου τοῖς τῶν ἀνακτόρων τοίχοις προσέπαττον, ὥς ἔργον εἶναι τὴν ἐκείνων κάθαρσιν, ἅμα δ’ ὅτι καὶ εἰς ἀσφάλειαν ἱκανῶς εἶχε βασιλεῦσι πρῶτως ἐπιβᾶσι πόλεως, τῶν πραγμάτων τεταραγμένως ἐχούσης. (Pachymeres I, 219.7-10).

latter was expected to be the imperial dwelling. We know that the previous ruler, Baldwin II, had resided in the palace too, but before 1204 the Great Palace had been mostly the imperial residence of choice.⁸⁵ It is therefore important to investigate why the Blachernai palace was so likely to become the main palace of the Palaiologoi. The reasons for choosing this palace had to do with its location in the Blachernai area: the palace complex was situated in the far north-west corner of the city, on one side bordering the sea walls of the Golden Horn, on the other side protected by land walls (fig 1). Residing in this area had several benefits. Firstly, the gates of the land walls gave immediate access to the countryside. This hinterland contained an area which was known under the name Philopation, an attractive escape from the city and popular park for hunting and leisure.⁸⁶ Although the Philopation is not mentioned by name in the Palaiologan literature, we may assume that the park was used by the Palaiologan emperors who were keen on hunting (Michael VIII and especially Andronikos III).⁸⁷ The Philopation consisted of an outer park and an inner, walled area with pavilions, among which the so-called palace of Manges.⁸⁸ The combination of a ruler's residence with a leisure park with pavilions nearby was not unusual in Anatolia. The setting and function of the Philopation, with its proximity to the Blachernai palace, has for example been compared to the Rum Seljuq palace parks from

⁸⁵ Ruth Macrides, 'The Citadel of Byzantine Constantinople' in Scott Redford ed. *Cities and Citadels* (Istanbul, forthcoming), 7 and 16 (hereafter Macrides, 'The Citadel'). I am grateful to Ruth Macrides for allowing me to read this article before publication.

⁸⁶ That the Philopation was located outside the Blachernai walls and not two kilometers more to the south, a position proposed by Raymond Janin in Raymond Janin, *Constantinople Byzantine* (Paris 1964), Map of Constantinople (hereafter Janin, *Constantinople Byzantine*), has been convincingly argued by Henry Maguire in Henry Maguire, 'The Philopation as a Setting for Imperial Ceremonial and Display', *ByzF* 30 (2011), 71-82, 71-73 (hereafter Maguire, 'The Philopation') as well as in Henry Maguire, 'Gardens and Parks in Constantinople', *DOP* 54 (2000), 251-264, 252-254 (hereafter Maguire, 'Gardens and Parks').

⁸⁷ For the Philopation and its use in Palaiologan times see Costas Constantinides, 'Byzantine Gardens and Horticulture in the Late Byzantine Period, 1204-1453: The Secular Sources', in Anthony Littlewood, Henry Maguire, and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (eds.), *Byzantine Garden Culture* (Washington D.C. 2002), 87-103, esp. 96-97 (hereafter Constantinides, 'Byzantine Gardens').

⁸⁸ Paul Magdalino notes that Raymond Janin wrongly identifies the Manges palace with the Palace of Mangana: Paul Magdalino, 'Medieval Constantinople', in Paul Magdalino (ed.), *Studies on the History and Topography of Byzantine Constantinople* (Aldershot 2007), 1-111, 81-82n147 (hereafter Magdalino, 'Medieval Constantinople'). See also Janin, *Constantinople Byzantine*, 138-145.

the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁸⁹ The park around the thirteenth-century Laskarid palace at Nymphaion can be seen as another example.⁹⁰

In the twelfth century, when the French king Louis VII was put up in the Philopation, the chronicler Odo of Deuil describes the park as a ‘lovely place’ (*deliciarium locus*), which contained ‘various kinds of game’, ‘canals and ponds’ and ‘certain palaces which the emperors had built as their springtime retreat’.⁹¹ His Byzantine contemporary, John Kinnamos, refers to the Philopation as ‘an imperial dwelling place’, which is ‘overgrown with leaves and produces rich grass’ and ‘bears everywhere a green appearance’.⁹² Since the Philopation was located outside the Blachernai area, the location of the Blachernai palace, as Steven Runciman already stated, made it easy to ride out for hunting and leisure, without the emperor having to ride through the city.⁹³ The historian Niketas Choniates further reveals that the Philopation could be seen from the Blachernai palace complex:

⁸⁹ Scott Redford, 'Thirteenth-Century Rum Seljuq Palaces and Palace Imagery', *Ars Orientalis*, 23 (1993), 219-236, 219 (hereafter Redford, 'Thirteenth-Century Rum Seljuq Palaces'). For Seljuq parks and pavilions see also: Scott Redford, 'Just Landscape in Medieval Anatolia', *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes*, 20/4 (2000), 313-324 and Scott Redford, *Landscape and the State in Medieval Anatolia: Seljuk Gardens and Pavilions of Alanya, Turkey* (BAR International Series 893; Oxford 2000).

⁹⁰ Suna Çağaptay, 'How Western is it? The Palace at Nymphaion and its Architectural Setting', in Ayla Ödekan, Engin Akyürek, and Nevra Necipoğlu (eds.), *On ikinci ve on üçüncü yüzyıllarda Bizans değişim / Change in the Byzantine world in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. I. uluslararası Sevgi Gönül Bizans araştırmaları sempozyumu / First international Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium* (Istanbul, 25-28 Haziran / June 2007, 2010), 357-362 (hereafter Çağaptay, 'How Western is it?').

⁹¹ *speciosus multimodam venationem includes, conductus etiam aquarum et stagna continens. (...) quae imperatores ad iocunditatem vernorum temporum sibi fundaverant.* (Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem* 3, ed. and trans. Virginia Gingerick Berry (New York 1965), 48) (hereafter Odo of Deuil, *De profectione*). For the Philopation and its use see further: Maguire, 'The Philopation'; Anthony Littlewood, 'Gardens of the palaces', in Henry Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204* (Washington D.C., 1997); Henry Maguire, 'Gardens and Parks in Constantinople'; Nancy P. Ševčenko, 'Wild Animals in the Byzantine Park', in Anthony Littlewood, Henry Maguire, and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (eds.), *Byzantine Garden Culture* (Washington D.C., 2002), 69-86.

⁹² ἐν δὲ τῷ καταντικρὺ τειχέων βασιλικῷ γεγρονῶς ἐνδαιτήματι, ὁ Φιλοπάτιον ὀνομάζουσιν οὐκ οἶδα εἴτε τὴν φύλιν αἰνιττόμενοι διατριβὴν (ἄνεσιν γάρ τινα παρέχεται καὶ φροντίδων ἀπαλλαγὴν τοῖς ἐκ τῶν ἀστικῶν ταραχῶν ἐνθάδε ἀπαλλασσομένοις) εἴτε καὶ τὴν φύλλοις κομῶσαν πόαν τε δαψιλῇ ἀνιείσαν (ἀμφιλαφὴς γὰρ ὁ χώρος καὶ ἐπίχλοον ἀπανταχῇ φέρει τὸ πρόσωπον), ἐντεῦθεν τῷ περιβόλῳ προσεῖχε τοῦ ἄστεος. (John Kinnamos, *Ioannis Cinnami epitome rerum ab Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis gestarum*, ed. A. Meineke (CSHB; Bonn 1863), 74.19-75.3). Translation by C. M. Brand, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus by John Kinnamos* (New York, 1976), 63.

⁹³ Steven Runciman, 'Blachernae Palace and its Decoration', in Giles Robertson and George Henderson (eds.), *Studies in Memory of David Talbot Rice* (Edinburgh, 1975), 279.

Often, he [emperor Isaac II Angelos (r. 1185-1195, and 1203-1204)] held newly wrought arrows in his hands and said that he would have them sharpened in order to pierce the hearts of the Germans. Then he would point to a window of the palace of the Blachernai through which were visible the plains outside the battlements that were suitable for horsemanship and that sloped down to the Philopatia, and he would say that the missiles would be shot through it, to strike down the Germans, thus moving his listeners to laughter.⁹⁴

This passage shows that the Philopation was situated relatively close to the walls and provided not only a beautiful view for spectators from the twelfth century Blachernai palace and a location for horse-riding and hunting, but could also accommodate military camps. This made the site of the Blachernai palace complex vulnerable when the city was under siege. Indeed, Anna Komnene implies that arrows fired off from outside the city walls could reach someone standing in a room of the Blachernai palace building ascribed to Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081-1118).⁹⁵ Similar stories are told about a pre-Komnenian structure located behind the Blachernai walls, from where Constantine IX Monomachos (r. 1042-1055) could see the enemy on the plain in front of the city and was nearly hurt by an arrow shot through the window.⁹⁶

The Blachernai palace's location next to the Constantinopolitan hinterland had another important benefit. Fresh water was channeled in from outside the city, most probably from the Hadrianic water supply line, situated north of Constantinople, in the area

⁹⁴ βέλη νεοχάλκευτα φέρων πολλάκις ἐν ταῖν χεροῖν ταῦτ' ἔφασκεν ἀκονᾶν κατὰ καρδίας παρησόμενα τῶν Ἀλαμανῶν· δεικνύων δὲ καὶ παράθυρον ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις τῶν Βλαχερνῶν, δι' ἧς ὁρατὰ ἦν τὰ ἱππήλατα πεδία τὰ ἐξῴθεν τῶν ἐπάλξεων ἐν τοῖς Φιλοπατίοις καθυπτιάζοντα, ἐκ ταύτης ἔλεγε μέλλειν ἀφιέναι τὰ βέλεμνα, βάλλειν τε καὶ καταβάλλειν τοὺς Ἀλαμανοὺς, ὥστε καὶ ἐν γέλῳ τι ἤγετο τοῖς ἀκούουσι τὰ λεγόμενα. (Niketas Choniates, *Nicetae Choniatae historia*, ed. Johannes van Dieten (Berlin 1975), 404.18-23) (hereafter Choniates). Translation by Henry Maguire in Maguire, 'Gardens and Parks in Constantinople, 235, adapted from H. J. Magoulias, trans., *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates* (Detroit 1984), 222.

⁹⁵ Anna Komnene, *Annae Comnenae Alexias*, eds. A. Kambylis and D. R. Reinsch (CFHB. Series Berolinensis XL/1; Berlin / New York 2001), 10.9.6.1-4 (hereafter Komnene, *Alexiad*).

⁹⁶ Michael Psellos, *Michel Psellos. Chronographie ou histoire d'un siècle de Byzance (976-1077)*, ed. É. Renauld, 2 vols. (Paris 1926-1928), 6.9.1-7 (hereafter Psellos) and John Zonaras, *Ioannis Zonarae epitomae historiarum libri xviii*, ed. T. Büttner-Wobst (CSHB; Bonn 1897), 628.10-629.13. For a commentary on the significance of these passages for the location of a pre-Komnenian building with a balcony looking out over the fields, see Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger, 'The Blachernai Palace'.

of the present-day Belgrade forest.⁹⁷ We know that Andronikos I Komnenos (r. 1183-1185) rebuilt the underground water channel leading to the 'agora' and fed water into it from the river Hydralis. This rebuilt conduit supplied the Blachernai area and beyond.⁹⁸ From the historian Gregoras, a frequent visitor of the Blachernai palace, we know that in Palaiologan times water was flowing in the courtyard of the palace complex.⁹⁹ The fountain on a small square in front of the Ivaz Efendi Camii, noticed by nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars, confirms the presence of waterworks in this area.¹⁰⁰ In the vicinity of the palace complex was also a natural source, or holy spring (*hagiasma*), which had been frequented by the emperors for its healing qualities from the fifth century onwards. Next to the spring stood a church, the public Blachernai church, containing several important relics and a much-revered icon.¹⁰¹ The Blachernai church was sometimes used for ceremonies by the Palaiologan emperors.¹⁰² The Blachernai area was further dotted with other churches and monasteries, among others the Chora monastery, lavishly restored in the fourteenth century by magnate Theodore Metochites.

There were more benefits to residing in the Blachernai area. The palace complex was, for example, surrounded by houses of aristocrats. As Vassilios Kidonopoulos has shown, from information about restorations and newly build houses, most of the early Palaiologan aristocrats and magnates chose their residence in the Blachernai-, Kynegoi-

⁹⁷ James Crow, Jonathan Bardill, and Richard Bayliss, *The water supply of Byzantine Constantinople* (London 2008), 22.

⁹⁸ Choniates, 329.18-330.3.

⁹⁹ Gregoras I, 431.22-432.2.

¹⁰⁰ The fountain and a large tree next to it are mentioned as a starting point for a tour of the area in Gustave Schlumberger, *Les îles des princes. Le palais et l'église des Blachernes. La grande muraille de Byzance* (Paris 1925, 2nd edition). The fountain also appears on Pervititch' insurance map (fig. 9). At present there is still a fountain in front of the Ivaz Efendi Camii.

¹⁰¹ The Blachernai spring, or *Hagiasma*, was part of the larger Blachernai church complex. In the fifth century there was a church built at the spring, at that time located outside the city walls. Emperor Leo I (457-474) added a *parekklesion* to contain relics of the Virgin imported from the Holy Land and build a *Hagion Lousma* over the spring. The first imperial apartment close to the *parekklesion* is also attributed to him. For the Blachernai church complex see Raymond Janin, *Les églises et les monastères de Constantinople* (La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin, III; Paris 1969), 161-171.

¹⁰² Pseudo-Kodinos, 243.17, 246.4-5, 286.15.

and Petra quarters, which confirms the importance of the north-west part of the city.¹⁰³ In Palaiologan Constantinople, the political and administrative centre was located in the Blachernai area and was separated from the religious centre around the Hagia Sophia.¹⁰⁴ With the presence of the imperial family and aristocrats the north-west had become a new heart of the city, opposing the old city centre which housed the Great Palace (occasionally used), the Hagia Sophia and the patriarchal seat. In between these areas, along the Golden Horn, as well as on the other side of the Golden Horn (the Byzantine suburb Pera, which in Palaiologan times contained the Genoese fortified Galata area), were the major commercial centres. Under the Palaiologoi, the great warehouses and the principal food market were situated along the coastline of the Golden Horn, between the Constantinian wall and the Theodosian/Komnenian wall.¹⁰⁵ As Paul Magdalino explains, although the shift towards this configuration started with the Komnenoi, the new outline of the city became most visible in Palaiologan Byzantium.¹⁰⁶ In this light we may perhaps put Gregoras' mention of the Blachernai area as an acropolis: the Blachernai palace and surroundings formed one of the new elevated hearts of Constantinople.¹⁰⁷

Besides the above-mentioned reasons why the surroundings of the Blachernai palace complex made it the best choice for an imperial residence, one could also argue that the customs and traditions inherited from the Komnenoi required a specific setting. In a recent publication, Ruth Macrides shows that the ceremonial of the Palaiologoi, as it appears in Pseudo-Kodinos, fitted the Blachernai palace perfectly. With its use of a limited

¹⁰³ Vassilios Kidonopoulos, *Bauten in Konstantinopel 1204-1328: Verfall und Zerstörung, Restaurierung, Umbau und Neubau von Profan- und Sakralbauten* (Wiesbaden 1994), 236 (hereafter Kidonopoulos, *Bauten in Konstantinopel*).

¹⁰⁴ Magdalino, 'Medieval Constantinople', 76.

¹⁰⁵ Pachymeres IV, 637-639 ; Gregoras I, 21 ; Gregoras II, 847. Magdalino, 'Medieval Constantinople', 100.

¹⁰⁶ Magdalino, 'Medieval Constantinople', 75ff. For a short overview of the development of Constantinople in the Middle Ages see: Paul Magdalino, 'Medieval Constantinople: Built Environment and Urban Development', in Angeliki E. Laiou (ed.), *The Economic History of Byzantium. From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Washington D.C. 2002), vol. 2, 529-537.

¹⁰⁷ Gregoras II, 775.2-3 and 11-13.

amount of space (chamber, hall and chapel around a central courtyard), appearances on high places (facilitated by the high buildings of the Komnenoi) and the occasional use of the Blachernai church, the Blachernai palace was the ideal setting for this kind of ceremonial. Such use of space could not have developed in the sprawling complex of the Great Palace, with its low palaces, courtyards and gardens. That Michael VIII chose the Blachernai palace was therefore also instigated by his wish to continue the ceremonies performed by the Komnenoi.¹⁰⁸ In addition, it may also have been that the general lifestyle of the court, which during the Komnenoi had been downsized, was centred around the imperial family, the imperial household and imperial favourites and had become less institutional in nature, a situation which befitted a different kind of residence.

In conclusion, Michael VIII's choice of the Blachernai palace as his main residence was an obvious one: despite being remote from the ancient core of the city and the Hagia Sophia, the location of the Blachernai palace complex gave easy access to the frequently used churches, important monasteries, the administrators, aristocratic houses and to Constantinopolitan hinterland. Not from the Great Palace complex in the south-east corner of the city, but from the Blachernai area the emperors could ride out to hunt without having to go through the city. The Blachernai palace complex was also the best choice with regards to the ceremonial developed by the Komnenoi and may have befitted the lifestyle of the court better than the Great Palace. Overall, it seems that the early Palaiologoi continued and elaborated the developments set in motion by their Komnenian predecessors.

¹⁰⁸ Macrides, 'The Citadel'.

1.2 THE BLACHERNAI PALACE, A FORTIFIED PALACE-CITADEL

Although little is known about the general lay-out of the Blachernai palace complex, we may assume that it looked like a citadel to early Palaiologan eyes. The fourteenth century traveller Ibn Battuta says about the Blachernai palace: ‘on top of the hill is a small citadel and the sultan’s palace’.¹⁰⁹ Geoffrey de Villehardouin, chronicler of the fourth crusade, uses the term castle (*chastel*).¹¹⁰ Also earlier sources give an impression of a high rising palace complex. Odo of Deuil, for example, says about the Blachernai palace that it is ‘the only building which rises above the walls of the city, and is actually directly above that place [the Philopation], and affords a view of its [the city’s] inhabitants’,¹¹¹ and that the palace ‘although having foundations on low ground, rises up high through a costly and ingenious construction’.¹¹² Another source, the illustrated poem in the manuscript Vaticanus Graecus 1851, praises the Blachernai palace as ‘the magnificent castle (*kastron*) of the land of the Romans (...), the castle with which no other can be compared at all’.¹¹³ Kantakouzenos and Gregoras sometimes refer to the Blachernai palace complex as fortress (*phrourion*) or castle (*kastelion*).¹¹⁴ Their description of attacks on Constantinople during the second civil war confirms that the palace complex was a citadel in the fourteenth century. For example, when Kantakouzenos tried to take the palace in 1347, he had entered

¹⁰⁹ Ibn Battuta, *Ibn Battuta. Travels in Asia and Africa (selections)*, trans. H. A. R. Gibb (London 1929), 160 (hereafter Ibn Battuta, *Travels*).

¹¹⁰ Geoffroy de Villehardouin *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. and trans. Edmond Faral, 2 vols. (Paris, 2nd edition 1961), vol. 2, §250, 52 (hereafter Villehardouin, *La Conquête*).

¹¹¹ imperiale namque palatium et singulare, quod muris supereminet urbis, istum sub se habet locum et inhabitantium in eo fovet aspectum (Odo of Deuil, *De profectione*, 48).

¹¹² ibi palatium quod dicitur Blasserna fundatur quidem in humili, sed sumptu et arte decenti proceritate consurgit (Odo of Deuil, *De profectione*, 64).

¹¹³ τοῦ κάστρου τοῦ περιφανοῦς τῆς χώρας τῶν ῥωμαίων (...) ἢ μᾶλλον τῶν ὑπ’ οὐρανὸν ἀπάντων τοῦ καλλίου (MS Vaticanus graecus 1851, fol. 6r.2-4-6v.1-2, here in the edition of Ioannes Spatharakis, *The portrait in Byzantine illuminated manuscripts* (Leiden, 1976), 220-227, 225). Translation after Maguire, ‘The Philopation’, 75. For references on the poem and its illustrations see: Cecily Hennessy, ‘A Child Bride and her Representation in the Vatican *Epithalamion*, Cod. Gr. 1851’, *BMGS* 30/2 (2006), 115-150 and Cecily Hilsdale, ‘Constructing a Byzantine Augusta: A Greek Book for a French Bride’, *The Art Bulletin*, 87/3 (2005), 458-483.

¹¹⁴ *phrourion*: Kantakouzenos II, 611.21-22 ; *kastelion*: Kantakouzenos II, 612.1 and Gregoras III, 242.23. See also Macrides, ‘The Citadel’.

the city through an opening in the Golden Gate (south in the city wall) and had made his way up north to the Blachernai palace, to find empress Anna ‘enclosed in that citadel’, says Gregoras.¹¹⁵ Via messengers and mediators several attempts were made to persuade her to open the gates. This means that the palace complex in its entirety could be closed off. However, the soldiers of Kantakouzenos’ army were not happy with the negotiations and decided to take the citadel by force, without telling Kantakouzenos. They formed a ring around the castle, armed with weapons and torches, burned its outer gate and took and plundered the lower part, while preparing to sack the rest of the palace complex, only to be called back by Kantakouzenos just in time.¹¹⁶ Overall, Gregoras’ story of the siege implies that the palace as a whole was enforced (both the imperial residence and the section around it), and could be secured by closing and guarding the gates and defending its walls. The soldiers of Kantakouzenos were able to encircle the whole complex and could enter it only by burning the gate. This shows that it must have been a palace-citadel, at least by the mid-fourteenth century.

With its castle-like appearance, the Blachernai palace can be seen as an early example of late medieval palace-citadels, which are known from both the West as well as Byzantium and the Balkans.¹¹⁷ According to Slobodan Ćurčić, whether a fortified residence can be classified as a palace-citadel is determined by its degree of fortification within the fortified settlement itself: the palace-citadel was not only protected against an external enemy, but also against potential enemies inside the settlement.¹¹⁸ A fine example is the fifteenth century citadel-palace of Smederevo in Serbia, which incorporates the

¹¹⁵ τῆς ἀκροπόλεως ταύτης ἐντὸς συγκλεισθεῖσα (Gregoras II, 775.2-3).

¹¹⁶ Gregoras II, 778.6-779.9.

¹¹⁷ For examples of palace-citadels in Byzantium and the Balkans see Ćurčić, ‘Late Medieval Fortified Palaces’.

¹¹⁸ Slobodan Ćurčić and Evangelia Hadjistryphonos, *Secular Medieval Architecture in the Balkans 1300-1500 and its Preservation* (Thessaloniki 1997), 37 (hereafter Ćurčić and Hadjistryphonos, *Secular Medieval Architecture*).

residence of Despot Đurađ Branković.¹¹⁹ Ćurčić believes that the Constantinopolitan palace known as Tekfur Saray should be seen as a Byzantine example of the palace-citadel type, perhaps the oldest example of a palace of this kind in the Balkans and a paradigm for later palace-citadels. Because it is built in-between two city walls (the main wall and the remains of its *proteichisma*, forewall) and has a facade facing an inner courtyard, it can be qualified as a fortified palace. A tower is linked to the southwest corner of the complex, which also fits with another essential of the palace-citadel type: the use of a tower or donjon connected to the main ceremonial wing.¹²⁰

If these are the key criteria of the late medieval palace-citadel type (enwalled and fortified, within a fortified settlement or city, tower or donjon, main ceremonial wing) the Blachernai palace should also be qualified as such – even though it is overlooked by Ćurčić. Its fortifications inside the city walls may have developed throughout the centuries, but in the mid-fourteenth century it certainly meets the criteria of a palace-citadel. By then, within the completely enwalled large city of Constantinople, the palace was fortified and looked like a castle or fortress. As we will see below, also architectural remains (walls and towers) point at a semi-defensive function of the palace.

The story of the 1347 siege shows that the weakness of the Blachernai palace's defense lay inside the city. On the occasion when the palace citadel was successfully taken, the besieging party had entered through a city gate more towards the south and had moved north towards the palace. This happened not only in 1347 but also in 1328 when Andronikos III and his troops came to the palace gate. This time, however, there was no siege and the gate was opened.¹²¹ Both events indicate that from the outside, that is from

¹¹⁹ Jovan Nešković, 'Citadel. Smederevo, Yugoslavia', in: Ćurčić and Hadjistryphonos, *Secular Medieval Architecture*, 208-211.

¹²⁰ Ćurčić and Hadjistryphonos, *Secular Medieval Architecture*, 39.

¹²¹ Gregoras I, 420.8-423.15.

outside the city walls, the palace must have been virtually impossible to take in Palaiologan times. It is important to note that this protection of the Blachernai area had not always been present and that the walls had been constructed over a long period of time. It was under the Komnenoi that the walls enclosing the Blachernai area were completed and were linked with the old Theodosian walls, thereby adding extra space and security to the Blachernai quarter.¹²² All maps, perhaps the map of Müller-Wiener most accurately (fig. 2), show the situation from Manuel I Komnenos and after, and reflect the situation under the early Palaiologoi. The Komnenian enlargement and protection of the area was an incentive for the increasing importance of the North-West of the city, which came to fruition in Palaiologan times. With its protective function, the wall may also have 'signaled the beginning of a new era of concern for the external security of palaces'.¹²³

The Palaiologoi made no major changes to the enforcements, but restored the defensive city walls protecting the Blachernai area. Pachymeres claims that soon after he entered the city, Michael VIII made the repair of the walls of the city one of his priorities, because they were in such bad shape that even when the gates were closed it was possible to enter Constantinople.¹²⁴ However, we do not know if the walls of the Blachernai area were restored, even though there is evidence that the emperor undertook restoration of the palace complex itself.¹²⁵ With regard to the walls, it has been suggested that Michael VIII

¹²² Only from the seventh century there had been walls built at this location, which had been often reinforced, extended or added to. The first wall had been erected under emperor Heraclius (r. 610-641) in order to protect the Blachernai church. A u-shaped wall in front of the wall was constructed by emperor Leo V (r. 813-820), of which the southern part was built by Michael II (r. 820-829) and his son Theophilus (r. 829-842), who also added two towers. Walls stretching in a bow from this point towards Tekfur Saray were built by Manuel I Komnenos (r. 1118-1180). For the walls around the Blachernai area see Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon*, 301-305.

¹²³ Ćurčić, 'Late Medieval Fortified Palaces', 12.

¹²⁴ Pachymeres I, 215.26-27. See also Talbot, 'The Restoration of Constantinople under Michael VIII', *DOP* 47 (1993), 243-261, 249 (hereafter Talbot, 'The Restoration of Constantinople').

¹²⁵ The restoration works of the Blachernai palace are mentioned in a *chrysobull* of 1272, issued by Michael VIII, see Ioannes Zepos and Panagiotes Zepos *Jus Graecoromanum*, 8 vols. (Athens 1931) vol. 1, 659-666, 665.

focused mainly on the restoration of the sea walls.¹²⁶ His son, Andronikos II, continued the works of his father and undertook restoration of the Blachernai walls, says Gregoras.¹²⁷ This is corroborated by material evidence: in the wall of Manuel Komnenos, above the Eğrikapı, there used to be an inscription, which points at a restoration by Andronikos II: ‘Andronikos Palaiologos, emperor by the grace of God and *autokrator* of the Romans, in the year 1285/86’.¹²⁸ Another short inscription in the Blachernai walls, by way of spolium inserted upside down in the masonry of a tower in Manuel Komnenos’ wall during restorations of 1441, indicates that more restoration work was done by Andronikos II – although it remains unclear where exactly – in the year 6824 [1317/1318], November 4.¹²⁹ If the inscription refers to restorations of the Blachernai walls indeed, these restorations may be linked to the earthquake of 1315.¹³⁰ Also later the walls of the city were restored. In 1342 for example, after court official Apokaukos had come to the palace to visit the empress Anna of Savoy, putting himself in a good light, he decided to quickly restore the walls of Constantinople, ‘starting with the gates in front of the palace’ and continuing towards the Golden Gate.¹³¹ Clearly, this included the gates of the walls protecting the palace complex.

Inside the fortified city walls, the Blachernai palace complex was enwalled too, at least in Palaiologan times – hence its citadel-like appearance. Because some small parts of

¹²⁶ Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger, *Die Landmauer von Konstantinopel-Istanbul* (Berlin 2007), 128 (hereafter Asutay-Effenberger, *Die Landmauer*).

¹²⁷ Gregoras I, 470.2-3.

¹²⁸ ἀνδρόνικος ἐν χῶ τῷ θεῷ πιστὸς βασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ ῥωμαίων ὁ παλαιολόγος ἔτους ‘ςψζδ’ (Theodor Preger, ‘Studien zur Topographie Konstantinopels. I. Das Tor Πολύανδρος oder Μυρίανδρος’ in *BZ* 14 (1905) 461-471, here at 470, no. 15). See also Asutay-Effenberger, *Die Landmauer*, 129.

¹²⁹ See for references and a discussion of the right reading and date (1317 or 1318) of the inscription Asutay-Effenberger, *Die Landmauer*, 130. It has been suggested that Andronikos II made the restorations, to which this inscription refers, with money from his wife Irene, after her death in that year. Alexander van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople. The Walls of the City and Adjoining Historical Sites* (London 1899), 126 (hereafter Van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople*); Asutay-Effenberger, *Die Landmauer*, 130.

¹³⁰ Asutay-Effenberger, *Die Landmauer*, 130-131.

¹³¹ ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τῶν πρὸ τοῦ παλατίου πυλῶν (Gregoras II, 711.19-20).

these walls can still be found in situ, we can have an idea of the possible contour of the Blachernai palace complex. The northern limit of the palace complex stretched from the present day Emir Buhari Tekkesi towards the east, turning to the south at the Ebuzer Gifari Camii (marked as A (the tekke) to B (the mosque) on the Blachernai region map of Müller-Wiener, see fig. 2). Parts of this wall, which served to make a platform, are still present (fig. 3, 4 and 5). Although nowadays intersected by stairs, the wall should be imagined as an uninterrupted wall, which can be dated to the Komnenian period based on the presence of internal beams and the use of recessed brick technique. The part of the wall from the tekke to the stairs (from A to the stairs on fig. 2) is in a bad state. Still visible is a higher part of it (ca. two to three metres above ground level) with two rows of narrow windows (fig. 5). The wall is made out of six layers of stone blocks, each with a single or double layer of bricks in between, and alternated with bands of bricks in the recessed brick technique (nine layers of bricks in total, five or four of which were recessed). The other part of the northern wall which has been preserved (from the stairs to point B on fig. 2), is again made of stone block layers, each with a single layer of bricks in between, alternated with a band of bricks in the recessed brick technique (counting nine bricks in total, five of which were recessed and four of which were visible, see fig 4). At the corner, the wall has been altered and enforced during Ottoman times (point B on fig. 2, and fig. 4).

From the Ebuzer Gifari Camii (point B), the outer wall turns southwards to form the eastern limit of the palace complex (B to C on fig. 2). Also this wall, a relatively long and uninterrupted stretch, can still be observed today, though tucked away behind houses (fig. 7 and 8). This wall is made of more bricks than stone blocks, alternating bands of bricks with bands of stone blocks in three or four layers, each with double layers of bricks in between. At some places recessed brick technique is visible, even though the bad quality

of the bricks has caused much deterioration. Like the northern wall, this eastern wall clearly creates a platform. The north-eastern limits of the palace complex are therefore generally agreed upon by archeologists and architectural historians. The map of Müller-Wiener (fig. 2), the most cautious, shows this border of the palace complex.

Less clear is where the south border of the palace complex was situated. A recent article by Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger locates it at the level of Eğrikapı, arguing that from the point where at present the Eğrikapı Caddesi reaches the Çetlik Papuçlu Sokağı the wall turned north-westwards to join the early Komnenian substructures next to the Emir Buhari Tekkesi, substructures which are popularly known as the Prison of Anemas.¹³² Of this wall there are no remains left. The only indication of a south border at this point is a small part of a wall extending city-wards from tower 13 in the Komnenian wall (I have indicated tower 13 on fig. 2, but the extension of the wall southeastwards is only visible on Pervititch's insurance map of 1929, fig. 9).¹³³ With the absence of further archeological evidence, Asutay-Effenberger strengthens her argument for the location of the south limit of the palace complex with evidence from Niketas Choniates, who mentions a south gate, in combination with Alfons Maria Schneider's assertion that the course of the Eğrikapı

¹³² Asutay-Effenberger, 'The Blachernai Palace'. This turn of the eastern wall is visible on Pervititch's 1929 insurance map (fig. 9), on Schneider's map of 1951 and partially on Dirimtekin's 1958 map (see Alfons Maria Schneider, 'Die Blachernen', *Oriens*, 4 (1951), 82-120 ; Feridun Dirimtekin, 'Les Fouilles dans la Région des Blachernes pour retrouver les substructions des Palais des Comnènes', *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi*, 9/2 (1959), 24-31, Lev. VII, 2). On Van Millingen's map the wall indicating the eastern border of the palace complex does not make a turn (instead, it stretches rather vaguely more to the south), while the wall on Meyer-Plath and Schneider's map of 1943 and Müller-Wiener's map (fig. 2) does not reach this far south (see Van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople*, opposite 109 ; Bruno Meyer-Plath and Alfons Maria Schneider, *Die Landmauer von Konstantinopel, Teil II* (Berlin 1943), 40). Papadopoulos (1928) indicates a hypothetical south limit by using a dotted line on his plan, showing that this course of the south border is not based on the presence of actual walls (Jean B. Papadopoulos, *Les palais et les églises des Blachernes* (Thessalonike 1928), 179) (hereafter Papadopoulos, *Les Palais*).

¹³³ This piece of wall, which does not appear on some topographies, must have indicated where the platform of the Blachernai palace complex reached its south-west border. Although Van Millingen assumes that this wall extended southwards to the so-called Mumhane wall (Van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople*, opposite 109), which lies between the Blachernai palace complex and Tekfur Saray, and Papadopoulos suggests that the wall extended more eastwards (Papadopoulos, *Les Palais*, 179), this should be seen as speculation.

Caddesi can be traced back to Byzantine times.¹³⁴ Schneider's claim is based on the assumption that streets on which Byzantine or fifteenth- or sixteenth century monuments are located, must be late Byzantine streets.¹³⁵ Choniates' passage speaks of a 'south gate of the Blachernai palace' (τὴν μεσημβρινὴν πύλην τῶν ἐν Βλαχέρναις ἀρχείων),¹³⁶ to which the corpse of the rebel John Komnenos 'The Fat' was attached around 1200, while 'the emperor [Alexios III], having gone up into his royal dwelling above, looked down' upon the corpse.¹³⁷ However, because Choniates does not give any clue as to the location of the southern palace gate, we cannot link it with certainty to Schneider's idea about the Eğrikapı Caddesi being a late Byzantine public street.

In conclusion, we know that the late Byzantine Blachernai palace complex was enwalled and we have a fairly good idea about its west, northwest, north and eastern borders, but the location of the southern border remains problematic¹³⁸. Related to this problem is the division of the entire palace complex into a higher and lower section. Ruth Macrides identifies the gate known as *Ta Hypsela*, which gave access to the palace precinct through the northern border of the palace complex, with the outer 'gate of the lower palace towards the holy church of Blachernai' (τὴν πρὸς τὸν ἐν Βλαχέρναις θεῖον νεὼν ἀναγομένην πύλην τοῦ κάτω παλατίου) mentioned by Gregoras in a passage which concerns the siege of the palace by John V Palaiologos in 1354.¹³⁹ If we indeed identify *Ta*

¹³⁴ Asutay-Effenberger, 'The Blachernai Palace'.

¹³⁵ Alfons Maria Schneider, 'Die Blachernen', *Oriens* 4 (1951), 82-120, 96-97 (hereafter Schneider, 'Die Blachernen').

¹³⁶ Choniates, 527.23

¹³⁷ Καὶ βασιλεὺς τὰς ἄνωθεν αὐτῆς ἀρχικὰς διαίτας εἰσανιὼν ἐθεῖτο κάτωθεν (Choniates, 528.2).

¹³⁸ Another important question is whether this enwalled area extended all the way towards the higher situated palace known as Tekfur Saray, south of the Eğrikapı. The problem is that we have no evidence of walls, nor of any substructures or palace buildings between Eğrikapı Caddesi and Tekfur Saray. The only possible indication of a connection between the Blachernai palace and Tekfur Saray is an isolated piece of wall known as Mumhane wall (clearly indicated on Meyer-Plath and Schneider's map, see Bruno Meyer-Plath and Alfons Maria Schneider, *Die Landmauer von Konstantinopel, Teil II* (Berlin 1943), 40). However, the function of this wall remains unclear and it seems therefore impossible to say anything conclusive about the connection between the Blachernai complex and Tekfur Saray.

¹³⁹ Gregoras III, 242.19-24. Macrides, 'The Citadel'.

Hypsela with a gate leading from the outside to the lower part of the palace complex, the area directly to the south of it must have been the ‘lower’ palace. I use inverted commas because the word low hardly applies to the area directly south of the *Hagiasma*. As I have shown above, at that point is still visible how the slope goes up and how it has been artificially turned into a platform (with a height of ca. 20-30 meters, fig. 3), creating the northern border of the palace complex (A to B on fig. 2).¹⁴⁰

A closer look at other passages of Byzantine historians tells a little more about the division of the Blachernai palace in two parts. When Gregoras refers to Kantakouzenos’ siege of Constantinople in 1347 he claims that Kantakouzenos’ soldiers were encircling the palace after which they set fire to ‘the gate to the precinct of the acropolis of Blachernai’ (τὴν πρὸς τῷ τεμένει τῶν Βλαχερνῶν τῆς ἀκροπόλεως πύλιν), and that a mass of soldiers streamed in and thus seized ‘the sea coast part of the acropolis’ (τὸ παράλιον οὕτω τῆς ἀκροπόλεως μέρος) and plundered the properties of the inhabitants there, while the ‘upper parts of the acropolis’ (τῶν ἀνωτέρω τῆς ἀκροπόλεως μερῶν) were in danger of being taken too.¹⁴¹ It is possible that in this passage the ‘lower part of the acropolis’ refers to the area from the palace citadel towards the sea (the Golden Horn), while the higher parts of the acropolis refer to the palace complex on the terraced platform. In that case it remains puzzling, however, which gate was burned to give access to this part of the acropolis. We know that Kantakouzenos and his soldiers had already entered the city by forcing open the Golden Gate and had moved towards the Blachernai area. Gregoras says that after having tried to negotiate access into the palace, Kantakouzenos withdrew to ‘the high houses opposite the palace’ in order to deliberate on a siege.¹⁴² Kantakouzenos says that he stayed in the Palace of the Porphyrogennetos.¹⁴³ Both remarks combined, we can conclude that the Palace of the Porphyrogennetos was not part of the Blachernai palace complex, but was lying opposite the palace. In that case, the lower ‘sea side’ section of the palace may indeed have been on the platform south of the Blachernai church, while the higher section was more towards the south, and the Palace

¹⁴⁰ It has been suggested that on this platform, more to the south-west, where the Ivaz Efendi Camii is standing, in Komnenian and Palaiologan times the *triklinos* built by Alexios I Komnenos was located (also called *Alexiakos*), see Asutay-Effenberger, ‘The Blachernai Palace’. If this was the case, was the *Alexiakos* part of the ‘lower’ palace?

¹⁴¹ Gregoras II, 778.23-779.6.

¹⁴² Gregoras II, 774.22.

¹⁴³ Kantakouzenos II, 607.11 and 19.

of the Porphyrogennetos lay somewhere opposite. The precise location of the ‘lower part’ and which buildings were situated in it remains unclear.

The division in a lower section and a higher imperial palace section can also be seen in Kantakouzenos’ narrative of the above-mentioned events. He says that the ‘fortress of Blachernai, the part which is around the palace fortress, which is called Castle’ (τὸ ἐν Βλαχέρναις φρούριον, μέρος καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦ περὶ τὰ βασιλεία φρουρίου ὄν, Καστέλιον προσαγορευόμενον) was plundered by the soldiers without his knowledge.¹⁴⁴ It appears that the part around the palace ‘castle’ was part of the entire fortress. He does not mention a particular gate.

To divide the palace complex in a higher and lower section is in compliance with the natural terrain: the area from the Golden Horn to Tekfur Saray ascends around 60 meters and somewhere in the middle of this ascent, on the aforementioned, partially artificial platform at ca. 30 meter, stood several palace buildings.¹⁴⁵ It is possible that there was a second level, ascending from this platform in southeastern direction. The terrain namely ascends ca. another 10 meters towards the south-east, reaching a high point where the present-day Çetlik Pabuçlu Caddesi is located. This is best visible on the map of Müller-Wiener (fig. 2), which indicates height lines. Just west from the Çetlik Pabuçlu Caddesi, in fact parallel to this street, remains of another wall have been found, creating a platform towards the east (from Y to Z on fig. 2, but better visible on Pervititch’ map, fig. 9). This platform must have been higher than the earlier mentioned platform (namely at its highest point ca. 37 meter above sea level). It is plausible that this platform extended more towards the south and was the ‘high’ part of the palace (fig. 10).¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Kantakouzenos III, 611.22-612.1.

¹⁴⁵ Through the tenth-century ceremony book we know that already the earliest imperial structures (four *triklinoi*), built in the fifth-sixth centuries adjacent to the Chapel of the Holy Reliquary, which was in turn a side chapel of the Blachernai church, were partially erected on terraces on the slope. These reception halls were erected to each other and had chambers attached to them. Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Le livre des cérémonies*, ed. Albert Vogt, 2 vols. (Paris, 1935-1939) vol. 2, 152, 154 and Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *Constantini Porphyrogeniti imperatoris de cerimoniis aulae Byzantinae libri duo*, ed. J. J. Reiske (CSHB; Bonn 1829), 542 ; Janin, *Constantinople Byzantine*, 124.

¹⁴⁶ Another high-low division was suggested by Jean Papadopoulos in the 1920s. According to him, the lower part of the Blachernai is the area between the wall in front of the *Hagiasma* and the sea walls of the

Not only walls protected the palace complex, towers were added too. Choniates says that emperor Isaac II Angelos (r. 1185-1195 and 1203-1204) ‘was determined to erect a tower at the Blachernai palace, for the defense of the palace and for its enforcement, but also as a dwelling for himself’.¹⁴⁷ Choniates’ testimony that for the construction of this tower Isaac II destroyed other buildings gave scholars the incentive to think that a great amount of spolia must have been used and consequently they identify the lofty tower in front of the substructure known as Anemas Prison as the tower of Isaac II (tower 14 on fig. 2 and fig. 11), even though an inscription has been found in a different tower, of which only half remains, one tower to the south in Manuel I Komnenos’ wall, with a dedication to Isaac II Angelos and the year 1186/1187 (tower 13 on fig. 2, fig. 12).¹⁴⁸ This inscription then, should be seen as a spolium. However, if we look closer at the inscription and how it fits into the masonry of the said tower, there seems no doubt that it is in its original place (fig. 13). There is no reason to doubt that this tower, which was a residential tower too, is dedicated to Isaac II Angelos. Thus, I would like to suggest that the tower with inscription (tower no. 13), and not the enormous residential tower with windows, should be identified with the tower of Isaac II Angelos mentioned in Choniates. In any case, the tower with the inscription was residential and also the architecture of the grand tower with its large

Golden Horn. This does not seem likely, if we assume that palace buildings were not located amidst public buildings in this area (like the Blachernai church). Papadopoulos’ higher part roughly corresponds with the entire palace complex as described above by me, see Papadopoulos, *Les Palais*, 63-66. Papadopoulos also subdivides the high part of Blachernai, which I identified as the palace complex, into two parts: he thinks there was a western lower part and an eastern higher part, which should be seen as a hill at the foot of the sixth hill of Constantinople. In the western part he locates the palace buildings ascribed to the Komnenoi (the *triklinos* of Alexios Komnenos and the palace of Manuel Komnenos), while the older *triklinos* of the Danube would have been located at the higher eastern section (Papadopoulos, *Les Palais*, 67-68). Although I cannot agree with his location of the buildings, I think he is correct in dividing the partly artificially made Blachernai palace complex in a higher and lower part, and that the higher part should be sought more to the south-east.

¹⁴⁷ προθέμενος δὲ καὶ πύργον τεκτίνασθαι κατὰ τὸ ἐν Βλαχέρναις παλάτιον, ἅμα μὲν εἰς ἔρημα τῶν ἀνακτόρων, ὡς ἔφασκε, καὶ ὑπέρισμα, ἅμα δὲ καὶ εἰς ἐνοίκησιν ἑαυτοῦ (Choniates, 442.11-13).

¹⁴⁸ For the problem of identifying the tower of Isaac II Angelos and for references, see Asutay-Effenberger, *Die Landmauer*, 131-134. In her more recent article on the defence of the Blachernai palace Asutay-Effenberger seems to accept the identification of the tower in front of the so-called Anemas prison as Isaac Angelos’ tower, see Asutay-Effenberger, ‘The Blachernai Palace.’

windows and columns to support a balcony (fig. 11), points at a use which was not primarily defensive. The latter may be seen as an example of military architecture (Gustave Schlumberger hails the tower as military medieval oriental architecture ‘dans tout sa grandeur’¹⁴⁹), but had it been pure fortification architecture, the tower would have shown narrow slits instead of large windows and would perhaps not have had a viewing place at that level.¹⁵⁰

Other examples in the Mediterranean region indicate that attaching semi-residential towers to the outside of a palace was by no means exceptional.¹⁵¹ Moreover, as Ruth Macrides has shown, middle- and late Byzantine textual evidence reinforces the idea of a palace complex functioning as an observation tower.¹⁵² Michael Psellos, for example, describes Constantine IX Monomachos as ‘seated with the empress on a projecting chamber’ to watch the usurper Tornikes assembling his army in front of the city walls.¹⁵³ Choniates says that Alexios III sat as a spectator in the exceedingly tall buildings to watch a battle during the fourth crusade,¹⁵⁴ and Pachymeres claims that Michael VIII ‘stood above [...] in the palace of Blachernai’ looking out over a procession of prisoners.¹⁵⁵ It is possible that the palace towers were used as look-outs for these military events, although none of the above descriptions specifically designates the viewing spaces as towers. Besides, Choniates’ description of the tower built by Isaac II implies that the reason to build a tower was only partly residential, and that defense played an important part too. In this the Blachernai palace was no exception either: that towers blended residential and

¹⁴⁹ Schlumberger, *Les îles des princes*, 343.

¹⁵⁰ For different late medieval towers, residential and non-residential, see Ćurčić and Hadjistryphonos, *Secular Medieval Architecture*, 213-241.

¹⁵¹ Two examples are the kiosk of the royal palace at Konya, built by Kilidj Arslan II in 1173-4 and the Torre Pisana of the Palazzo Reale of the Normans in Palermo, dating from the 1140s. See: Ćurčić, *Architecture in the Balkans. From Diocletian to Süleyman the Magnificent* (New Haven and London 2010), 353-354.

¹⁵² Macrides, ‘The Citadel’.

¹⁵³ ἐπὶ τινος προβεβλημένου τῶν ἀνακτόρων οἰκήματος ἅμα ταῖς βασιλίσι καθῆστο (Psellos, 6.109.3-4).

¹⁵⁴ Choniates, 544.11-13.

¹⁵⁵ ἴστατο μὲν ἄνωθεν (...) ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐν τοῖς ἀνακτόροις τῶν Βλαχερνῶν (Pachymeres II, 651.8-9).

military features, or, as Slobodan Ćurčić puts it, security and comfort, can be seen in many other palace-citadel examples of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹⁵⁶ Also towers in thirteenth century Rum Seljuq palace-citadel architecture had a semi-residential function.¹⁵⁷

The Palaiologoi added towers to the Blachernai palace too, but these were meant as fortifications and storage spaces and not so much as residential buildings. According to Gregoras, when a Serbian siege was feared in 1334, emperor Andronikos III added tower fortifications to the Blachernai palace in anticipation: ‘in the first place he [Andronikos III] fortified the imperial palace and the gate with enormous towers and put inside a great amount of grain by way of supply for most [inhabitants] of the castle and himself, in case there was need’.¹⁵⁸

That the Palaiologan towers were more defensive than the previously built tower enforcements, firmly places the Blachernai palace within the development of the architectural palace-citadel type. Slobodan Ćurčić states that during the course of the fourteenth century ‘security, as a concern, completely displaced comfort in residential architecture of the Balkans’.¹⁵⁹ The development of the Blachernai palace complies with this theory. The defensive tower additions of the fourteenth century show that the need for security was beginning to prevail. Thus, the Blachernai palace may have been an important key in the gradual process of replacing comfort for security in the late medieval residential architecture of Byzantium.

As far as access to the citadel-like palace complex is concerned, through the earlier mentioned passage in Choniates about Alexios III gazing down the corpse of a rebel from

¹⁵⁶ Ćurčić and Hadjistryphonos, *Secular Medieval Architecture*, 41.

¹⁵⁷ Redford, ‘Thirteenth-Century Rum Seljuq Palaces’, 220.

¹⁵⁸ Τὰ μὲν οὖν πρῶτα πύργοις μεγίστοις ὠχύρωσε τὰς βασιλείους ἀνὰς καὶ πύλας καὶ σίτου πλῆθος ἐντέθεικε διαρκέσον ἐς πλεῖστον τοῖς τε φρουροῖς καὶ αὐτῷ, εἰ δεήσειεν. (Gregoras I, 496.11-13).

¹⁵⁹ Ćurčić and Hadjistryphonos, *Secular Medieval Architecture*, 41.

his palace, we know of a ‘southern gate of the Blachernai palace,’ which at least existed around the year 1200. Its location cannot be specified, nor can it be confirmed that it was in use in early Palaiologan times, since Palaiologan sources do not refer to a southern gate. In contrast, we do have detailed information about the northern gate, *Ta Hypsela*, ‘High Places’. In a passage referring to the transfer of an icon from the Hodegon monastery to the palace during Easter, Pseudo-Kodinos mentions two different gates in the palace complex, one of which was an inner gate, the other an outer gate, *Ta Hypsela*:

Staying in the palace from the first of these [vigils], the icon of the most holy Theotokos Hodegetria remains [in the palace] until the Easter Sunday of our great Lord. Upon its arrival, the emperor meets the icon at the gate of the palace courtyard, and when it leaves on the Second day [Easter Monday] he accompanies it to outside *Ta Hypsela*, and after the commemoration of the emperors has taken place there, the emperor returns.¹⁶⁰

Apparently, the emperor would meet the icon at the gate of the inner court, but upon its departure would accompany it beyond the outer gate *Ta Hypsela*. This implies that there was a precinct and an inner courtyard, both of which were accessible through gates. From Pseudo-Kodinos we also learn that every time the emperor had to leave the palace, the Varangian palace guards accompanied him to *Ta Hypsela*. The emperor would be on horseback and the guards would walk next to him, carrying their axes on their shoulders. At *Ta Hypsela*, the Varangians were to wait for the emperor’s return. Then they would escort the emperor back towards the palace, until he dismounted his horse. In this way the escort took place during all ceremonial occasions which required the emperor going out, apart from on two occasions when the emperor went to the Blachernai church. Then the Varangians accompanied him to the church.¹⁶¹ Pseudo-Kodinos confirms that the emperor went through the gate of *Ta Hypsela* on his way to the Blachernai church for a celebration of the *Hypapante* feast.¹⁶² For this reason Paul Magdalino thinks that this gate can be located on the hill to the south of the *Hagiasma*, the Blachernai shrine, the only part of the Blachernai church complex

¹⁶⁰ Ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς πρώτης αὐτῶν ἐπιδημοῦσα ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ ἡ εἰκὼν τῆς ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου τῆς ὁδηγητρίας μένει μέχρι καὶ τῆς μεγάλης Κυριακῆς τοῦ πάσχα· ἡντινα εἰκόνα ἐρχομένην μὲν ἀπαντᾷ ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐν τῇ πύλῃ τῆς τοῦ παλατίου αὐλῆς, τῇ Δευτέρᾳ δὲ ἀπερχομένην προπέμπει μέχρι καὶ τῶν Ὑψηλῶν ἐκτός, καὶ γενομένης ἐκεῖσε μνήμης τῶν βασιλέων ὁ βασιλεὺς ὑποστρέφει. (Pseudo-Kodinos, 231.1-12).

¹⁶¹ Pseudo-Kodinos, 243.17-244.8. Also Pseudo-Kodinos, 245.19-20 and 246.5-6.

¹⁶² Pseudo-Kodinos, 244.5-6,

which is still standing. Its name suggests that it was situated on an elevated place or perhaps that it was a tall structure.¹⁶³ Magdalino further proposes that *Ta Hypsela* must have been situated approximately at the spot where an archaeological survey of 1958 reveals substructures of a building.¹⁶⁴ However, I do not think that the gate was part of the excavated substructures, but must have been situated to the west of them. The construction of the north wall of the palace complex and the topography of the area makes it probable that the gate was located close to the city wall, at the location where the present-day Dervişzade sokak bends around the Emir Buhari Tekkesi (marked as X on fig. 2, and fig. 6).¹⁶⁵

At night the outer gates of the palace were closed. When the old emperor Andronikos II got very ill one night in 1332 and feared his imminent death, he could find no-one to serve him holy communion, ‘because all the gates of the palace were shut’.¹⁶⁶ It appears that there were no clergymen at hand in the palace and that the gates were closed to prevent the old emperor, under housearrest at that time, from calling for a priest and receiving communion. Also during daytime the gates were closed to keep unwanted visitors out of the palace premises. In 1328 for example, the old and practically blind emperor Andronikos II was in his private apartments, while the gates were put. The emperor was fearfully awaiting the arrival of his grandson Andronikos III and his army, when he heard an enormous noise from outside the palace and the palace gate, announcing the arrival of the young emperor and his soldiers.¹⁶⁷ We also find the closure of palace gates as a metaphor. In 1347, when empress Anna of Savoy was living in the palace and the new emperor Kantakouzenos about to move in, patriarch John was kept imprisoned:

¹⁶³ Paul Magdalino, ‘Pseudo-Kodinos’ Constantinople’, in Paul Magdalino (ed.), *Studies on the History and Topography of Byzantine Constantinople* (Aldershot, 2007), XII 1-14, 3 (hereafter Magdalino, ‘Pseudo-Kodinos’ Constantinople’).

¹⁶⁴ Magdalino, ‘Pseudo-Kodinos’ Constantinople’, 3. For the excavation: Feridun Dirimtekin, ‘Les Fouilles dans la Région des Blachernes pour retrouver les substructions des Palais des Comnènes’, *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi*, 9/2 (1959), 24-31, 29-31.

¹⁶⁵ I am very grateful to Hansgerd Hellenkemper, with whom I conducted a survey of the Blachernai palace area on 20 April 2012, for pointing this out.

¹⁶⁶ κεκλεισμένων ἅπασων τῶν περὶ τὰ βασιλεια πυλῶν (Gregoras I, 462.13). The emperor then prayed to God for salvation of his soul, took the icon he was wearing around his neck in his mouth by way of Eucharist, put himself to bed and died. For the entire story of the last evening and death of Andronikos II see Gregoras I, 461.8-463.2.

¹⁶⁷ Gregoras I, 422.3-5.

‘closed were the gates of the palace for those who wanted to speak in favour of the patriarch’, says Gregoras.¹⁶⁸ It appears that the outer gates were an essential tool in regulating access to the palace and the people living in it. Keeping them closed was a way to exercise power, though defensively. Likewise, keeping the palace gates open, for example for washerwomen to wash laundry in the water running in the courtyard and for animals to roam freely, was a way in which Andronikos III showed the lack of power of his grandfather Andronikos II in 1328, who was allowed to stay in the Blachernai palace, but became the laughingstock of his subordinates.¹⁶⁹

As I earlier mentioned, a reference to Andronikos III constructing towers in 1334 at the palace and the gates, anticipating a siege, implies that the gates may have been strengthened with towers, which were possibly used as storage spaces.¹⁷⁰ If the towers were indeed built against the outer gates of the palace, they must have given the palace an impressive outlook from the outside.

Little more is known about the outer gates of the palace complex. An epigram of Manuel Philes is dedicated to imperial statues (Ἐπίγραμμα εἰς στήλας βασιλικάς) in front of the imperial gates (πρὸ πύλων βασιλείς), which are life-like (ἐμψύχους) and therefore instill fear into one’s mind (Ἐνάγεται μὲν εἰς ὑπόμνησιν φόβου).¹⁷¹ Franz Tinnefeld thinks this refers to statues in front of the imperial gates of the palace.¹⁷² However, Philes may have been writing about the ‘imperial gate’ mentioned by Pachymeres, which most likely refers to the gate presently known as Balatkapı, leading to the small Blachernai harbour in

¹⁶⁸ Ὅθεν ἀπεκλείοντο μὲν αἱ πύλαι τῶν βασιλείων ἅπασιν, ὅσοι τῷ πατριάρχῃ συνηγοροῦντες εἶεν· (Gregoras II, 783.8-9).

¹⁶⁹ Gregoras I, 431.22-432.2.

¹⁷⁰ Gregoras I, 496.11-13.

¹⁷¹ Philes, *Carmina* (ed. Miller) II, 234, no. 221.1-4.

¹⁷² Franz Tinnefeld, 'Der Blachernenpalast in Schriftquellen der Palaiologenzeit', in Birgitt Borkopp and Thomas Steppan (eds.), *ΑΙΘΟΥΣΑ ΤΩΝ ΜΕΣΕΩΝ. Studien zur byzantinischen Kunst und Geschichte. Festschrift für Marcell Restle* (Stuttgart 2000), 277-287, 281.

the Golden Horn.¹⁷³ Thus, how the outer palace gates looked and whether they were decorated remains unclear.

Apart from an outer gate, Pseudo-Kodinos also mentions a second gate, leading to the courtyard. It is difficult to identify this gate in the sources, let alone locate it. Often authors simply speak of ‘the gate’ without specifying its location (outer or inner gate or even palace entrance). In Pseudo-Kodinos there is for example a gate which is said to have played a role when the emperor mounted a horse in the courtyard: first, the *protostrator* leads the horse to the middle of the courtyard, when

the *megas chartoularios* takes over from him and brings it by the bridle as far as the gate. He also does so when the emperor is about to dismount, namely, he brings the horse from the gate as far as the bespoken place, from where the *protostrator* takes over again, bringing it as far as the *pezeuma* [the place to dismount].¹⁷⁴

So, the *megas chartoularios* brings the emperor on his horse to ‘the gate’, after having taken over the horse from the higher ranked *protostrator* (Pseudo-Kodinos later explains that when the *protostrator* is not there, the *megas chartoularios* does the whole run and when he is away, the most eminent of the court title holders present leads the horse) and vice versa on the way back. The emperor mounted and dismounted the horse in the courtyard of the palace, and then it would be led to a gate. There is no indication that this gate was the same one as *Ta Hypsela*, in which case the Varangians would accompany the emperor as well, as we have learned before. It must therefore have been the gate to the courtyard.

¹⁷³ Pachymeres II, 469.15 and Pachymeres IV, 551.14. See also Pachymeres IV, 550n27.

¹⁷⁴ Ἐπειτα διαδεξάμενος τοῦτον ὁ μέγας χαρτουλᾶριος φέρει διὰ τοῦ χαλινοῦ ἕως τῆς πύλης. Ὡσαύτως ποιεῖ καὶ ὅποτε μέλλει πεζεύσειν ὁ βασιλεὺς, φέρων δηλονότι ἀπὸ τῆς πύλης τὸν ἵππον μέχρι καὶ τοῦ προρρηθέντος τόπου, ἀφ’ οὗ διαδέχεται πάλιν αὐτὸν ὁ πρωτοστράτωρ, φέρων ἕως καὶ τοῦ πεζεύματος. (Pseudo-Kodinos, 168.12-21).

It is plausible that the gate to the courtyard functioned as symbolic dividing line: in the courtyard, behind the gate one had to behave according to certain ceremonial regulations and one's position at court. For example, the emperor was allowed to enter the courtyard on horseback, whereas others had to dismount before entering. From the gate, one entered the courtyard on foot.¹⁷⁵ Apart from the emperor, only his sons and brothers could dismount in the courtyard, says Gregoras, but sometimes an exception was made:

And behold, the emperor brought the barbarian [Halil, son of Orhan] on horseback, for all were mounted, into the palace courtyard, which was only allowed – apart from the emperor – to the imperial sons and brothers. When the barbarian understood the exceptional honour and how respected he was (the involuntary entry was demonstrated immediately after the gate of the courtyard), he resisted and withdrew his constrained hand out of the hand of the emperor, and holding fast the bridle of the horse he was riding on, he begged to be let go in every language.¹⁷⁶

This passage shows that being on horseback beyond the gate leading to the courtyard, was a privilege rarely granted to people with a position inferior to the emperor and his brothers or sons.¹⁷⁷ The gate was the crucial point where one's status was established.

During the *parastasis*, the daily reception ceremony, the gate to the courtyard may have been protected by the Vardariots. Pseudo-Kodinos explains that during the daily reception ceremony, the guards would be positioned at various points in the courtyard. The division known as Vardariots would be stationed 'at the gate of the courtyard'.¹⁷⁸ Again, we may assume that Pseudo-Kodinos refers here to the gate leading to the courtyard and

¹⁷⁵ Kantakouzenos II, 79.4-6.

¹⁷⁶ εἶδον γὰρ ἅπαντες ὡς ἔφιππος ἔφιππον ὁ βασιλεὺς τὸν βάρβαρον εἰσήνεγκε τὰς βασιλείους αὐλάς, ὃ δὴ μόνοις ἐφεῖται μετὰ βασιλέα βασιλέων παισὶ τε καὶ ἀδελφοῖς· πλὴν ὅτι αἰσθόμενος ὁ βάρβαρος τὸ τῆς τιμῆς ὑπερβάλλον, καὶ οἷον αἰδεσθεῖς, τὸ ἀκούσιον τῆς εἰσαγωγῆς εὐθὺς ἐκ τῶν βασιλείων πυλῶν ἐνεδείκνυτο, ἀντιτείνων καὶ ἀνθέλκων τὴν κατέλκουσαν ἐκ χειρὸς χεῖρα τοῦ βασιλέως, καὶ ἐπέχων τὰς ἡνίας οὐπὲρ αὐτὸς ἐπωχεῖτο ἵππου, καὶ γλώττη πάσῃ δεόμενος ἀφεθῆναι. (Gregoras III, 506.7-15).

¹⁷⁷ A passage in Kantakouzenos shows how the rules of mounting and dismounting in the courtyard of the imperial palace were discussed in the summer of 1341, when Kantakouzenos had not entered the courtyard on horseback, while some thought he was entitled to. See Kantakouzenos II, 83.19-87.21.

¹⁷⁸ Οἱ δὲ Βαρδαριῶται εἰς τὴν τῆς αὐλῆς θύραν (Pseudo-Kodinos, 181.1-2). For more information about these guards see chapter 4.

not to the outer gate *Ta Hypsela*. That palace gates were protected is described by the traveller Ibn Battuta, who visited the palace around 1331/1332: 'We passed through four gateways, each of which had archways in which were foot soldiers with their weapons, their officer being on a carpeted platform.'¹⁷⁹ At the fifth gateway Ibn Battuta was searched by four Greek youths to see that he had no knife on him. And after that 'the man in charge of the gate rose and took me by the hand and opened the gate.'¹⁸⁰ We do not know which palace Ibn Battuta visited and it can even be disputed whether he visited a palace at all, but if we accept his report, he may have been speaking about a visit of the Great Palace or another palace in Constantinople. After all, we know that around that time the old emperor-monk Andronikos II (Anthony) was living in the Blachernai palace under house arrest, while the emperor Andronikos III was living in other palaces when he was in the city. Nonetheless, it is interesting that Ibn Battuta speaks of the custom of protecting the gates by placing guards in front of them, and an officer on a small platform. We may assume that all palace gates, also those in the Blachernai palace were guarded, especially if the emperor was living in it. After all, gates existed mainly for security reasons.

¹⁷⁹ Ibn Battuta, *Travels*, 158.

¹⁸⁰ Ibn Battuta, *Travels*, 158.

1.3 BEHIND THE GATES: PALACE BUILDINGS AND COURTYARD

There were several palace structures in or around the courtyard, although the connection between them is unclear. From Pseudo-Kodinos we learn that there was a palace which consisted of a reception hall (*triklinos*) and the emperor's private apartments (*kellion*, *kellia* or *koiton*), which were connected with a walkway (the so-called *peripatos*, which had a ceremonial function) to a palace church. In addition to the church, there was also a chapel, which was decorated with a mural painting of Saint George facing the courtyard. A *prokypsis* platform was in the courtyard too. However, through other sources we learn that not just one palace building was to be found within the compound of the Blachernai, but several palaces or extensions.

What had happened to the early Byzantine structures (*triklinoi*) adjacent to the Blachernai church is unknown, and likewise we have no information about the pre-Komnenian building used by Constantine IX Monomachos in the eleventh century. The Komnenian structures, however, were actively used by the Palaiologoi and it seems that it were these palaces which functioned as main residences. There were two reception halls or palaces built by the Komnenoi. The first one was the so-called *Alexiakos triklinos*, built by emperor Alexios I Komnenos in the eleventh century. It cannot have been far from the walls and must have been high enough to overlook the countryside, because Anna Komnene implies that an arrow was successfully shot through the window from the plain in front of the city walls.¹⁸¹ The *Alexiakos triklinos* is mentioned a couple of times in Palaiologan sources, mainly when it was used for meetings. Pachymeres, for example mentions the *Alexiakos* as location for a synod,¹⁸² and other official meetings.¹⁸³ One of

¹⁸¹ Unless this story should be read as a *topos* only. Komnene, *Alexiad*, 10.9.6.1-4.

¹⁸² During the reign of Michael VIII: Pachymeres II, 339.23 and 343.29. During the reign of Andronikos II: Pachymeres III, 103.9.

these meetings is crucial for the dating of emperor Michael VIII's move to the Blachernai palace. We know that Michael VIII had already arranged with his general Alexios Strategopoulos to start the refurbishment of the palaces before arriving triumphantly in Constantinople¹⁸⁴, but as Pachymeres' earlier mentioned passage has shown, in 1261 the Blachernai was not suitable as a residence yet. Until recently it has been believed that the restoration was extensive and may have taken years, possibly as much as ten.¹⁸⁵ However, it has now been suggested that the move to this residence took place much earlier.¹⁸⁶ In 1265 the emperor seems to have been living there, because he received patriarch Arsenios and other high members of the clergy in the *Alexiakos triklinos* and used the Blachernai palace church for ceremonial.¹⁸⁷

The *Alexiakos triklinos* only occurs once in the Palaiologan sources as part of an imperial residence: the *Alexiakos* was part of the palace building where Kantakouzenos moved into when he had become emperor (1347). By that time the rooms adjacent to the *Alexiakos* were in a ruinous state, says Gregoras: Kantakouzenos took up residence in 'the buildings, or more correctly speaking, the ruins next to the huge *triklinos* of the former emperor Alexios'.¹⁸⁸ Its bad condition may be linked to the plundering of the lower part of the palace by Kantakouzenos' soldiers in that same year. In that case, Gregoras' mention of the state of the *Alexiakos* can be called ironic: Kantakouzenos had to move into a palace which was damaged by his own soldiers, while the other part of the Blachernai palace was empress' Anna's residence. Some years later the state of Kantakouzenos' part of the

¹⁸³ In 1294 emperor Andronikos II held a meeting on the punishment of Michael Strategopoulos and Constantine Porphyrogennetos in the *Alexiakos triklinos*. See Pachymeres III, 209.29.

¹⁸⁴ Pachymeres I, 215.10-11.

¹⁸⁵ Müller-Wiener, *Bildlexikon*, 224.

¹⁸⁶ Macrides, 'The Citadel'.

¹⁸⁷ Pachymeres II, 339.22-345.12.

¹⁸⁸ αὐτὸς δ' ἐν τοῖς περὶ τὸν Ἀλεξίου τοῦ πάλαι μέγιστον τρίκλινον ἐρειπίοις μᾶλλον ἢ οἰκήμασιν εἰπεῖν δέδωκε φέρων οἰκεῖν ἑαυτόν. (Gregoras II, 784.8-10). Translation by Ruth Macrides, in Macrides, 'The Citadel'.

Blachernai palace may have improved a bit, because we know that he presided over a synod on the doctrine of Gregory Palamas in the *Alexiakos triklinos*. This means that in 1351, the year of the synod, this part of the palace was not in the presupposed ruinous state and was suitable for a large gathering.

While Kantakouzenos and his family were staying in the apartments around the *Alexiakos*, the court of Anna of Savoy occupied the rooms of other palace buildings. These were the better preserved ones: ‘For since the empress already occupied the buildings that befitted an imperial lifestyle, he [Kantakouzenos] did not eject her and her son and emperor John, nor did he object to their continuing to reside there as before.’¹⁸⁹ It was perhaps this residence befitting an imperial lifestyle that was the main permanent residence of the early Palaiologoi. Following the hypothesis of Paul Magdalino, I would like to suggest that these buildings should be identified with the palace buildings erected by Manuel I Komnenos (r. 1118-1180) and restored by Andronikos II.¹⁹⁰ Consequently, the main *triklinos* mentioned by Pseudo-Kodinos for ceremonial should be sought in this part of the palace.

The palace of Manuel I Komnenos, which was dedicated to his wife Irene, the German princess Bertha, is mentioned as a new palace (*palatium novum*, as opposed to the old palace of Alexios Komnenos) by the crusade-chronicler William of Tyre.¹⁹¹ Its dedication to Irene has probably caused Pachymeres to call it ‘the empress’ palace’: Pachymeres says that for the issue of a *chrysobull* in 1296 a meeting was called in ‘the

¹⁸⁹ οἷς μὲν γὰρ ἀρμόττουσαν ἔχειν ἐνῆν οἰκήμασι δίαίταν βασιλεῖ, ταῦτα προκατέχουσιν οὐκ ἐξέστησεν Ἄνναν τὴν βασιλίδαν ζῆν γε τῷ παιδὶ καὶ βασιλεῖ Ἰωάννῃ, οὐδ’ ἐμποδὼν ἐγεγόνει τὴν προτέραν σφᾶς ἐν τοῦτοις ἔχειν ἀνάπανσιν· (Gregoras II, 784.3-6). Translation by Paul Magdalino, in Magdalino, ‘Pseudo-Kodinos’ Constantinople’, 4.

¹⁹⁰ Magdalino, ‘Pseudo-Kodinos’ Constantinople’, 4-5.

¹⁹¹ palatium novum, quod Blachernas dicitur (Guillaume de Tyr, *Chronique*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, 2 vols. (CCCM; Turnhout, 1986), vol. 1, 171.46-47 and 172. 29-30 ; vol. 2, 945.3 and 1010.36) (hereafter Tyr). Other mentions of the Blachernai palace: Tyr, vol. 1, 169.20 and 171.50.

palace of the Despoina', where the emperor was staying at that moment.¹⁹² Because Pachymeres uses the word *anaktoron*, the palace mentioned here must have been an important, imperial palace in Constantinople. It seems likely that this points at Manuel I's palace in the Blachernai complex.¹⁹³

Manuel I's palace is called *hyperhypsilon*, 'very high' by the contemporary historian Niketas Choniates.¹⁹⁴ In general, height was an important feature of the Blachernai palace complex in Komnenian and Palaiologan times.¹⁹⁵ While the palace complex itself was situated on a slope leading to a hilltop, and gave the appearance of a castle, some of the palaces built by the Komnenoi were also several stories high –

¹⁹² τὰ τῆς δεσποίνης ἀνάκτορα (Pachymeres III, 263.8-9).

¹⁹³ There has been some discussion on the right interpretation of this 'palace of the empress'. Dimitris Kidonopoulos suggested that the Despoina for whom this palace was erected was empress Theodora, wife of Michael VIII (Kidonopoulos, *Bauten in Konstantinopel*, 153-154). Albert Failler, however, reviews all the options (separate palace of empress-mother Theodora, separate palace of Andronikos II's first wife Anne or his second wife Irene or simply the aforementioned Blachernai palace built by Manuel I, which was dedicated to the empress Irene) and concludes that the evidence is too meager, although the most logical conclusion would be that the residence of empress Irene is meant (Failler, 'Pachymeriana Novissima', 237-238).

¹⁹⁴ Choniates, 544.12-13, and also: 'a high-vaulted house, which is called Precious' (ὕψηρεφῆ δόμον, ὃς Πολύτιμος λέγεται) in Choniates, 271.43-45.

¹⁹⁵ Height and view may already have been an important feature of the Blachernai complex in the eleventh century. A pre-Komnenian palace in which Constantine IX Monomachos (r. 1042-1055) and empress Zoe resided had balconies with views over the countryside. Psellos says about the view: 'besieged as he was inside the city walls, his immediate object was to prove to his enemies that he was still alive. So, dressed in his imperial robes, he sat together with the empresses on a balcony of one of the imperial apartments, breathing faintly and groaning in a feeble manner. The only part of the enemy's army that he saw was that straight in front of him.' ὁ δὲ γε αὐτοκράτωρ πολιορκούμενος ἔσωθεν, ἵνα τέως ὀφθεῖν τῷ ἐναντίῳ στρατεύματι ζῶν, ἐσθῆτι βασιλικῇ κοσμηθεὶς ἐπὶ τινος προβεβλημένου τῶν ἀνακτόρων οἰκήματος ἅμα ταῖς βασιλίσσι καθῆστο, ὀλίγον μὲν ἐμπνέων, βραχὺ δ' ἀναστένων, καὶ τοσοῦτον ὄρων τοῦ στρατεύματος ὅποσον εἰστήκει ἐγγὺς τε καὶ κατὰ μέτωπον. (Psellos, 6, 109.1-7, translation from E. R. A. Sewter (trans.), *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers: The Chonographia of Michael Psellus* (London 1966), 157). Also Zonaras mentions a similar balcony with a view, possibly in the same building of the pre-Komnenian Blachernai complex: 'And the emperor himself [Constantine IX Monomachos], in order that he might see the enemy, and be seen by them, sat enthroned in state in one of the imperial chambers that projected in front of the others and was turned towards the plane in front of the city. [...] The emperor almost came within danger of his life, for one of the enemy drew his bow and let fly an arrow against him, which however missed the emperor and hit a young boy who was one of the servants of his bedchamber, but neither did the latter suffer a fatal wound from the arrow. The emperor's attendants immediately withdrew in fear, and he moved the throne to another spot.' καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ αὐτοκράτωρ ἐν τινι τῶν βασιλικῶν θαλάμων προβεβλημένῳ τῶν ἄλλων καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ πρὸ τῆς πόλεως ἐστραμμένῳ πεδίον καθῆστο βασιλικῶς, ἵν' ὁρῶν τοὺς ἐναντίους καὶ ὁρῶτο αὐτοῖς. [...] ὁ δὲ γε βασιλεὺς μικροῦ ἂν ἐκινδύνευσε· τῶν γάρ τις ἐναντίων τόνδ' ἐπιτοξάζεται καὶ βέλος ἀφήσιν κατ' αὐτοῦ, τὸ δ' ἀτευκτῆσαν τοῦ βασιλέως βάλλει μενράκιόν τι τῶν θαλαμηπολούντων. ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἐκείνῳ καιρία γέγονεν ἢ ἐκ τοῦ βέλους πληγῇ· οἳ γε μὴν περὶ τὸν βασιλέα δείσαντες αὐτίκα μετέστησαν, κάκεινος αὐτὸς ἄλλοσέ πη τὸν θῶκον μετήνεγκεν (Zonaras, *Epitome Historiarum*, 628.10-629.13). The translation is by Paul Magdalino in Asutay-Effenberger, 'The Blachernai Palace'.

providing magnificent views over both the city and the hinterland. Although we are not sure which palace in the Blachernai complex is meant, Geoffrey de Villehardouin says that the crusader mediators are led into a 'high palace'.¹⁹⁶ Odo of Deuil claims that when he visited the palace in the mid twelfth century, it 'rises high through its costly and skilful construction' and 'affords its inhabitants the triple pleasure of looking out upon sea, fields, and city'.¹⁹⁷ As we have seen, also emperor Isaac II Angelos built himself a high structure, ie. a tower looking out over the plains.¹⁹⁸ Other indications that the Komnenian palace building were high structures are given by Choniates who says that Alexios III (r. 1195-1203) watched the action in the exceedingly tall buildings of the Blachernai palace: '[the emperor] sat back as a spectator of the events taking place and ascended to the lofty "apartments of the Empress of the Germans" as they are called'.¹⁹⁹ And at another time the emperor, 'having gone up into his royal dwelling above, looked down' upon the corpse of a usurper, which was attached to a gate below.²⁰⁰ Also Michael VIII 'stood above [...] in the palace of the Blachernai' to watch prisoners pass by.²⁰¹

As Ruth Macrides pointed out recently, the height and style of the structures built by the Komnenoi (single-block type buildings) coincided with the development of spatially restricted ceremonial, with an emphasis of movement between *triklinos* (hall), *kellion* (chamber) and chapel, all within a relatively limited area.²⁰² Height and display of emperors on high structures seems to have been a significant factor of late Byzantine

¹⁹⁶ 'and they brought him to the high palace' si l'emporterent el halt palais de Blaquerne (Villehardouin, *La Conquête*, vol. 1, §182, 184).

¹⁹⁷ sumptu et arte decenti proceritate consurgit et triplici confinio triplicem habitantibus iocunditatem offerens mare, campos urbemque visibus alternis despicit (Deuil, *De profectione*, 64).

¹⁹⁸ Choniates, 442.38-44.

¹⁹⁹ θεατῆς τῶν δρωμένων ἐκάθητο, τοὺς ὑπερυψηλοὺς δόμους ἀνιών, οἱ τῆς ἐξ Ἀλαμανῶν δεσποίνης κυκλήσκονται (Choniates, 544.11-13). Translation by Harry J. Magoulas, *O city of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates* (Detroit, 1984), 298.

²⁰⁰ Καὶ βασιλεὺς τὰς ἄνωθεν αὐτῆς ἀρχικὰς διαίτας εἰσανιὼν ἐθεᾶτο κάτωθεν (Choniates, 528.1-2).

²⁰¹ ἴστατο μὲν ἄνωθεν [...] ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐν τοῖς ἀνακτόροις τῶν Βλαχερνῶν (Pachymeres II, 651.8-9).

²⁰² Macrides, 'The Citadel'.

ceremonial. For some of these ceremonies the tall buildings of the Blachernai palace were suitable. There was, for example, the high walkway called *peripatos*, which was used for a procession from the palace to the palace church on Palm Sunday.²⁰³ In this way the emperor could be seen processing towards the church. Then there was a high outdoor room or platform on four columns in the courtyard, a so-called *prokypsis*, which under the Palaiologoi was used at Christmas and Epiphany for a *prokypsis* ceremony. During this ceremony, trumpets sounded while curtains would be drawn and the emperor would ‘appear’ on the platform, with the light of a big candle shining on him.²⁰⁴ The origin of the *prokypsis* ceremony has been traced back to emperor Manuel I.²⁰⁵ Although we do not know if Manuel I had built a *prokypsis* platform for his appearance ceremony, we may assume that his innovation in ceremonial suited his new ‘very high’ palace in the Blachernai palace complex.²⁰⁶

When we combine the information about the interior of Manuel I’s palace, certain features stand out. Its *triklinos* must have been impressive. Choniates says about it:

The emperor’s love of magnificence is evidenced by the immensely long collonaded halls which he erected in both palaces [the Great Palace and the Blachernai palace], and which, resplendent with gold mosaics, portray in diverse colours and by means of wonderful handicraft the brave deeds he accomplished against the barbarians and the other benefits he conferred on the Romans.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ Pseudo-Kodinos, 224.5-226.5.

²⁰⁴ Pseudo-Kodinos, 197.1-198.6.

²⁰⁵ Michael Jeffreys was the first to point this out. Michael Jeffreys, ‘The Comnenian Prokypsis’, *Parergon*, 5 (1987), 38-53 (hereafter Jeffreys, ‘The Comnenian Prokypsis’).

²⁰⁶ Michael Jeffreys, on the other hand, argues that the *prokypsis* platform (or tower, as he calls it) is a secondary issue for the development of the ceremony, perhaps only relevant to the fourteenth century, and that a twelfth-century *prokypsis* ceremony may have existed away from the Blachernai, see Jeffreys, ‘The Comnenian Prokypsis’, 41.

²⁰⁷ Φιλοκαλίαν δὲ κατηγοροῦσι τοῦδε τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ οἱ κατ’ ἄμφω τὰ ἀνάκτορα ἐπιμήκιστοι καὶ περίστυλοι ἀνδρῶνες, οὓς αὐτὸς ἀνήγειρεν, οἱ ψηφίδων χρυσῶν ἐπιθέσει διαυγάζοντες τυποῦσιν ἄνθεσι βαφῆς πολυχρόου καὶ τέχνη χειρουργῶ θαυμασίᾳ ὅσα οὗτος κατὰ βαρβάρων ἠνδρίσατο ἢ ἄλλως ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον Ῥωμαίοις διεσκευάκει (Choniates, 206.4-8). Translation by Cyril Mango, in Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453: Sources and Documents* (Toronto 1986), 224 (hereafter Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*).

It appears that the palace building of Manuel I in the Blachernai complex was not only high, but its reception hall was immense and adorned with columns and gold mosaics. The mosaics depicted imperial battle scenes. There is no mention of the apartments around the reception hall, nor of additional buildings. It looks like the palace of Manuel I was a single-block type of building, several stories high and with one main hall.

It was this palace which was visited by many foreign guests, who were enthusiastic about its beauty and mentioned similar features as in Choniates' description. Benjamin of Tudela (1130-1173) says:

This King Emanuel built a great palace for the seat of his government upon the sea-coast, in addition to the palaces which his fathers built, and he called its name Blachernae. He overlaid its columns and walls with gold and silver, and engraved thereon representations of the battles before his day and of his own combats. He also set up a throne of gold and of precious stones, and a golden crown was suspended by a gold chain over the throne, so arranged that he might sit thereunder. It was inlaid with jewels of priceless value, and at night no lights were required, for every one could see by the light which the stones gave forth.²⁰⁸

Benjamin of Tudela also mentions the palace as 'great' but does not specify in what its greatness lay. The most impressive features of the palace were the interior, with its columns and walls decorated with gold and silver mosaics of imperial victories. It is noteworthy that Benjamin of Tudela pays special attention to the throne in the reception hall, which he describes as a golden throne with a precious crown above it, suspended by a chain. Also Pachymeres mentions the throne in the throne room used by Andronikos II in the early fourteenth century, which was situated 'in the innermost area of the palace (...) under the double-head', perhaps a reference to the same crown hanging above it or a similar construction above the throne, which may have depicted the double headed eagle,

²⁰⁸ Benjamin of Tudela, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, ed. and trans. Marcus Nathan Adler (London 1907), 21-22 (translation on p. 13).

the Byzantine imperial symbol.²⁰⁹ An eagle on or over the throne is also mentioned in emperor Michael VIII's *prostagma* of 1272.²¹⁰ This throne room was used daily and was made ready for its use by a *prokathemenos* of the bedchamber.²¹¹

We know a bit more about the throne room through a passage in Gregoras' history. Andronikos III had a preference for informal rulership, which was expressed in his use of the *triklinos*, most likely the one of the palace of Manuel I. In his tendency to mix informally with people from a lower position, says Gregoras, Andronikos III used to step down from the platform where the thrones were based. The lay-out of the *triklinos* was as follows: 'It is known to all that both sides of the floor of the opposing far ends of the imperial *triklinos* lie above the floor in between as far as a third of a span higher, especially there where the imperial throne is situated.'²¹² This means that we should imagine the reception hall of the palace having platforms (or a platform) at the far ends of the room. On one of these platforms the imperial throne would be situated. Pseudo-Kodinos corroborates this in his passage on the promotion of the patriarch, when he says that the emperor's throne would be set up on a platform near the door.²¹³ In addition, a short poem from the manuscript Marcianus graecus Z 524 suggests that Manuel I's *triklinos* had a conch, a sort of apse, at one end, with an image of the Virgin flanked by the emperor (Manuel I Komnenos) and his parents, or only by the latter.²¹⁴

²⁰⁹ τοῖς τῶν ἀνακτόρων ἀδύτοις (...) τοῦ ἀμφικεφάλου ὑπεν[ερθε] (Pachymeres IV, 629. 23-24).

²¹⁰ Michael VIII's *prostagma* is published in August Heisenberg (ed.), 'Aus der Geschichte und Literatur de Palaiologenzeit', *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-philologische und historische Klasse*, 20/10 (1920), 1-144, at 33-81, here 38.4 (hereafter Heisenberg, 'Aus der Geschichte').

²¹¹ For more information about this official see the next chapter of this thesis.

²¹² δῆλον γάρ ἐστι τοῖς ἅπασιν, ὥς αἱ τοῦ ἐπιπέδου ἐκ διαμέτρου ἀκρότητες τῶν βασιλικῶν τρικλίνων ἀμφοτέραι ὑπέρκεινται πού τοῦ μεταξύ ἐπιπέδου ἄχρι καὶ ἐς τρίτον σπιθαμῆς, καὶ μάλιστα ὅπη καὶ ὁ βασιλικὸς ἔστηκε θρόνος (Gregoras I, 566.23-567.4).

²¹³ Pseudo-Kodinos, 278.14-19.

²¹⁴ 'On the conch of the newly built throne-room on the hill of the Blachernai. In you I have securely laid the foundation of this imperial and splendid house, O Maiden, living palace of the universal King, and I also represent the figures of my parents, so that I may see my lamented, if only in shadows.' (MS Marcianus graecus Z 524, fol. 108v, ed. Sp. Lampros, 'Ὁ Μαρκανδὸς κῶδις 524', *Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων* 8 (1911), 3-57,

It is likely that Odo of Deuil, describing the reception of the French king Louis VII in the twelfth century, saw the interior of the same palace of Manuel I, although his description is not as detailed as Benjamin of Tudela's:

Its interior surpasses anything I could say about it. It is decorated throughout with gold and various colours and the floor is paved with cleverly arranged marble. Indeed, I do not know whether the subtlety of the art or the preciousness of the materials gives it the greater beauty or value.²¹⁵

Again, we read of gold and other colours adorning the walls, and here we learn that the floor was made of inlaid marble. The palace is impressive because of its height, skillful construction, view and interior. It appears that the palace of Manuel I was a richly decorated and cleverly constructed building, though not as beautiful from the outside as from the inside.

We also know that emperors after Manuel I made their own additions to the complex of Blachernai, possibly to the buildings he had erected. Isaac II Angelos not only built a tower-residence, as we have seen above, but also 'the most splendid baths and apartments' in both the Great Palace and the Blachernai.²¹⁶ Whether the Latin kings made additions or restorations to the palace is unknown. However, I think that the *triklinos* of which the walls were blackened with soot by the last Latin ruler of Constantinople, Baldwin II, should be identified with the *triklinos* of Manuel I.²¹⁷ Michael VIII restored the palace to some extent, before he moved in, in the early 1260s. Part of the restorations may

123-192. For an interpretation and commentary of the poem, entitled 'On the conch of the newly built *triklinos* on the hill of the Blachernai', see Paul Magdalino and Robert Nelson, 'The Emperor in Byzantine Art of the Twelfth Century', *ByzF* 8 (1982), 123-183, here at 140-142 (hereafter Magdalino and Nelson 'The Emperor in Byzantine Art').

²¹⁵ interior vero quicquid de illa dextero superabit. Auro depingitur undique variisque coloribus, et marmore studioso artificio sternitur area; et necio quid ei plus conferat pretii vel pulchritudinis, ars subtilis vel pretiosa materia. (Odo of Deuil, *De profectione*, 64).

²¹⁶ ἐντός τε οὖν τῶν βασιλείων ἀμφοτέρων λουτρά καὶ διαιτήσεις λαμπροτάτας ἐδείματο (Choniates, 442.8-9). Translation by Cyril Mango, in Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 236.

²¹⁷ Pachymeres I, 219.7-10.

have been the establishment of a library in a part of the palace.²¹⁸ Later during his reign Michael VIII commissioned a decorative scheme for the palace's inner walls:

Wishing that these deeds [the victory over the Angevins at Berat in 1281] be immortalized, he [Michael VIII] ordered them to be painted on the walls of the palace, and not these only, but also those that by God's grace had been accomplished from the beginning [of his reign]. The former were immediately painted in the vestibule, while the latter were not executed, the Emperor having died in the meantime.²¹⁹

The paintings of these heroic deeds in the vestibule seem to have been inspired by the mosaics of the accomplishments of Manuel I, who had decorated the same palace a century earlier.²²⁰ Michael VIII died before all the paintings were executed, but the victory over Berat must have been visible from 1281.

Also Andronikos II commissioned a restoration of the Blachernai palace, most likely of the building of Manuel I. In Nikephoros Xanthopoulos' praise of the restoration, the palace has characteristics which resemble to a great extent those of the palace of Manuel I (beautiful and well proportioned from the outside, but especially praiseworthy from the inside, with columns, marble floors and mosaics). In Xanthopoulos' own words: it was 'luxurious', 'well situated', 'solidly constructed', 'greater in size than most buildings', 'surpassing all in beauty'. It had 'graceful gates and porches', 'inner courses

²¹⁸ This has been suggested by Konstantinos A. Manaphes, *Αἱ ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει βιβλιοθηκαί, αὐτοκρατορικαὶ καὶ πατριαρχικαί, καὶ περὶ τῶν ἐν αὐταῖς χειρογράφων μέχρι τῆς ἀλώσεως, 1453. Μελέτη φιλολογικὴ*. ("Αθήνα". Σύγγραμμα περιοδικὸν τῆς ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἐπιστημονικῆς Ἑταιρείας. Σειρὰ διατριβῶν καὶ μελετημάτων, 14.; Athens, 1972), 55-57. Manaphes' evidence is a manuscript (Par. gr. 1115), whose colophon (fol. 306v) states that the manuscript was copied by a certain Leo Kinnamos in 1276, 'during the reign of Michael VIII and his wife Theodora' and 'deposited in the imperial library'. Manaphes thinks that this evidence may be pointing at the establishment of a library in a wing of the newly restored Blachernai Palace. Alice-Mary Talbot mentions that scholars have doubted the validity of Manaphes' evidence, see Talbot, 'The Restoration of Constantinople', 250n50.

²¹⁹ *θέλων ἀνάγραπτα θεῖναι, προστάσσει γράφεσθαι τοῖς τῶν ἀνακτόρων τοιχίσμασι, πλὴν οὐκ αὐτὰ καὶ μόνα, ἀλλ' ἃ δὴ καὶ ἀρχῆθεν Θεοῦ γέγονεν ἐλεοῦντος· κὰν ἐκεῖνα μὲν καὶ αὐθις ἐν προστώοις γεγράφατο, τὰ δ' οὐκ ἔφθασαν τελεσθῆναι, ἐπελθόντος τῷ βασιλεῖ τοῦ θανάτου* (Pachymeres II, 649.30-651.4). Translation by Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 246.

²²⁰ For the depictions of Manuel's victories, see Choniates' History in Mango's translation: in Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 224 and also Magdalino, 'Manuel Komnenos and the Great Palace' in *BMGS* 4 (1978), 101-114, 101-102.

and circuits, which successive pillars resembling giants and standing peacefully in decorum and modesty divide from each other'. The building boasts marble flooring: 'glistening charm of marbles', marbles which are 'fitted to the fineness of a hair' with 'bands that both project from the whole construction and are woven into it'. The marbles 'are strewn on the ground', and also cover 'the whole space of the walls wears like a richly embroidered tapestry'. Xanthopoulos then compares the marbles to the gently rolling waves of the sea. In contrast, the ceiling is decorated with a 'great outpouring of gold like some ethereal dust, incandescent and blooming with fire'. It also has 'creations in mosaic which put Nature herself in second place'.²²¹

This evocation of the nature-like beauty of the palace decoration can also be found in other fourteenth century authors who describe palace decoration under Andronikos II. They do not mention wall paintings or mosaics of battle scenes or imperial deeds, like the military rulers Michael VIII and Manuel I had commissioned, but rather depictions of imperial virtues, animals and gardens. This decoration scheme is not unusual. The general norm, both for the decoration of imperial palaces as well as for aristocratic grand houses, seems to have been a cycle, which propagated the imperial ideology symbolically through

²²¹ Μεγέθει μὲν γὰρ ὑπὲρ τοὺς πολλοὺς ἐστὶ, κάλλει δὲ καὶ στεῤῥότητι σχεδὸν ὑπὲρ ἅπαντας, ὑπὸ μεγάλῳ καὶ πολλῷ τῷ φωτὶ, ἐτι δὲ περισσὴ αἴγλης καταστραπτόμενον, πυλῶν τε χάρισι καὶ προφυλαίων τοὺς ἐκάστοτε προσιόντας ὥσανεὶ προσυπαντῶν τε ἅμα φιλοφρόνως καὶ δεξιούμενον· τοῖς δ' ἔνδον δρόμοις καὶ περιδρόμοις, οὓς πιστοὶ τινες γίγασιν ἐοικότες, ἐν κόσμῳ δὲ καὶ σωφρόνως ἐφεξῆς ἡρέμα διεστηκότες, ἀπ' ἀλλήλων διατειχίζουσιν, ἀπανταχοῦ χωρεῖν, καὶ τὰς ὅψεις ἐστιᾶν προτρεπόμενον. Τὸ δ' ἐπίχαρι τῶν μαρμάρων καὶ στύλβον, ἃ καὶ ἐς τρίχα, τὸ δὴ λεγόμενον, ἡρμοσται, τὰς τε ζώνας, αἱ τοῦ παντὸς ἔργου προβέβληνται τε ὁμοῦ καὶ συνεξυφαίνονται, πῶς ἂν τις εἴποι; Ἄ τε τῷ ἐδάφει ὑπέστροται, καὶ ἅπερ ὁ σύμπας τῶν τοίχων χῶρος, οἷά τι πέπλον ποικίλως ἐστιγμένον ἀμπίσχεται; Φαίης ἂν εὐθὺς ἰδὼν, θάλασσαν εἶναι πραοτάτοις ἀπανταχοῦ ὑποκυμαινομένην τοῖς κύμασι, καὶ ἡρέμα πῶς φρίσσουσιν· ὥσπερ δὴ καὶ πέπλον ὑπανέχειν θάπτον, μὴ τι τῶν ὑγρῶν τὰ κράσπεδα ἐπισπάσειαν. Τὰ δ' ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς τούτῳ οὐρανῷ ἂν εἰκάσαις τῷ πολλῷ καὶ κατακεχυμένῳ χρυσῷ, οἷά τι ἀιθερίῳ χρώματι, περιλαμπομένῳ καὶ ἀνθοῦντι πυρί. Ἀλλὰ πῶς ἂν λόγος τοσοῦτον ἔργον χρόνου τε καὶ πόνου πολλοῦ οὕτως ἐν βραχεὶ παραστήσειεν, ὃ μήτοι γε λόγος, ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὅψις, μᾶλλον δὲ οὐδὲ νοῦς καὶ ταῦτα τοῖς τοιοῦτοις ἐγγυμνασάμενος ἰκανῶς παραλήψαιτο; Ἐμοὶ δ' ἀρκέσει τοῦτο μόνον εἰπεῖν, ὥς πολλῶν καὶ ἀπείρων σχεδὸν βασιλείων οἰκῶν ἐν τοῖς ἄνω χρόνοις φιλοτίμως ἐξεργασθέντων, οὗτος ἐφ' ἅπασιν ψήφοις ἀπάσαις, τὸ δὴ λεγόμενον, κατὰ παντὸς τοῦ χρόνου τὸ πρωτεῖον κεκλήρωται μεγέθει, κάλλει, στεῤῥότητι, τῷ λελογισμένῳ ῥυθμῷ, καὶ τῇ κεκομψευμένῃ συνθήκῃ τῇ τε ψηφίδι, καὶ τοῖς ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς πλάσμασι καὶ φάσιν αὐτὴν ἐν δευτέρῳ τιθεῖσι, καὶ σχεδὸν ἅπασιν, οἷς τοιοῦτον εἰκὸς ἀγλαΐζεσθαι τέμενος. (Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos, *Historia ecclesiastica*, in J.-P. Migne (ed.), *PG* (145; Paris 1857-1866), cols. 550-1332, cols. 585-588). See for a translation of the entire section: Magdalino, 'Pseudo-Kodinos' Constantinople', 13-14.

the display of 'the moral, judicial and physical strength of its leadership'.²²² This could be expressed by depicting of military successes, but also in hunting scenes or personifications, imperial virtues or even in monumental imperial portraits.²²³ Of course, we should bear in mind that there were no victories to be commemorated under Andronikos II.

The traveller Ibn Battuta, who may have visited the palace around 1331/1332, mentions 'a large hall, the walls of which were mosaic work, in which there were creatures, both animate and inanimate'.²²⁴ And the fourteenth century court poet Manuel Philes wrote a long poem about a garden depicted on the ceiling of the palace. The poet admires the life-like quality of the painting, mentioning among other things fruit, flowers, a grove, lilies, birds and carnivores, fowl in circular pens, a meadow, four hares, a small bird sucking from a lily, a lioness with cubs, and a pair of peacocks. According to the poet, the painter banished the noisy birds, because they would only disturb the silence which is required in an imperial chamber.²²⁵ Overall, it evokes a paradise.

Andronikos II appears to have commissioned paintings of virtues, thereby expressing his imperial character in a different way than his predecessor. The poet Manuel Philes describes these paintings, which represented four virtues. He dedicates a poem to each one of them, but first blames the artist for choosing only four.²²⁶ After this the poet describes the painting of the virtues in terms of a marriage between the personifications

²²² Lucy-Anne Hunt, 'Comnenian Aristocratic Palace Decoration: Descriptions and Islamic Connections', in Michael Angold (ed.), *The Byzantine Aristocracy. IX to XIII Centuries* (Oxford, 1984), 138-156, 139 (hereafter Hunt, 'Comnenian Aristocratic Palace Decoration').

²²³ For imperial imagery in the palaces under the Komnenoi see Magdalino and Nelson 'The Emperor in Byzantine Art'.

²²⁴ Ibn Battuta, *Travels*, 158. It is unclear, however, if Ibn Battuta spoke about the Blachernai palace. In 1331 Andronikos II (now under the monastic name Anthony) may still have been living in the Blachernai, while his grandson Andronikos III was living in other palaces when he was in the city. This means that this palace description may refer to the Great Palace rather than the Blachernai.

²²⁵ E. Miller (ed.), *Manuelis Philae Carmina* 2 vols. (Amsterdam 1967), vol. 2, no.62, 127-131 (hereafter Philes, *Carmina*). For a translation see Appendix II. A partial translation is available in Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 248. See also, Constantinides, 'Byzantine Gardens', 95-96.

²²⁶ Philes, *Carmina*, vol. 1, no. 237. For a translation see Appendix II. A translation is partially made by Cyril Mango, in Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 247.

and the person whose virtues are depicted (the emperor).²²⁷ In this marriage-poem the poet's use of the term 'bridal chamber' (αἱ παστάδες) is probably metaphorical, but may be a reference to the location of the paintings in one of the inner chambers of the palace.²²⁸

Philes dedicates two more epigrams to the way the painter expresses or should have expressed the character of the emperor, and subsequently describes the paintings of the virtues in four poems as personified as maidens bearing attributes or making a gesture (Prudence pointing her finger at her head, scale for Justice, arms for Fortitude, crown and mantle for Temperance).²²⁹ Until now it has been assumed that paintings of this set of cardinal or imperial virtues do not appear elsewhere in Byzantine art, although representations of virtues or abstract ideas as women are known.²³⁰ Cyril Mango therefore thought it plausible that the paintings for the Blachernai palace were executed by a painter who was well acquainted with the Western iconographical tradition and suggested a Western influence, especially after the description of Fortitude, who is given arms (possibly a spear and a shield), which points at a Western iconography.²³¹

However, there is evidence that this palace decoration had predecessors in the imperial art of the Komnenoi. The same set of Virtues is for example mentioned in the twelfth century romance *Hysmine and Hysminias*. In this text we find a description of a mural painting in a palace garden showing the Virtues Prudence, Fortitude, Temperance

²²⁷ Philes, *Carmina*, vol 1, no. 238. For a translation see Appendix II.

²²⁸ Although the word παστάς can also mean portico or colonnaded hall in ancient texts, its meaning seems to be used more often for bridal room or wedding hall in later times – the related παστάδιον means wedding in later Byzantine sources (*LBG*, 1243).

²²⁹ Philes, *Carmina*, vol. 1, no. 241-245. For a translation see Appendix II.

²³⁰ Adolf Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Mediaeval Art from Early Christian Times to the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Alan J. P. Crick (London: The Warburg Institute 1939), 29 and Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 247n14. For personifications in Palaiologan art, esp. for muses and Wisdom see Ljubica Popovich, *Personifications in Paleologan Painting (1261-1453)* (PhD dissertation, Washington D.C. 1963), 157-168. I am grateful to Ivana Jevtic for sharing this reference with me.

²³¹ Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 247n14.

and Justice standing in a row.²³² Lucy-Anne Hunt suggests that, although there is no indication of an architectural context for the painting, the writer of the romance may well have seen such a painting in a palace or palace pavilion.²³³ Another example, which firmly connects the personification of virtues with imperial imagery, is the depiction of two virtues on enamel plaques on the crown of Constantine IX Monomachos (dated between 1042-1050), which show personifications of Truth and Humility.²³⁴ Similar to one of the virtues in the description of Philes, Truth on the enameled crown points her finger at her head. In an expression of modesty, Humility crosses both her hands before her chest. A third example can be found in a poem praising a painting in ‘the newly built *kouboukleion* in the *kouboukleion* at the Blachernai’.²³⁵ According to this poem, emperor Manuel I Komnenos is depicted amidst Virtues, represented as allegorical figures, who are holding hands. Manuel I, apparently, had commissioned a painting of himself surrounded by Virtues in an inner chamber of the Blachernai palace. Thus, I would like to propose that the origin of the images commissioned by Andronikos II for a room in the Blachernai palace should rather be sought in Komnenian Byzantium than in the West.

The beautifully decorated main palace buildings of the Blachernai palace were situated around one central courtyard (*aule*), which was most probably reached after entering through a gate (but not the outer gate *Ta Hypsela*). We know very little about the

²³² The paintings are painted on a wall surrounding a garden. Eustahtios Makrembolites, *Hysmine and Hysminias*, ed. R. Hercher (ESG 2; Leipzig 1859) 170-174. For a translation: Elizabeth Jeffreys, *Four Byzantine Novels* (Liverpool 2012), 185-188.

²³³ Hunt, ‘Comnenian Aristocratic Palace Decoration’, 139. See also Magdalino and Nelson, ‘The Emperor in Byzantine Art’, 143n43.

²³⁴ For an image see Hunt, ‘Comnenian Aristocratic Palace Decoration’, fig. 1. That personifications of virtues can be connected with imperial imagery confirms an early Komnenian miniature in which two personifications of virtues stand behind an enthroned Christ, who is crowning emperor John Komnenos standing below on his right and his son Alexios on his left. The virtues (Justice and Mercy) are dressed like Byzantine princesses and seem to whisper into Christ’s ears. They do not bear attributes, nor make gestures and can only be recognized through the inscription above their heads (Ioannis Spatharakis, ‘Three Portraits of the Early Komnenian Period’, *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 7/1 (1974), 5-20, 16, fig.7).

²³⁵ MS Marcianus graecus Z 524, fol. 112v. For an edition, translation and commentary see Magdalino and Nelson, ‘The Emperor in Byzantine Art’, 142-146.

courtyard and have no material evidence which can help us identify its location. Textual evidence points at certain main functions of the central courtyard: it was used to express hierarchy during several outdoor-ceremonies and rituals, it was a gathering place for courtiers or visitors, and it may have been a place of enjoyment and entertainment, with a water channel or fountain and some green.

As far as the courtyard as a place of leisure is concerned, we have some indications that there was water and vegetation. Part of it may have been a garden. Gregoras says that in the courtyard there was water flowing and complains that when Andronikos III had ordered his grandfather's house-arrest in the Blachernai palace (1328), the courtyard resembled 'a downtrodden pasture' in which animals would graze.²³⁶ The fourteenth century traveller Ibn Battuta, who may have visited the palace in 1331, also points at a water channel and trees, although his description may refer to an inner space or even a garden depicted on a mosaic rather than the palace courtyard.²³⁷ Late Byzantine poetry also points at the palace courtyard's function as a garden. In an ekphrasis by John Eugenikos we find a newly wed imperial couple in a palace garden who are being observed from the galleries of the palace above.²³⁸ The garden may be identified with a part of the courtyard. If this refers to an actual event, the ekphrasis may have been written for the wedding of John VIII Palaiologos with Sophia of Monferrat in 1421.²³⁹ At that time the imperial family lived in the Blachernai palace again, after having occasionally resided in different locations from the 1370s.²⁴⁰ However, if John Eugenikos' ekphrasis is an imagined event and garden, we have at least a description of what an ideal palace court looked like. It is

²³⁶ Gregoras I, 431.22-432.2.

²³⁷ Ibn Battuta, *Travels*, 158. See also: Tinnefeld, 'Die Blachernenpalast', 280.

²³⁸ John Eugenikos, *Ekphrasis*, in J. Fr. Boissonade ed., *Anecdota Nova* (Paris 1844, (repr. Hildesheim 1967), 340-346 (hereafter Eugenikos, *Ekphrasis*).

²³⁹ Constantinides, 'Byzantine Gardens', 96.

²⁴⁰ Tinnefeld, 'Die Blachernenpalast', 283-284.

interesting that also here water plays an important role. The poet says that the couple had walked into the garden from the palace (τὰ βασιλεια λιπόντας ἐνεαρίζειν ἐνθάδε), where they were surrounded by fruit trees and flowers. There were water channels (ὕδραγωγοὶ) and ‘the very beautiful water basin with the golden dove on the spout, which – through its fluttering wings – appears to be alive and to take a bath’.²⁴¹ People were watching the pair ‘from the palace above, peeping out from windows and balconies’.²⁴²

Another pleasurable aspect of the courtyard was its function as entertainment area. Pseudo-Kodinos mentions at the end of the ceremony book that ‘pard’ trainers on horseback would enter the courtyard with their ‘pards’ for imperial wedding celebrations.²⁴³ Presumably, they, and perhaps other performers using animals too, would entertain the wedding party in the courtyard and not inside the palace. We also know from Choniates’ History that the courtyard was suitable for imperial amusement. Around 1200, during the reign of Alexios III Angelos, there were mock chariot races, gymnastic contests, including running, and slapstick jokes staged in the courtyard while the core of the imperial court (the imperial family and servants) was looking on.²⁴⁴ The courtyard must have been spacious enough to accommodate all this.

Secondly, we find the courtyard described as a gathering place where people would wait before accessing the palace. This was not always an orderly sight. The historian Gregoras relates how he and some others were making their way to the 1351 synod on hesychasm, which took place in the Blachernai palace. When they were about to enter, some guards saw them from afar and came to tell them to keep back and wait in the

²⁴¹ ἡ πάγκαλος φιάλη, καὶ ἡ ἐπὶ τοῦ αὐλοῦ χρυσεῖ περιστερὰ, οἷον περυγίζουσα τε καὶ τὴν ζῶσαν καὶ λουομένην ἀπομιμουμένη (Eugenikos, *Ekphrasis*, 342).

²⁴² ἐκ τῶν βασιλείων ἄνω διὰ τῶν θυρίδων καὶ κιγκλίδων ἐκκύπτοντας (Eugenikos, *Ekphrasis*, 346).

²⁴³ Pseudo-Kodinos, 287.22-29.

²⁴⁴ Choniates, 280-281.

courtyard.²⁴⁵ That guards within the palace (or the palace complex?) saw people from afar implies a certain distance between the palace buildings and indicates an open courtyard which could accommodate a number of people waiting. During the same synod, Gregoras was approached by someone from the entourage of the emperor when he had come to ‘just about the middle of the courtyard of the palace’ and was led away for a private meeting with the emperor.²⁴⁶ This points to a rather free use of the palace courtyard.

Similarly, the patriarch and courtiers standing and quarrelling in the courtyard at the beginning of the civil war, in 1341, were not an example of order either. Kantakouzenos explains that from the palace he and empress Anna heard voices in the courtyard. It appeared that a lot of men, not only from the military ranks but also distinguished young men of high birth, were standing in the courtyard of the palace disputing the question whether the *megas domestikos* should be allowed to enter the courtyard on horseback or should enter on foot like everyone else, while the patriarch amidst them was trying his best to calm them down. Officially, entering the inner courtyard on horseback was reserved to the imperial rank. Kantakouzenos went out angrily, blamed the patriarch for being incapable of restraining the men and went back in again to advise the empress on the matter. She then summoned the men and told them they behaved like barbarians.²⁴⁷ To give a last example, Gregoras describes the use of the courtyard by actual ‘barbarians’ during the reign of John Kantakouzenos, when mystics and all sorts of non-Christian ascetics would roam around, chanting in the courtyard of the palace and dancing their whirling dances, crying out songs of Mohammed with obscure sounds.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ Gregoras II, 896.15-20.

²⁴⁶ Ἄρτι δὲ περὶ που τὰ μέσα γενομένοις τῆς βασιλείου αὐλῆς ἀπήντησέ τις ἡμῖν τῶν πάνυ τῷ βασιλεῖ προσφκειωμένων, καὶ μόνον πάντων ἔμεγε ἀπειληφῶς προσῆγε τῷ βασιλεῖ (Gregoras II, 986.16-18).

²⁴⁷ Kantakouzenos II, 83.19-87.21.

²⁴⁸ Gregoras III, 202.12-203.4.

Although the courtyard may have seemed in disorder occasionally, it also appears in the sources as a space where hierarchy would be expressed through ceremonies, both on the ground and on high places visible from the courtyard (the *peripatos*, walkway, and the *prokypsis*, appearance platform on four columns). We find the courtyard therefore mentioned often in Pseudo-Kodinos. An important ceremonial function of the courtyard concerns mounting and dismounting horses. Pseudo-Kodinos explains that there are several points in the courtyard where the emperor or the highest officials would stop for mounting or dismounting. The emperor's dismounting place was called the *pezeuma* ('the place where the feet are touching the ground'). It was to that point that the Varangians accompanied the emperor on horseback when he returned, with the *protostrator* holding the bridle of the horse from the *pezeuma* until the fourth or fifth section of the courtyard on both the emperor's departure (and vice versa on his return).²⁴⁹ Based on this description we may assume that ideally the courtyard could be divided into different sections, with perhaps a ceremonial significance for each. Nothing is known about the appearance of the *pezeuma*, but we are better informed about its location. From Pseudo-Kodinos we already understand that the *pezeuma* was not located in the fourth and fifth section of the courtyard, and from Gregoras we learn that it was not in the middle of the courtyard, but rather more towards the palace. When Halil, the son of Orhan went into the courtyard together with the emperor, he did not have to dismount, but instead his horse was led by its bridle:

And yet, though being vexed and feeling irritated and thus refusing to being led by the bridle, he came until the middle of the courtyard of the palace. And there, while the emperor was not very willing, he leapt from his horse on the ground, and holding the imperial horse by its bridle, he led it straight to the imperial

²⁴⁹ Varangians: Pseudo-Kodinos, 244.7-8 ; *Protostrator*: Pseudo-Kodinos, 168.8-12.

dismounting place. Then he went together with the emperor to the imperial wedding ceremony.²⁵⁰

In the courtyard, at some distance from the *pezeuma* (probably closer to the courtyard gate) there was a place called *tetrastylon*, probably a low platform on four columns, where it was also possible to dismount from a horse. About the *sebastokrator*'s dismounting rights, Pseudo-Kodinos says:

He also dismounts in the courtyard of the palace, at the *tetrastylon*. I mention this place because it is well known. When the emperor can be found in another place, he [the *sebastokrator*] dismounts in a place of which the location is similar to that of the *tetrastylon*.²⁵¹

This *tetrastylon* must have been a dismounting place in a less prominent location than the emperor's *pezeuma*, but it still was a distinctive platform in the courtyard. It also appears that Pseudo-Kodinos prescribed that in other locations than the courtyard of the palace the situation in the courtyard should be imitated and the *sebastokrator* was to dismount in a different place than the emperor.

Not only the *sebastokrator*, but also the Despot, the Caesar and the patriarch were given the right to mount and dismount in the courtyard. The Despot had no specific place to dismount, but got off his horse in whichever place the emperor commanded him to do so.²⁵² The Caesar dismounted in the courtyard close to the place where the *sebastokrator* dismounted, ie. close to the *tetrastylon*.²⁵³ Lastly, the patriarch dismounted in the palace courtyard, but Pseudo-Kodinos adds that this only applied to promoted patriarchs and that

²⁵⁰ ὁμῶς οὕτω δυσανασχετῶν καὶ ἀχθόμενος καὶ οἷον ἀφηνιάζων ἦκε μέχρι καὶ ἐς τὸ μέσον τῆς βασιλικῆς αὐλῆς. ἐνταῦθα δὲ καὶ μὴ πάνυ τι βουλομένου τοῦ βασιλέως ἀπεπήδησέ τε τοῦ ἵππου πρὸς γῆν, καὶ τὰς ἡνίας τοῦ βασιλικοῦ χειρῳσάμενος ἵππου ἴθυνεν ἄχρι τοῦ βασιλικοῦ πεζευτηρίου. ἔπειτα συνεισῆει τῷ βασιλεῖ πρὸς τοὺς βασιλικοὺς θαλάμους (Gregoras III, 506.15-21).

²⁵¹ Πεζεύει δὲ καὶ οὗτος ἐν τῇ τοῦ παλατίου αὐλῇ εἰς τὸ τετράστυλον· λέγω δὲ τοῦτο διὰ τὸ τοῦ τόπου γνῶρισμα. Τοῦ βασιλέως δ' ἐν ἄλλῳ τόπῳ εὕρισκομένου πεζεύει κατ' ἀναλογίαν κάκεισε τοῦ τόπου τοῦ τετραστύλου (Pseudo-Kodinos, 148.14-21).

²⁵² Pseudo-Kodinos, 145.13-15.

²⁵³ Pseudo-Kodinos, 149.11-14.

candidate patriarchs were supposed to dismount outside the courtyard.²⁵⁴ In total, Pseudo-Kodinos specifies three hierarchically different locations for mounting and dismounting in the courtyard: the *pezeuma*, the *tetrastylon* and a place close to the *tertrastylon*. The imperial dismounting place was closer to the palace than the other two places.

Apart from the aforementioned people there was no-one else who could ride a horse into or out of the courtyard, as Pseudo-Kodinos states when he explains the duties of the *komes* of the imperial horses. This official would train the imperial horses and lead them into the courtyard if necessary, but would not enter the courtyard on horseback, nor would any other official.²⁵⁵ However, there may have been particular household servants, entertainers and delivery men who entered the courtyard on horseback, as Pseudo-Kodinos mentions in the very last lines of the ceremony book when he writes about the wedding protocol: the ‘pard’ trainers and the men delivering the cooling containers for the wedding feast were allowed to enter and leave the palace courtyard on horseback.²⁵⁶ That the ‘pard’ trainers may have needed to do so in order to perform their entertainment, is suggested by an eleventh century carved ivory horn which shows a cheetah riding on the back of its trainer’s horse.²⁵⁷ The men delivering cooling containers perhaps entered the courtyard on horseback out of practical reasons. The ceremony book also implies that the imperial bride – and presumably the empress likewise – was allowed to enter the palace on horseback.²⁵⁸

The courtyard was used for other expressions of hierarchy too. During the daily reception ceremony the guards – with the exception of the Varangian guard division who were inside the palace – would be stationed in the courtyard, just like the officials were

²⁵⁴ Pseudo-Kodinos, 281.6-9.

²⁵⁵ Pseudo-Kodinos, 169.38-169.27.

²⁵⁶ Pseudo-Kodinos, 287.22-29.

²⁵⁷ Eunice Dauterman Maguire and Henry Maguire, *Other Icons: Art and Power in Byzantine Secular Culture* (Princeton / Oxford 2006), 84 and fig. 82.

²⁵⁸ Pseudo-Kodinos, 287.18-19.

stationed inside. One official, the *primmikerios* of the palace was responsible for keeping the guards in the courtyard orderly during the ceremony. The Vardariots would be stationed at the gate of the palace or the courtyard,²⁵⁹ while the other divisions would be standing in the courtyard: first the Paramonai, some of whom were with horses,²⁶⁰ after them the guards known as Tzakones,²⁶¹ who were followed by the Mourtatoi during the reception ceremony,²⁶² while the Kortinarioi (literally: tent-attendants), ‘even though they are of a lower rank, stand below the *prokypsis*.’²⁶³ From the ceremony book we get the impression that the outdoor reception mirrored the indoor reception. The reason for this may well have been that there was not enough space inside the palace for the reception of both officials and guards. And thus, at times, the courtyard may have functioned as an extension of the palace.

The large space of the courtyard was also useful at the ceremonial occasion of the distribution of *epikombia*, little sachets filled with coins. This happened during a coronation ceremony. While the *epikombia* for the general public were distributed before the coronation either in the Augusteion (forecourt) of the Hagia Sophia²⁶⁴ or along the processional route,²⁶⁵ after the coronation *epikombia* would be also distributed to people in the courtyard of the Blachernai palace by a senator.²⁶⁶ We do not know which people would be present in the courtyard to receive *epikombia*, but I think that they may have been household servants. After the distribution of the *epikombia* by a senator, the emperor himself comes out of the palace together with the head of the imperial treasury to distribute

²⁵⁹ Pseudo-Kodinos, 181.1-2.

²⁶⁰ Pseudo-Kodinos, 180.3-11.

²⁶¹ Pseudo-Kodinos, 180.11-14.

²⁶² Pseudo-Kodinos, 180.14-17.

²⁶³ οἵτινες δὴ καὶ ἐλάττων τάξεις εὐρίσκονται, ἀλλ’ οὖν κάτω ἴστανται τῆς προκύψεως (Pseudo-Kodinos, 180.26-181.1).

²⁶⁴ Pseudo-Kodinos, 254.26-255.19.

²⁶⁵ Pachymeres III, 221.14-15.

²⁶⁶ Pseudo-Kodinos, 271.1-5.

money. They do this in front of the icon of Saint George, which was painted on the outside of the chapel of the Virgin Nikopoios, and was thus facing the courtyard. The treasurer holds up his mantle, which is filled with gold coins, and the emperor takes hand fulls of coins from it and sprinkles the money around.²⁶⁷ Pseudo-Kodinos says that the distribution of money was for the title holders and the *archontopoula* (young *archontes*), but Kantakouzenos gives nuance:

On the following day none of the commoners are present. But everyone appointed in the army and the entire imperial service personnel are there when the emperor comes out into the court of the palace, with the imperial treasurer standing next to him, whose dress is filled up to its border with money and gold *nomismata* from the imperial treasury, which the emperor grabs and sprinkles around.²⁶⁸

Again, during these celebrations it was the courtyard which could hold more people than the *triklinos* could and therefore the emperor had to come out of the palace to distribute money. This implies again that the palace courtyard functioned as an extension of the palace and that it was used ceremonially if the latter proved too small.

Partly for similar reasons of capacity, the imperial appearance ceremony (*prokypsis*) would be held in the courtyard and not inside the palace.²⁶⁹ The entire court would gather in the palace courtyard for this ceremony. Pseudo-Kodinos mentions who was there: all the title holders who would be stationed in the courtyard as they would have been in the *triklinos*, imperial guards, the palace clergy and musicians.²⁷⁰ Gregoras says

²⁶⁷ Pseudo-Kodinos, 271.6-24.

²⁶⁸ εἰς τὴν ὑστεραίαν δὲ τῶν δημοτικῶν μὲν πάρεσιν οὐδένες· τοῦ στρατιω-τικοῦ δὲ καὶ τοῦ περὶ τὴν βασιλικὴν ὑπηρεσίαν τεταγμένου παρόντος παντός, ἐν ταῖς τῶν βασιλείων αὐλαῖς ἐξερχόμενος ὁ βασιλεὺς, τοῦ τῶν βασιλικῶν ταμίου παρεστῶτος, χρημάτων καὶ τὴν ἄκραν τῆς ἐσθῆτος πλήρη φέροντος νομισμάτων χρυσῶν ἐκ τῶν βασιλικῶν, δραττόμενος ὁ βασιλεὺς κύκλῳ διασκεδάζει. (Kantakouzenos I, 203.14-21).

²⁶⁹ Henry Maguire locates the *prokypsis* platform in a hall of the palace, but this is not correct, for Pseudo-Kodinos says that all the courtiers gathered in the courtyard for the *prokypsis* ceremony (Pseudo-Kodinos, 197.6-31). See Henry Maguire, 'The Disembodied Hand, the *Prokypsis*, and the Templon Screen', in Joseph D. Alcherms, Helen C. Evans, and Thelma K. Thomas (eds.), *ΑΝΑΘΗΜΑΤΑ ΕΟΡΤΙΚΑ. Studies in Honor of Thomas F. Mathews* (Mainz am Rhein 2009), 230-235, 233.

²⁷⁰ Pseudo-Kodinos, 197.6-31.

that for the *prokypsis* ‘the mass of people from Byzantium and the entire army’ would gather in the courtyard.²⁷¹ For this ceremony there was a *prokypsis* platform in the courtyard. Paul Magdalino has identified the *prokypsis* with the outdoor platform on four columns mentioned by the fourteenth century author Nikephoros Xanthopoulos in the preface to his Ecclesiastical History.²⁷² Xanthopoulos attributes the platform to Andronikos II and praises the structure as follows:

There is also the outdoor platform which you [Andronikos II] have established on four columns, a sight worthy of great account, so that you may look upon us leaning down from on high as if from some superior realm of nature, in this too imitating God who mingles with men through the compassion of his goodness.²⁷³

Here we learn that the *prokypsis* platform on four columns was a high structure, which was built (rather restored) by Andronikos II. We are not certain if this *prokypsis* platform had a predecessor or was a newly built platform, but we do know that *prokypsis* ceremonies were held in Andronikos II’s reign and most likely also during the reign of Michael VIII: they are also mentioned in a *prostagma* of Michael VIII, issued in 1272.²⁷⁴ As I showed before, although this is the earliest mention of a *prokypsis* ceremony by name, the origins of the ceremony lay in the reign of Manuel I Komnenos.²⁷⁵ It is therefore possible that the *prokypsis* platform of Andronikos II was a renovation of an earlier one, erected during the reign of Manuel I Komnenos, even though descriptions of this platform are absent in

²⁷¹ ἀθροιζομένου τοῦ πλήθους τῶν Βυζαντίων, καὶ παντὸς τοῦ στρατοῦ (Gregoras II, 616.20-21).

²⁷² Magdalino, ‘Pseudo-Kodinos’ Constantinople’, 5.

²⁷³ πρὸς δὲ καὶ ὃν τέσσαρσιν ἀνίδρυσας κίουσιν ὑπαιθρον ὄροφον, θέαμα λόγου πολλοῦ ἄξιον, ὥς ἂν οἶά τις φύσεως ὑπερτέρας προκύπτων ἄνωθεν, ἡμᾶς διορώης, Θεὸν κὰν τοῦτω μιμούμενος, οἴκτῳ χρηστότητος ἀνθρώποις ἐπιμιγνύμενον (Xanthopoulos, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, col. 585). Translation by Paul Magdalino in: Magdalino, ‘Pseudo-Kodinos’ Constantinople’, 13.

²⁷⁴ Heisenberg, ‘Aus der Geschichte’, 38.15-17. Unaware of Xanthopoulos’ text, August Heisenberg presumed that the *prokypsis* platform mentioned by Pseudo-Kodinos was a temporary wooden structure in the courtyard, see Heisenberg, ‘Aus der Geschichte’, 87n7.

²⁷⁵ Jeffreys, ‘The Comnenian Prokypsis’.

twelfth-century sources.²⁷⁶ This idea corresponds to Paul Magdalino's suggestion that the adjacent building – again attributed to Andronikos II by Nikephoros Xanthopoulos – was in fact a reconstruction of the twelfth-century palace of Manuel Komnenos.²⁷⁷ Also Albert Failler shows convincingly, in contradiction to Kidonopoulos' claim that Andronikos II built a new palace, that we should think of a restoration or extension of an earlier palace rather than a newly built structure.²⁷⁸ The *prokypsis* platform on four columns of Andronikos II may therefore have been a renovation of a similar twelfth-century structure.

The *prokypsis* platform also occurs in Gregoras' history, who describes it as an 'outdoor chamber [literally: little house] of the palace' (τῷ τοῦ παλατίου αἰθερίῳ οἰκίσκῳ), that is of the palace of Andronikos II from where the mother of Kantakouzenos, being held hostage, could hear the acclamation of John V Palaiologos and the mocking of her son, emperor John VI Kantakouzenos, in the middle of the courtyard.²⁷⁹ Although Gregoras' evidence does not help much in establishing the appearance of the structure, due to its presumed location in the middle of the courtyard we may imagine something like a pavilion on pillars. On the other hand, its mention as an outdoor room of the palace rather points to a loggia-like balcony attached to the palace.²⁸⁰ More information about the

²⁷⁶ Michael Jeffreys dismissed the idea that the *prokypsis* structure was a defining characteristic of the *prokypsis* ceremony in the twelfth century due to the lack of evidence for the existence of an actual structure, see Jeffreys, 'The Comnenian Prokypsis', 41-42. More recently, it has been suggested that a depiction of a *prokypsis* platform may be found in the famous twelfth-century Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (fol. 227v), which shows imperial women on a balcony, but the argument for this identification is not well founded. The suggestion is by Elizabeth Piltz, *Byzantium in the Mirror: The Message of Skylitzes Matritensis and the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople* (BAR International Series 1334, London 2005), 16.

²⁷⁷ Magdalino, 'Pseudo-Kodinos' Constantinople', 5.

²⁷⁸ Albert Failler, 'Pachymeriana Novissima', *REB* 55 (1997), 235-238, 234-235.

²⁷⁹ For the reference of Kantakouzenos' mother living in captivity in the palace, see Gregoras II, 617.7-8.

²⁸⁰ Magdalino therefore deduces that it was attached to the palace built by or restored by Andronikos II. Magdalino, 'Pseudo-Kodinos' Constantinople', 5. A parallel could be the ceremonial loggia *camera blancha* as described in the *Leges Palatine* and expressed in architecture in the palace of the kings of Majorca in Perpignan, see Gotfried Kerscher, 'Die Perspektive des Potentaten. Differenzierung von "Privattrakt" bzw. Appartement und Zeremonialräumen im spätmittelalterlichen Palastbau', in Werner Paravicini (ed.), *Zeremoniell und Raum. 4. Symposium der Residenzen-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, veranstaltet gemeinsam mit dem Deutschen Historischen Institut Paris und dem Historischen*

structure is added by Pseudo-Kodinos, who says that the emperor *ascended* it²⁸¹ and that it could be closed off by curtains, which would hide the emperor from sight before the start of the ceremony.²⁸² This implies that the structure was covered or built upon in some way, and that curtains hung from its roof or between pillars and that stairs led to the *prokypsis* platform. During the ceremony, Varangian guards would be stationed next to the pillars of the *prokypsis* and when the emperor appeared they would raise their axes. The emperor would be on the platform, assisted by some officials. With the help of torches light effects would be created and the emperor would gaze down on his subordinates, who were standing in an orderly fashion in the courtyard.

Overall, the courtyard of the Blachernai palace was a multi-functional space. It was sizeable, large enough to accommodate the entire court, or to entertain guests, to have several structures in it which would indicate hierarchy (dismounting places and the *prokypsis*, which may have been a pavilion or loggia in the middle of the courtyard or perhaps attached to a palace building) and a beautiful place too, with a painted (or mosaic) icon of St. George, a water channel and possibly vegetation. It was used formally, for ceremonies like the *prokypsis* and the positioning of guards or less formally for the distribution of money and entertainment. At times it was a space where hierarchy would be expressed through horse etiquette or the positioning of people, but we also find several examples of disorganized situations. Most importantly, we get the impression that there was just one single courtyard which served all the aforementioned purposes and that the most important palace buildings were centred around it. There is no evidence of other courtyards which were in any way significant, neither for ceremonies nor leisure. This,

Institut der Universität Potsdam. Potsdam, 25. bis 27. September 1994 (Sirmaringen, 1997), 155-186, here at 158 and 172 fig. 2.

²⁸¹ Pseudo-Kodinos, 197.6-8.

²⁸² Pseudo-Kodinos, 198.6-9.

then, was in great contrast with the multiple courtyards and subsequent processional ceremonial in the Great Palace, as we know it from the tenth century *Book of Ceremonies*.

CONCLUSION

When Michael VIII moved into Constantinople, his aim was to stay in the Blachernai palace, even though it needed restoration and cleaning. It seems that he wanted to live in the residence of the Komnenoi, located close to the outer walls of the city, next to the park Philopation and in the area which had become the new heart of the city. The Palaiologan ceremonial also suited the Blachernai palace better than the Great Palace in the south-east corner of the city.

The architecture of the Blachernai palace complex had all the features of any Byzantine palace of the middle and later Byzantine period: a multi-functional courtyard, several palace structures around and in it (two main *triklinoi*, a *peripatos*, a *prokypsis* structure, and (dis)mounting places), a church and a chapel. However, it was not a sprawling complex: there was an emphasis on height and multiple stories, rather than on horizontal expansion. Where the Great Palace knew a separation between halls and living spaces (these were in fact different buildings, connected through courtyards and corridors), in the architecture of the Blachernai palace this division had disappeared. Instead of atrium-style palace buildings, we now see single-block palace buildings with the hall and living spaces incorporated in the main structure. The interior of the main palace (most likely the building of Manuel I Komnenos, restored by Andronikos II) was lavish: colonnaded hall or portico, a throne room with platforms at either end, marble floors, victory scenes and paintings of personifications of virtues. There is strong evidence that the Palaiologoi in their (ceremonial) use, renovation and decoration of the Blachernai palace fell back on the traditions set in under the Komnenoi.

What made the Palaiologan Blachernai palace different was its appearance of a castle or citadel. It was built on a platform (or several platforms) on the slope of a hill, had

protective walls, semi-residential towers and – presumably – one main gate. Its buildings were high and looked out over the city, the Golden Horn and the plains beyond the walls. We have material and textual evidence that during the early Palaiologan period the palace was even more fortified than it had been before, turning it into a castle. The Blachernai palace should therefore be seen as an early example of the palace-citadel type.

2 THE IMPERIAL FAMILY

This chapter is concerned with the palace's main inhabitants: the imperial family. Besides investigating which members of the imperial family were residents of the imperial palace in the period under study and defining the relation between them, I will address two underlying factors, which have been important focal points in recent Byzantine scholarship. In the first place I will examine the role of kinship under the early Palaiologoi and investigate whether we can speak of a kinship based court government – as had been proposed for the Komnenoi.²⁸³ Secondly, I will argue that elements of a women's court survived into the Palaiologan period, thereby challenging Kazhdan and McCormick's assumption that there was a further retreat of gender segregation in the late Byzantine period.

The first emphasis of this chapter lies on the emperor's relations with his next of kin. Since it has been noted that kinship played an important role in – especially Komnenian – imperial governance, scholars have paid a significant amount of attention to imperial kinship relations in Byzantium.²⁸⁴ Generally, it has been acknowledged that during the reign of Alexios I (r. 1081-1118) members of the nuclear and wider imperial family were promoted to political offices to such an extent that the imperial family gained a monopoly over the state apparatus, thereby creating a kinship based government. Paul Magdalino states that it was not the hierarchy of titles, but the degree of kinship with the emperor,

²⁸³ Peter Frankopan, 'Kinship and the Distribution of Power in Komnenian Byzantium', *EHR* 122/495 (2007), 1-34 (hereafter Frankopan, 'Kinship').

²⁸⁴ On kinship, see: J.-C. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance 963-1210* (Paris, 1990), 359ff ; Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180* (Cambridge, 1993), 180ff (hereafter Magdalino, *The Empire*) ; *ibid.*, 'Innovations in Government', in M. Mullett and D. Smythe (ed.), *Alexios I Komnenos-Papers* (Belfast, 1996), 146-66 (hereafter Magdalino, 'Innovations').

which determined seniority at court.²⁸⁵ In a recent article, however, Peter Frankopan suggests some nuances to this argument, and shows that the emperor's reliance on and support from his immediate family was not as solid as is implied by comments in contemporary authors like Anna Komnene and John Zonaras.²⁸⁶ Frankopan points at elements of mistrust from both sides. Examples of rebellious family members reveal that Alexios could not always rely on his family.²⁸⁷ And the emperor did not base his authority completely on his family either: it appears that the allocation of titles and dignities to family members was neither consistent, nor even, which undermines the idea that power was distributed and retained within a specific group.²⁸⁸

I perceive the idea of kinship government and Frankopan's nuances as an incentive to connect the emperor and his dealings with his nuclear family (the residents of the palace, the core of the court society) to questions about the importance of kinship in the government of the early Palaiologoi. So far, kinship in Palaiologan Byzantium has received little attention, nor has kinship in relation to the heart of court society been given much discussion. Dimiter Angelov states that Palaiologan imperial government bears characteristics of the reform of the Komnenoi: there was widespread use of individual fiscal privileges (tax exemptions, *pronoia*) and the emperor's relatives dominated the hierarchy of court dignities.²⁸⁹ In their chapter on the court as a social phenomenon, Alexander Kazhdan and Michael McCormick mention the importance of kinship structures with regard to court society, although they only state that 'kinship structures may have been changing', referring to the Komnenian emphasis on kinship, and that these kinship

²⁸⁵ Magdalino, 'Innovations', 148.

²⁸⁶ Frankopan, 'Kinship', 33.

²⁸⁷ Frankopan, 'Kinship', 34.

²⁸⁸ Frankopan, 'Kinship', 11.

²⁸⁹ Dimiter Angelov, *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204-1330* (Cambridge 2007), 254 (hereafter Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*).

structures ‘played a significant role in court life’.²⁹⁰ Building on this idea and on the discussion of Komnenian kinship, I will investigate imperial kinship relations in early Palaiologan Byzantium and address the role of these relations in shaping the core of court society, that is the residential court. With a view to this particular aim, I perceive ‘kin’ rather narrowly as blood relations of the closest kind. I will examine how the emperor dealt with close relatives who were until some point in their lives residents of the imperial palace.²⁹¹ Key to this approach is to see the emperor as someone who attempted to control the distribution of power and the access to power (to himself). In this struggle, did he rely on his close family members for support or is there evidence of competition within the imperial family and sidelining of the emperor’s next of kin?

The second focal point in this chapter is the empress and her household. This part addresses to what extent the empress was ‘the pinnacle of a distinctive social and institutional group’ (the women’s court).²⁹² Here I will touch upon the question of gender segregation. In their chapter on the middle Byzantine court as a social phenomenon, Kazhdan and McCormick state that the ninth and tenth century court was, among other things, characterized by gender segregation: imperial women led their life largely separate from that of their husbands, in the ‘the court of women’ (*to sekreton ton gynaikon*). They suggest that this gradually shifted under the Komnenoi, that men and women intermingled at court and that further research will confirm a retreat of gender segregation in Byzantium in the later period.²⁹³ Linda Garland corroborates their suggestion in, for example, her article ‘Life and Ideology of Byzantine Women’ (1988) and her chapter ‘Imperial women

²⁹⁰ Kazhdan and McCormick, ‘The Social World’, 176.

²⁹¹ It is noteworthy that from the time of Michael VIII’s usurpation the imperial family had consistently produced male heirs and imperial daughters, thereby securing continuation of the dynasty. The Palaiologan emperors did not need to introduce outsiders into the family as heirs to the throne, for example through adoption, as occasionally occurred in earlier times, see Ruth Macrides, ‘Kinship by Arrangement: The Case of Adoption’, *DOP* 44 (1990), 109-118, 117.

²⁹² Kazhdan and McCormick, ‘The Social World’, 183.

²⁹³ Kazhdan and McCormick, ‘The Social World’, 182-185.

and entertainment' (2006), although she states that also under the Komnenoi specific elements of the women's court were preserved: despite some shared activities of imperial males and females, women still had a private space in the palace, some of their own ceremonies (receiving the wives of title holders in audience) and their own social sphere expressed in, for example, the existence of special servants for women.²⁹⁴ I contribute to this discussion by investigating whether imperial women in early Palaiologan Byzantium formed a separate female core group or whether gender segregation had retreated by this time.

²⁹⁴ Lynda Garland, 'The Life and Ideology of Byzantine Women: A Further Note on Conventions of Behaviour and Social Reality as Reflected in Eleventh and Twelfth Century Historical Sources', *Byzantion*, 58 (1988), 361-393 (hereafter Garland, 'Life and Ideology of Imperial Women'); Lynda Garland, 'Imperial Women and Entertainment at the Middle Byzantine Court', in Lynda Garland (ed.), *Byzantine Women AD 800-1200: Varieties of Experience* (London, 2006), 177-191 (hereafter Garland, 'Imperial Women and Entertainment'), 177-178.

2.1 THE EMPEROR AND HIS NEXT OF KIN

The Palaiologoi had a successful start. Upon the reconquest of Constantinople in 1261, usurper Michael VIII was in his late thirties and was married to Theodora. Pachymeres says that during his triumphal entry he took not only his wife with him, but also their two-year old son Andronikos and his popular mother-in-law Eudokia, also known as the Grand Lady.²⁹⁵ It is most likely that they moved into the Great Palace with Michael and waited there for the restoration of the Blachernai palace. In that summer of 1261, Michael and Theodora did not have any other sons apart from Andronikos. Their first born, Manuel, had died at the age of approximately three years old in the 1259. But we know that during the entry into Constantinople Theodora was pregnant with their second son Constantine, who was the first boy to be born in the palace and was therefore appropriately named *porphyrogennetos* (born in the *porphyra*, a purple room in the Great Palace).²⁹⁶ Their last son, Theodore, was born in 1263. There were also three daughters, whose date of birth we can roughly guess through their marriage. The oldest, Irene, was most probably born in the early 1260s (the possible dates are 1260, 1262, 1264). It is plausible that Theodora gave birth to her second daughter, Anna, in the early or mid 1260s and that their youngest daughter Eudokia was born in the late 1260s. Besides, Michael had two illegitimate daughters, and according to the history of Kantakouzenos they were also part of the imperial household.²⁹⁷ Overall, all these infants must have coloured daily life in the imperial residence. During the 1260s Michael VIII lived with his wife, his mother-in-law, his heir Andronikos, five other young children and possibly two illegitimate daughters in the Blachernai palace.

²⁹⁵ Pachymeres I, 217.1-7.

²⁹⁶ Manuel Holobolos describes this birth tradition and the custom of hanging a red sandal from the palace to inform people outside of the birth of an imperial male child (Manuel Holobolos, *Manuelis Holoboli Orationes*, M. Treu ed. (Potsdam 1906), 91.3-11).

²⁹⁷ Kantakouzenos I, 188.14-17.

How can we define Michael VIII's attitude towards his next of kin? Michael VIII has been characterized as a paranoid ruler, who, especially toward the end of his reign, frequently cut ties with his aristocratic friends and supporters.²⁹⁸ And although it seems likely that he, as *pater familias* and founder of a new dynasty, strengthened kinship ties instead, Michael VIII is not known for his favourable attitude towards his family either. With regards to his relationship with his wife, we know that their marriage knew difficult times. Right after the entry into Constantinople, Michael VIII considered divorcing Theodora and marrying Anna-Constance von Hohenstaufen, the young widow of John Vatatzes, after she had declined his offer to become his mistress. Empress Theodora had to ask patriarch Arsenios to intervene. Michael VIII then yielded to the patriarch's reprimand and let Anna-Constance leave for her homeland.²⁹⁹ Michael VIII's motives for this marriage remain unclear. It has been suggested that he wished to marry Anna-Constance for diplomatic reasons (her brother was Manfred, ruler of Sicily)³⁰⁰ and that this marriage would bring him the support of the followers of John Vatatzes,³⁰¹ but it is also possible that this affair was a romantic error of judgment – Pachymeres says that the emperor was madly in love.³⁰²

There is more information about the relationship between the imperial couple. In her portrait of Theodora, Alice-Mary Talbot noted that the empress was, like many of Michael VIII close relatives, not eager to support her husband in his policy towards the

²⁹⁸ Demetrios S. Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass.: unpublished doctoral thesis, 1997), 311-312 (hereafter Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*).

²⁹⁹ For the entire affair see Pachymeres I, 245.1-249.11.

³⁰⁰ John Deno Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus and the West (1258-1282). A Study in Byzantine-Latin Relations* (Cambridge, Mass. 1959), 145 (hereafter Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus*).

³⁰¹ Alice-Mary Talbot, 'Empress Theodora Palaiologina, Wife of Michael VIII', *DOP* 46 (1992), 295-303, 296 (hereafter Talbot, 'Empress Theodora Palaiologina').

³⁰² Pachymeres I, 245.13-14 ; *ibid.*, 247.11-12 ; *ibid.*, 249.9-11.

union of churches, but she was unable to persuade him to change his mind.³⁰³ On some occasions, however, she was able to influence him to give mercy to courtiers who had fallen into disfavour. She was also actively involved in the marriage arrangements of her daughters.³⁰⁴ This shows that the emperor occasionally shared decision making with his wife and sometimes may have needed her support.

A striking feature of Michael VIII's attitude towards his three sons is that his heir Andronikos received a clearly favourable treatment. This was apparent from quite early on, as Franz Dölger convincingly argues. Based on sources in which Andronikos is addressed as *basileus* while he was still a toddler, Dölger concludes that Andronikos must have been part of the emperorship of his parents from as early as 1261.³⁰⁵ We also know that the emperor proclaimed his son his successor in 1265, but the official coronation followed later, in 1272, when Michael VIII was still emperor.³⁰⁶ Such a gap between proclamation and coronation has been considered to be a Palaiologan innovation.³⁰⁷ Nicaean emperors, for example, did proclaim their sons, but did not crown them emperor during their lifetime.³⁰⁸ The Palaiologan system may have served a double purpose: dynastic succession was secured early on through the proclamation of the heir and was again confirmed during his coronation, thereby keeping away other contenders. Yet, in order to make clear that there was only one real emperor, there was a gap between proclamation

³⁰³ Talbot, 'Empress Theodora Palaiologina', 297.

³⁰⁴ Talbot, 'Empress Theodora Palaiologina', 296.

³⁰⁵ He specifically refers to orations of Manuel Holobolos, see for references Franz Joseph Dölger, 'Die dynastische Familienpolitik', *Festschrift E. Eichman zum 70. Geburtstag* (Paderborn 1940), 179-190, here at 187-189 (hereafter Dölger, 'Die dynastische Familienpolitik').

³⁰⁶ For the proclamation of Andronikos II see Albert Failler, 'La proclamation impériale de Michel VIII et d'Andronic II', *REB* 44 (1986), 237-251.

³⁰⁷ The idea that this gap between proclamation and coronation is a Palaiologan renovation is remarked by Renaud Rochette (Renaud Rochette *Le ciel et le sang. Le pouvoir impérial à Byzance à l'époque des Paléologues (1261-1453)* (PhD thesis, Paris, 2009), 53-132 and 164-177) and Ursula Bosch (Ursula Bosch (Ursula Victoria Bosch, *Kaiser Andronikos III. Palaiologos. Versuch einer Darstellung der byzantinischen Geschichte in den Jahren 1321-1341* (Amsterdam 1965), 177 (hereafter Bosch, *Kaiser Andronikos III*)).

³⁰⁸ On Theodore II as proclaimed emperor-son see Ruth Macrides, *George Akropolites. The History. Introduction, translation and commentary* (Oxford, 2007), 39-40 (hereafter Macrides, *Akropolites*).

and coronation. In this way the emperor would have a certain heir, but his authority would not be contested – if the heir did not rebel against his father.

There is some evidence that Michael VIII found it difficult to define the emperorship of his son. The coronation of Andronikos as emperor happened in 1272, when Michael VIII placed the imperial crown upon the head of his fourteen-year old son and also his twelve-year old bride Anne of Hungary was crowned, during their wedding which took place in that year. Michael VIII gave his son a magnificent retinue and instituted three indispensable officials for Andronikos' household: a *pinkernes* (a certain Libadarios), an *epi tes trapezes* (Bryennios) and a *tatas tes aules* (TzAMPLAKON),³⁰⁹ presumably in order to secure the loyalty of these officials, but perhaps also to control his son, now emperor, through his household officials. Upon the occasion of the coronation, the emperor issued a *prostagma*, which outlined the (ceremonial) rights and responsibilities of Andronikos as emperor.³¹⁰ This document shows that Michael VIII honoured his heir with certain imperial privileges, but it also makes clear that the emperor felt the need to determine where the (ceremonial) boundaries lay between his own emperorship and that of Andronikos II. How Michael VIII struggled to share power with his heir is made apparent by Pachymeres, who says that Michael VIII gave Andronikos II a scepter of wood encrusted with gold, which the latter would hold during the singing of hymns, but then he took it away, with the reasoning that as there was only one empire there was only one emperor.³¹¹ Michael VIII made Andronikos II emperor, but did not allow his son to contest his emperorship.

Although Michael VIII arranged this marriage for his successor Andronikos II and crowned him co-emperor, for his other sons he did no such thing. Both Constantine

³⁰⁹ Pachymeres II, 29.16-21.

³¹⁰ Heisenberg, 'Aus der Geschichte'.

³¹¹ Pachymeres II, 413.17-415.9.

porphyrogennetos, who is mentioned as the emperor's favourite son,³¹² and Theodore, married late in life, the latter perhaps about ten years after the death of their father.³¹³ Neither of them held offices or were given titles, although Constantine was considered to be 'above the Despots'.³¹⁴ Officially, they stood always in the shadow of their brother, even though Michael VIII could have decided otherwise. When for example Andronikos II's wife Anne died in 1281, the requirement to wear mourning costume was a pretext for emperor Michael VIII to change an earlier decision regarding the costume of his favourite son Constantine. He ordered the *porphyrogennetos* to stop wearing the imperial red clothes he had been allowed to wear – an extraordinary privilege – and to revert to clothes which were suitable for someone of a Despot's status, but with some imperial details.³¹⁵ In this way the distinction between the heir and the emperor's second son was expressed hierarchically. Constantine held a status above the Despots, but clearly under the emperor. It is obvious that emperor Michael VIII never really favoured his second son to the extent that he considered making him emperor. On the other hand, Michael VIII did train his sons in military affairs and they seem to have served the empire's army readily during his reign.³¹⁶

³¹² Gregoras I, 187.3-11.

³¹³ According to Gregoras emperor Michael VIII wanted his favourite son to marry a foreign bride (perhaps Irene of Monferrat, who became Andronikos II's second wife), but this was never arranged (Gregoras I, 187.3-11) and Constantine married the Byzantine aristocratic Irene Rhaoulaina instead. Failler argued convincingly that the marriage of Constantine should not be placed around 1290, as is generally thought, but around 1287. See Albert Failler, 'Chronologie et composition dans l'Histoire de Georges Pachymères (livres VII-XIII)', *REB* 48 (1990), 5-87, 19-20 (hereafter Failler, 'Chronologie et composition') and *ibid.*, 'Pachymeriana Novissima', *REB* 55 (1997), 235-238, 229-230 (hereafter Failler, 'Pachymeriana Novissima').

³¹⁴ ὑπὲρ δεσπότης (Pachymeres III, 173.21). Constantine was promised the title of Despot, but died before he ever received it and Theodore, who was not deemed worthy of this title by his brother emperor Andronikos II, was offered the title *sebastokrator* instead, which he refused. This is how neither Constantine nor Theodore held a title or dignity. See Pachymeres III, 203.1-14.

³¹⁵ Pachymeres II, 631.1-12. See also Albert Failler, 'Les insignes et la signature du despote', *REB* 44 (1982), 171-186, 174-176.

³¹⁶ For example, Constantine led a campaign to the West in 1280 and later to the East, replacing his father, see Pachymeres II, 627.12-629.17.

As far as the imperial daughters are concerned, they were used for political marriage allegiances with foreign rulers. Michael VIII managed to give his illegitimate daughters in marriage to the Mongol Khans: in the early 1260s, one of them (Maria) was given in marriage to Hulagu, the grandson of Dzenghis Khan. She was sent from Constantinople to the Ilkhanate together with an embassy led by the archimandrite of the Pantokrator monastery. It is also known that she married the son of her fiancée, Abaqa, since Hulagu had died.³¹⁷ The other illegitimate daughter, Euphrosyne, was given to Abaqa's rival Nogai in 1270, the ruler of the Khanate of the Golden Horde.³¹⁸

Also legitimate imperial daughters were given to foreign rulers, but here the empress had her say about the marriage arrangement. Sometimes these allegiances would be made when the princesses were very young. In 1269 Michael decided to give his second daughter Anna in marriage to the second son of the Serbian king Stephen Uroš I. Empress Theodora was concerned about her daughter's wellbeing and prepared a grand retinue for the little princess, after which the girl was sent off to Serbia, alongside an embassy. However, the negotiations for a marriage allegiance failed and Anna returned to Constantinople. Empress Theodora also advised her husband when in 1278 their oldest daughter Irene had left the palace to marry czar Ivan (John) III Asan.³¹⁹ The reign of Ivan did not last long and the couple came back to Constantinople in the following year. It is unknown where they took up residence. In November of 1278, Anna found a husband in Demetrios (later Michael) Komnenos Doukas Angelos, Despot of Epirus.³²⁰ In September

³¹⁷ Pachymeres I, 235.11-21.

³¹⁸ Pachymeres I, 243.8-9.

³¹⁹ Pachymeres I, 243.5-10 and *ibid.*, III, 291.1-2.

³²⁰ Pachymeres II, 559.24-561.10.

1282 Eudokia, the youngest princess, was married to John II Komnenos, emperor of Trebizond.³²¹

Overall, Michael VIII's attitude towards his closest family, his wife and children, did not endanger the stability of court life. We may conclude that he relied to a certain extent on his immediate family or was at least able to keep them under his control. In contrast, Michael VIII's relationship with his adult relatives was troublesome. At the very beginning of his reign (1259), Michael had promoted his relatives to high offices after he had given them the command over military expeditions (which ended successfully): upon his accession to the throne he made his younger brother John Despot and his step-brother Constantine *sebastokrator*, while he promoted his uncle Constantine Tornikes to *sebastokrator* too. His most successful general, the *meGas domestikos* Alexios Strategopoulos, was made Caesar, one of the four highest offices, and several of his in-laws were promoted and marriages were arranged.³²² Franz Dölger suggests that in this way the emperor created a hierarchy of secondary successors, recreating the system, which had been developed under the Komnenoi.³²³ However, we should question whether this was ever Michael VIII's intention. Dölger also argues that already in the early 1260s it was clear that the emperor considered Andronikos as the one and only successor to the throne.³²⁴ When this was (again) made public during the marriage and coronation of Andronikos in 1272, the emperor warned his brothers, says Pachymeres:

The bishops also issued a *tomos* to excommunicate anyone who would revolt against the emperor, because he was still suspicious of his brothers, especially of Despot John, seeing his ardor in combat and how everyone treated him with

³²¹ Pachymeres II, 659.5-6.

³²² Pachymeres I, 153.8-157.3

³²³ Dölger, 'Die dynastischen Familienpolitik', 182.

³²⁴ Dölger, 'Die dynastischen Familienpolitik', 182-186.

goodwill because of his benevolence and his attitude towards his supporters, for nothing enthralls people more than good and graceful deeds.³²⁵

The passage shows that emperor Michael VIII, at the grand ceremonial occasion of the marriage and coronation of his heir, at which undoubtedly many high-born men were present, made the clergy proclaim a *tomos* with repercussions in case of revolt. According to Pachymeres, the warning was directed against the emperor's brothers and especially against the popular John, whom the emperor mistrusted. How can we relate this attitude to the promotion of his relatives in the late 1250s? It seems that after his usurpation the emperor felt the need, because of family obligations and gratitude for military support, to promote his brothers, uncle and his best general to the highest positions. But he may have realized early on that this was also a dangerous move and that it was necessary to make clear that none of them had a chance to get close to ultimate power. Consequently, from just as early on he put his son Andronikos forward as his successor, while distancing himself from the members of his wider family.

Especially during the late 1270s Michael VIII isolated himself from his supporters and family through his choice to propagate a union of churches, a policy which made him hugely unpopular. Relatives who did not support his view were imprisoned and their property was confiscated. We know of their fate because a list of adversaries who were punished appears in a report sent to pope Nicholas III in 1278.³²⁶ It included close relatives like the emperor's formerly favourite sister Irene, by that time better known under her monastic name Eulogia.

³²⁵ Ἐτομογράφουν δὲ καὶ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς, ὑπ' ἀφορισμὸν ποιοῦντες τὸν ὃς καὶ ἐπανασταίῃ τῷ βασιλεῖ· εἶχε γὰρ εἰς ὑποψίαν τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ἔτι, καὶ μᾶλλον τὸν δεσπότην Ἰωάννην, πολὺ τὸ θερμὸν παρ' ἐκείνῳ βλέπων εἰς μάχας καὶ τὴν παρὰ πάντων πρὸς ἐκεῖνον διὰ τὸ εὐεργετικὸν καὶ πρὸς τὰς δόσεις πρόχειρον τοῖς αἰτούσιν ἀγαθοθέλειαν· οὐδὲν γὰρ οὕτω δουλοὶ τὰς ψυχὰς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ὥς ἡ μετὰ χάριτος εὐποιία (Pachymeres II, 415.10-15).

³²⁶ R.-J. Loenertz, 'Mémoire d'Ogier, protonotaire, pour Marco et Marchetto nonces de Michel VIII Paléologue auprès du Pape Nicholas III (1278, printemps-été)' in *OCP* 31 (1965), 374-408.

In contrast to Michael VIII's politics concerning the adult members of his family during the last years of his reign, there does not seem to have been discord between the emperor and his immediate family in the Blachernai palace. In 1279 the palace was inhabited by the emperor and the empress, by the empress-mother, and by five teenagers: the young imperial couple Andronikos II and Anna (assuming that they stayed in the palace), Andronikos' two brothers Constantine and Theodore and their youngest sister Eudokia. Besides, the family consisted of two young children: Andronikos II and Anna had produced a son, Michael, and most probably their second son Constantine was also born before the end of the decade. However, fate soon struck and in the following years the imperial population of the Blachernai palace thinned drastically. In 1280 Andronikos II and his wife Anna left on an expedition to Anatolia. In 1281 Anna died, most probably in Nymphaion. To comfort his mourning son and to further ensure the dynasty, Michael VIII proclaimed his four-year-old grandson emperor.³²⁷ In the same year also Eudokia, the popular mother-in-law of the emperor, died after which her namesake, Michael's daughter, left the palace for her marriage in Trebizond. In December 1282 emperor Michael VIII himself passed away, which meant that emperor Andronikos II was now suddenly not only head of state, but also head of a nuclear family which consisted of himself, his mother, his two brothers and two young children.

It is not surprising that Andronikos II soon remarried; his diplomatic marriage in 1285 to Yolanda (renamed Irene) of Montferrat put an end to claims of the Montferrat family to Thessaloniki (or: through Yolanda they finally received it) and extended the family with new offspring.³²⁸ Andronikos' and Irene's sons John and Theodore were born

³²⁷ Pachymeres III, 99.28-31.

³²⁸ The marriage is mentioned in Pachymeres III, 99.31-101.3.

in the late 1280s.³²⁹ Unlike his father, Andronikos II seems to have been somewhat of a stay-at-home and cannot be accounted for any military victories – in fact, after his rather unsuccessful campaign in 1280/81 he did not lead any military expeditions at all. Consequently, we are well informed about his life in the palace and his relations with his close relatives. Angeliki Laiou described his attitude towards his family as ‘a curious mixture of passionate attachment and violent withdrawal’.³³⁰ Like his father, Andronikos II had a large nuclear family, consisting of two sons from his first wife Anne, four children with empress Irene and two illegitimate daughters.³³¹ Irene and Andronikos II also suffered the loss of some children. We are informed by Pachymeres that Irene had three stillborn babies, who are also known through a poem of Manuel Philes.³³² During the first years of his reign, the emperor probably also shared his residence with his two brothers and his mother. However, the family soon disintegrated and within twenty years the palace was nearly deserted.

Perhaps the most important cause of the disintegration of the residential court was the marital strife between the imperial couple. The relationship between emperor Andronikos II and his second wife empress Irene was difficult, especially from the mid 1290s. The beginning may have been problematic too. Pachymeres explains that Andronikos II could not pick the highest status bride for his second marriage, because

³²⁹ John was born between 1285 and 1290 and given the title of Despot in 1294: Pachymeres III, 221.17-223.4. Theodore was Despot too and got married in 1305: Pachymeres IV, 659.15-23.

³³⁰ Angeliki E. Laiou., *Constantinople and the Latins. The Foreign Policy of Andronikos II, 1282-1328* (Cambridge, Mass. 1972), 8 (hereafter Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*).

³³¹ There may have been a third illegitimate daughter, who married Uzbek, Khan of the Golden Horde. It is also possible, however, that she was an illegitimate daughter of Andronikos III. She is mentioned as such by Ibn Battuta, who calls her Bayalún, the third khátún of Úzbeg Khán and the daughter of the Emperor of Constantinople the Great (Ibn Battuta, *Travels*, 149). Ibn Battuta must have been referring to Andronikos III, who was emperor at that time, but we cannot be certain, because of Ibn Battuta’s questionable chronology. The illegitimate daughter does not occur in Byzantine sources. See also Steven Runciman, ‘The Ladies of the Mongols’, *Εἰς Μνήμην Κ. Αμάντου* (Athens, 1960), 46-53.

³³² Pachymeres III, 305.3-4 According to Philes there were three still-born children: E. Martini (ed.), *Manuelis Philae Carmina inedita* (Naples, 1900), poem 7 (hereafter Philes, *Carmina inedita*).

foreign kings did not want to send their daughter to Byzantium – since future offspring would not be candidates for the imperial throne.³³³ In this light, it is not surprising that in later years Irene was eager to maintain her own position and improve the position of her children. In May 1294, for example, Andronikos II's first-born son from his first wife, Michael, was crowned emperor and his second son Constantine was made Despot. Irene then put pressure on the emperor for her son to be made Despot too, which was granted.³³⁴ The troublesome relationship between emperor and empress, which was mainly caused by their different opinion about the future of their children, is further exemplified by the historian Gregoras. According to Gregoras, who disliked Irene, the empress suggested a Western-style division of the Byzantine state into principalities, each to be ruled by a son of Andronikos II. She did so, says Gregoras, because 'she had an ambitious nature and wanted her children and grandchildren to inherit the rule over the Romans forever'.³³⁵ And because her husband 'loved her more than is normal in marriage' Irene thought she could convince him, claims the historian.³³⁶ When the emperor declined this, Irene

took on different attitudes towards her husband. One day grieving and refusing to live, if she did not see her sons adorned with imperial symbols during her lifetime, the other day acting indifferent and refusing her husband time for their marital union, by way of payment for the agreement with what she wanted to be done for her sons. While all this happened and without anyone knowing about it, things were brought to and end by the emperor. The glow of his love for her died out and a fiery fight began instead, which would be hidden from most people. In the end the emperor got tired of sharing his bed with her.³³⁷

³³³ Pachymeres III, 99.25-101.3.

³³⁴ Pachymeres III, 221.21-23.

³³⁵ φύσει φιλότιμος οὕσα ἠβούλετο κατὰ διαδοχὴν παῖδας καὶ ἀπογόνους αὐτῆς ἐς ἀπείρους ἡλίους κληροῦσθαι τὴν τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴν (Gregoras I, 233.14-16).

³³⁶ Ὅρῳσα τοίνυν τὸν βασιλέα καὶ σύζυγον στοργὴν αὐτῇ χαριζόμενον πλείονα ἢ κατὰ σύζυγον ἐνόμισεν ἔξειν καταπειθῇ καὶ πρὸς τὰ περὶ τῶν παιδῶν βουλευμάτων (Gregoras I, 234.16-19).

³³⁷ νῦν δὲ ἀκκιζομένη καὶ θρυπτομένη καὶ οἷον ἀπεμπολῶσα τῷ συζύγῳ τὴν ὥραν καὶ ὄνιον συγκαταθέσεως τοῦ περὶ τῶν υἱέων βουλευματος ποιουμένη. ταῦτα πολλάκις γινόμενα καὶ μηδενὸς ἑτέρου τῶν πάντων γινώσκοντος φέρειν οὐκ ἦν εἰς τέλος τῷ βασιλεῖ. διὸ καὶ τὰ τῆς φλεγμαινούσης ἐκείνης στοργῆς ἤδη κατὰ μικρὸν ἐμαρπαίνετο, καὶ ἀντεισέγγετο μάχη διάπυρος μὲν, λανθάνουσα δ' ἔτι τοὺς πλείστους. τέλος δὲ καὶ αὐτὴν ἀπέστερξε τὴν τοῦ λέχους αὐτῆς κοινωνίαν. Ἡ μέντοι σύζυγος Εἰρήνη παραδόξως οὕτω τὴν ταχίστην ἔρημος τῶν ἐλπίδων καταστᾶσα πολέμιον ἔθρεψεν ἐν τοῖς στήθεσι λογισμὸν κατ' αὐτοῦ. (Gregoras I, 235.6-

According to Gregoras, the reason for the break-up between the imperial couple lay with the empress, whose demands and unpredictability caused the emperor's love to diminish. Perhaps it should also be understood that the historian tries to find an excuse for the emperor's extramarital affair – without explicitly mentioning it. Angeliki Laiou thinks that Irene was unhappy with the emperor having a mistress with whom he had produced illegitimate children, 'accusing him of satyriasis when she was angry with him'.³³⁸ It is also interesting to see that Gregoras implies that attempts were made to keep the marital strife between emperor and empress hidden. It shows that the imperial couple enjoyed a certain level of privacy in the palace and that it was possible to keep secrets from outer court circles. We see this reflected in a letter of the patriarch, who tried to reconcile the couple but was not aware of the precise circumstances.³³⁹

The marriage was so sour that a separation was inevitable. The imperial couple appeared in public perhaps for the last time in 1299 in Thessaloniki, upon the wedding of their five-year old daughter Simonis with the Serbian ruler Milutin.³⁴⁰ Somewhat later, from 1303, the empress moved to Thessaloniki, where she held her own court.³⁴¹ It was there, says Gregoras, that she spread gossip about her husband and thus made reconciliation virtually impossible:

Through this she wanted to disgrace the emperor even more, and now she was away from her husband she made the bedroom secrets and faults of her husband known, even though she avoided to utter these things in front of a mass of people. She

13).

³³⁸ Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 8.

³³⁹ Athanasios I, *The correspondence of Athanasius I, Patriarch of Constantinople : letters to the Emperor Andronicus II, members of the imperial family, and officials / an edition, translation, and commentary by Alice-Mary Maffry Talbot* (Washington D.C., 1975), no. 75, 188.17 (hereafter Athanasios I, *Correspondence*).

³⁴⁰ Donald Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady: Ten Portraits* (Cambridge, 1994), 52 (hereafter Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady*).

³⁴¹ The empress left for Thessaloniki in April 1303: Pachymeres IV, 413.21-22.

trusted that these bad things were buzzed about to this and that person, and in this she was unsparingly evil, which demeaned her dignity much. For she showed indignation at, was mad at and behaved arrogantly towards her husband's gentleness and did not fear God, nor respect humans, and she had little respect for the many secrets of her husband's behaviour and her own, which was shameless and bold, things which even the most lecherous courtesan would not tell without blushing. One time she took a certain monk aside and blamed her husband for things, which randomly came to her mind. The other time she reported these things and more to well-born ladies who were visiting her. Also to the Kral of Serbia, the husband of her daughter, she wrote things that cannot be revealed, always trying to present herself as honourable and chaste while accusing her husband of maltreatment.³⁴²

However, other evidence sheds different light on the break-up. Patriarch Athanasios tried in several letters to mend the broken marriage. One letter was addressed to the emperor and may have been written with the aim to discreetly urge the emperor to give up his mistress ('that we may attain the honour of marriage'), according to Alice Mary Maffry-Talbot's interpretation.³⁴³ Another letter reveals the wish of the patriarch to meet up and discuss the emperor's marriage problems:

if your divine Majesty is agreeable, I think I should come there [to the palace], or to Chora, or to the church of All Saints, and as quickly as possible, if you agree. The reason, lest your thoughts be troubled (?), is that you may take thought to bring about concord and peace with the wife granted to you by God (...).³⁴⁴

³⁴² ἡ δὲ διὰ τοῦτο μᾶλλον αἰσχύνειν ἐθέλουσα τὸν βασιλέα καὶ σύζυγον ἀπῆει θριαμβεύουσα κοινὰ καὶ λαθραῖα τοῦ συζύγου ἐγκλήματα, τοῦτο μόνον φυλαξαμένη, τὸ πρὸς δῆμους καὶ πλήθη προφέρειν αὐτά. πρὸς δέ γε τὸ πρὸς οὓς ἐκάστη τε καὶ ἐκάστῳ οἷς ἐθάρρει τὰ μάλιστα περιάδειν, πρὸς τοῦτο δὲ καὶ μάλα ἀφειδῶς εἶχεν ἡ πολλὴν σχηματιζομένη σεμνότητα. ὕβριοπαθοῦσα γὰρ καὶ μαινομένη καὶ κατεπαιρομένη τῆς ἐκείνου πραότητος καὶ μήτε θεὸν φοβούμενη, μήτ' ἀνθρώπους αἰδουμένη, πολλὰ τῆς φύσεως ἐξεφαύλισεν ἀπόρρητα τοῦ συζύγου τε καὶ ἐαυτῆς ἢ πάντολμός τε καὶ ἀναιδής, ἃ κἂν ἡρυνθίασε λέγουσα καὶ ἡ τῶν ἐταιρίδων ἀσελγεστάτη. καὶ νῦν μὲν ἄλλον κατ' ἄλλο μέρος τῶν μοναζόντων ἀπολαμβάνουσα κατηγορεῖ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς, ὅποσα ἐβούλετο· νῦν δὲ πρὸς τὰς εἰσιούσας τῶν εὐγενῶν ταῦτά τε καὶ πλείω τούτων ἐξηγγελλε· νῦν δὲ πρὸς τὸν Κράλην Σερβίας τὸν ἐπὶ θυγατρὶ γαμβρὸν ἔγραφεν, ὅσα οὐδὲ λέγειν χρεῶν, πανταχόθεν ἐαυτῇ μὲν περιποιουμένη τιμὴν καὶ σωφροσύνην, τῷ δὲ συζύγῳ πᾶσαν ὕβριν μηχανωμένη. (Gregoras I, 235.19-236.13).

³⁴³ Athanasios I, *Correspondence*, no. 97, 252.3. The translation is by Alice Mary Maffry-Talbot. For her commentary see *ibid.*, 427.

³⁴⁴ ἔνεκεν τούτου ἀναγκαῖον νομίζω ἐλθεῖν με αὐτόθι, εἰ τοῦτο κελεύσει ἡ ἐκ Θεοῦ βασιλεία σου, ἢ ἐν τῇ Χώρα, ἢ ἐν τῷ τῶν ἁγίων πάντων ναῷ, πλήν, εἰ κελεύεις, ταχύτερον. ἡ δὲ αἰτία, μήπως καὶ θορυβῆται ὁ λογισμός, ἵνα τὰ πρὸς ὁμόνοιαν καὶ εἰρήνην φροντίσης τῆς πρὸς Θεοῦ σοι δοθείσης συζύγου (Athanasios I, *Correspondence*, no. 98, 252.14-254.18). Maffry-Talbot assumes that the Blachernai palace is meant by word 'there', but we cannot be certain. 'There' (αὐτόθι) can also refer to the general north-west part of the city and in that case we should read that the patriarch wanted to meet the emperor in either the Chora or the church of All Saints.

While Gregoras points at Irene for the cause of the marital problems, the letters of Athanasios suggests that Andronikos II was not keen to be reconciled with his wife. In this, we see an example of Andronikos II's quiet yet stubborn character – the pious and intellectual emperor is often portrayed as a weak man under the influence of the forceful people around him, but the abovementioned and other examples show that he did not always concede.³⁴⁵

Another letter of Athanasios I was addressed to the empress in the capital, which implies that she at least visited the palace once between 1305 and 1309, the period to which the letter can be dated.³⁴⁶ The letter confirms that the marital problems were initially kept from the public, to such extent that the patriarch was not well informed when the empress came to Constantinople:

when I was not even yet precisely informed of the circumstances (which must be known by those who wish to bring about a reconciliation), inflamed by my love for both of you, and by my concern for your honour and salvation, I considered it intolerable not to pray as much as I could that the lengthy separation between you come to an end.³⁴⁷

The patriarch's reference to a 'lengthy separation' indicates that for most of the time, the empress and the emperor lived apart. The couple kept disagreeing about the marriages and careers of each of their children, sometimes to the discontent of the patriarch, who interfered by writing a letter of warning to the emperor; to allow at least their son Despot

³⁴⁵ Another example is the emperor's firm stance against Athanasios I's advice concerning the provisioning of Constantinople during the winter of 1306-1307, see Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 9.

³⁴⁶ Athanasios I, *Correspondence*, no. 75, 178-191, 397-398.

³⁴⁷ μηδ' ἀκριβῶς διδαχθεὶς τὰ ἐν μέσῳ, ἃ τοῖς μεσολαβεῖν βουλομένοις τὰ πρὸς εἰρήνην γινώσκειν χρεών, ἀμφοτέρων τῷ πόθῳ καὶ τῇ τιμῇ καὶ τῇ σωτηρίᾳ φλεγόμενος, τῶν λίαν ἐλογισάμην ἀνιαρῶν μὴ ὡς δύναμις δεηθῆναι ἀπελαθῆναι τὴν μέσον ὑμῶν διάστασιν πολυήμερον. (Athanasios I, *Correspondence*, no. 75, 188.17-20). The translation is by Alice Mary Maffry-Talbot.

John to go to Thessaloniki to see his mother.³⁴⁸ The emperor must have let go of John indeed – he died prematurely in Thessaloniki.

Emperor Andronikos II did not only have a troublesome relationship with his spouse. Like his father, he was aware of the threat of his direct male relatives. The treatment of Andronikos II's two younger brothers, Constantine and Theodore, is a good example of sidelining. Constantine *prophyrogenetos*, who was emperor Michael VIII's favourite son, enjoyed initially an enormous wealth and the service of many eminent men from the palace, although he 'behaved arrogantly towards his emperor-worthy subordinates'.³⁴⁹ Constantine did not hold an official title and Pachymeres describes him vaguely as 'a man placed above the Despots'.³⁵⁰ He made himself useful by serving in the army: around 1280 he was sent to fight the Serbs in Macedonia and a little later to fight off the Turks in the Meander region – joining his brother Andronikos II's rather unsuccessful campaign. He married, relatively late, in his late twenties, around 1287, the high-ranked Irene Rhaoulaina.³⁵¹ We can assume that at least from that moment on they lived outside the Blachernai palace complex, because from Pachymeres we learn that they had their own house, which was one of the most luxurious in Constantinople.³⁵² The couple had a son, John, who must have been born not long after their marriage.³⁵³

An incident, which took place in the palace in Nymphaion in the following year shows how ambitious siblings like Constantine could pose a threat to the emperor. During the feast of the Apostles (29 June 1292), emperor Andronikos II received 'grand men' (*megistanoi*) while his wife empress Irene of Monferrat received their wives (*matronoi*) in

³⁴⁸ Athanasios I, *Correspondence*, no. 84, 220-7, 410-14.

³⁴⁹ καὶ ὑπερηφανεύετο εἰς ὑποταγὴν τὴν ἐξ βασιλείας πρέπουσαν (Pachymeres III, 175.32-33).

³⁵⁰ ὑπὲρ δεσπότης (Pachymeres III, 173.21).

³⁵¹ Although there is some confusion about the chronology, Albert Failler shows that Constantine and Irene got married around 1287, see Failler, 'Chronologie et composition', 19-20.

³⁵² Pachymeres III, 179.25-26.

³⁵³ Failler, 'Chronologie et composition', 20.

audience. An older lady, Strategopoulina, the wife of Constantine Strategopoulos, had taken a seat and refused to give it up to, causing the outrage of the higher ranked Irene Rhaoulaina, the empress's sister-in-law. This did not escape the attention of the male court and Irene Rhaoulaina's husband (Constantine) felt the need to support his wife. He made a plan to insult the older lady. He ordered his *oikeioi* to fetch a certain Constantine Maurozomes, the alleged lover of Strategopoulina, undress him and carry him triumphantly across the entire agora. When this was reported to emperor Andronikos II, he immediately ended this shameful procession and set the poor man free.³⁵⁴

Andronikos was enormously angered by the behaviour of his brother, which he considered an inappropriate display of power under his own eyes. Because it worried him so much, the emperor decided to discuss the issue with his confidant the *protovestiaros* Theodore Mouzalon. The emperor even spent the night in Mouzalon's house, who was severely ill and unable to come to the palace.³⁵⁵ As punishment for Constantine's ambitions, the emperor took draconic measures: he confiscated all the belongings of his brother in the spring of the following year and had them transferred to the public treasury, while Constantine was imprisoned. The move of Constantine's luxuries to the treasury was quite a sight, recalls Pachymeres: spectators would watch the riches pass by for about an hour.³⁵⁶

On 28 June 1293 Andronikos went back to Constantinople, carrying his brother with him in a portable cage.³⁵⁷ From that moment, Constantine would live imprisoned in the imperial palace. Some years later he was taken to Thessaloniki in a similar cage, when

³⁵⁴ For the entire story of the incident see Pachymeres III, 171.26-177.13.

³⁵⁵ Pachymeres III: 171.26-177.13. We do know that the illness made Mouzalon bedridden, so that at a certain moment he resided in one of the imperial apartments. This was when the emperor decided to form a matrimonial allegiance between Mouzalon and the imperial family (1293) (Pachymeres III, 201.25-27). This exceptional situation means that normally high ranked officials would not live in the palace, no matter how close they were to the emperor. Mouzalon died in 1294 (Pachymeres III, 215.1-20).

³⁵⁶ Pachymeres III, 179.24-36.

³⁵⁷ Pachymeres III, 183.15-16.

Andronikos II moved his court there to celebrate the marriage of his daughter Simonis (1299). Gregoras says that the emperor was afraid that his mother Theodora would free his brother if he were to leave him behind imprisoned in Constantinople.³⁵⁸ Back in Constantinople, Constantine remained in prison and died on the fifth of May 1304 in captivity.³⁵⁹

Relatively little is known about Andronikos' youngest brother, Theodore, who had a good relationship with the emperor. It is possible that he lived in the Blachernai palace with the rest of the imperial family until the moment that he married the daughter of the *pinkernes* Libadarios in 1293.³⁶⁰ He was already around thirty years old by that time, which means that he married late in life by Byzantine standards. Empress-mother Theodora would have liked her youngest son to get the title of Despot, but he was only granted the title of *sebastokrator* by his brother Andronikos II. Theodore then declined this title, but kept serving the empire in the capacity of 'son of the emperor, brother of the emperor and master of the Romans'.³⁶¹ Gregoras says about the relationship between Andronikos and Theodore:

He was not mistrusted by the emperor and enjoyed his goodwill – he could therefore live how and where he wanted. But witnessing the confinement of his brother [Constantine], he understood that it would be better to live more modestly, put away the insignia of his rank and used the garment of a private person. Because of all this he enjoyed genuine goodwill of the emperor.³⁶²

³⁵⁸ It is Gregoras (Gregoras I, 203.22-24), who thus suggests that empress-mother Theodora stayed behind. See also Talbot, 'Empress Theodora Palaiologina', 298.

³⁵⁹ Pachymeres IV, 467.1-23.

³⁶⁰ Pachymeres III, 201.17-203.14.

³⁶¹ βασιλέως δ' ἀδελφὸς εἶναι τε καὶ κεκληῖσθαι, καὶ τῶν Ῥωμαίων δεσπότης ἐκλείβετο. (Pachymeres III, 203.13-14). Theodore kept occasionally serving in the army, captured the rebellious general Alexios Doukas Philanthropenos in 1295 (Pachymeres III, 245.36) and fought in the disastrous battle against the Catalans in 1305 (Pachymeres IV, 577.3 and 599.20). It is unknown when Theodore died, but this must have been after 1310.

³⁶² ἀνύποπτος γὰρ ἦν οὗτος τῷ βασιλεῖ καὶ πολλῆς ἐκείνου τῆς εὐμενείας ἀπέλαυε καὶ διὰ τοῦτο διέτριβεν ὅπῃ καὶ ὅπως ἐβούλετο. ἀφ' οὗ γὰρ εἶδε κατασχεθέντα τὸν ἀδελφόν, συνήκεν ὡς καλὸν τὸ μετριώτερον φέρειν τὴν τύχην· καὶ ρίψας τὰ ὀφειλόμενα τῆς ἀξίας σύμβολα ἰδιωτικοῖς καὶ αὐτὸς ἐχρήτο ἐνδύμασι. διὸ καὶ πολλὴν ἐκαρποῦτο καὶ καθαρὰν τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως εὐμένειαν. (Gregoras I, 199.24-200.5).

Thus, it was exactly by keeping low and not living in accordance with his rank, or rather status, that Theodore earned the respect of the emperor. Gregoras implies that this decision was not made by choice, but by necessity: it was only after he had seen what the emperor had done to his brother Constantine, that Theodore wisely sought a place in the shadows. In a letter of Maximos Planoudes and most poems of Manuel Philes, he is simply referred to as ‘the brother of the emperor’, which confirms his relatively modest position.³⁶³

In contrast, Andronikos II’s attitude towards his sons was positive – more supportive than his father Michael VIII had been. Firstly, a special place was preserved for his dynastic heir, Michael IX, who had already been proclaimed heir to the throne at the age of four by his grandfather Michael, mainly to circumvent the possibility of succession by Constantine, Andronikos II’s brother.³⁶⁴ Michael IX was crowned emperor on May 21 of the year 1294.³⁶⁵ In this way Andronikos II copied the succession system invented by his father: again the heir was crowned emperor during the lifetime of the reigning emperor, but quite some time after the proclamation. After failed negotiations with Catherine I of Courtenay, in 1295 a marriage was arranged for Michael with princess Rita (renamed Maria) of Armenia, who bore him four children: Andronikos III, Manuel, Anna and Theodora.³⁶⁶ Unlike his father, the young emperor was often to be found on the battlefield, starting with a failed campaign in Asia Minor in 1302.³⁶⁷ Also his later expeditions against the Catalans, Osman and the Slavs were ultimately unsuccessful, even though he became an experienced general. From 1311 he was relieved of the defense of Thrace, after which

³⁶³ e.g. ἀνταδελφός τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος (Philes, *Carmina*, vol. 1, 114, poem 214) ; ἀδελφός τοῦ βασιλέως (Philes, *Carmina*, vol. 2, 161-162, poem 126) ; τῷ τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος ἀνταδελφῷ (P. L. M. Leone (ed.), *Maximi Monachi Planudis Epistulae* (Amsterdam 1991), 4-7, epistle 2) (hereafter Planoudes, *Epistulae*).

³⁶⁴ Pachymeres III, 99.28-31 and Gregoras I, 193.12-13.

³⁶⁵ Gregoras I, 193.12-13.

³⁶⁶ For the marriage see Pachymeres III, 233.9-10.

³⁶⁷ On the first expedition of Michael IX see Pachymeres IV, 341.15-35 ; Gregoras I, 205.20-24.

he withdrew to Thessaloniki and not to Constantinople. There is no indication of any disagreement between the emperor and co-emperor, but Michael IX's preference for Thessaloniki (where the empress' court was situated at that time) is rather telling.

Andronikos II used his other sons to tie his loyal supporters to the imperial family through marriage. In 1292 Andronikos' second son by his first wife, Constantine, married the daughter of the emperor's favourite, the *protovestiarios* Theodore Mouzalon.³⁶⁸ It is unknown if the young couple remained in the palace, but based on his namesake's example (uncle Constantine *porphyrogennetos*, who was about to be imprisoned) it seems to have been the custom for imperial sons who were not heir to the throne to live in their own house.³⁶⁹ As opposed to his uncle, however, young Constantine did receive the title of Despot.³⁷⁰ Likewise, John, the firstborn of Andronikos II and Irene, was made Despot in 1295 and married in 1303 in a rather simple ceremony (because of the mourning for the old empress Theodora) the twelve-year old daughter of the imperial favourite Nikephoros Choumнос,³⁷¹ despite empress Irene's disapproval.³⁷² Pachymeres tells us that in the following year John was given a house in Constantinople which was confiscated from one of Andronikos II's brothers-in-law, which again confirms that princes who were not heir to the throne were supposed to leave the imperial residence.³⁷³ It also shows that Andronikos II treated his sons well, while sidelining his adult relatives.

Another son was used to establish a Palaiologan satellite state in the Montferrat

³⁶⁸ Pachymeres III, 201.17-203.14.

³⁶⁹ Although we have to take into consideration that Constantine could have been at most fourteen years old in 1292.

³⁷⁰ Pachymeres III, 203.4-5.

³⁷¹ Pachymeres IV, 413.19-415.5.

³⁷² Irene wanted her first son to become ruler of Montferrat. Pachymeres IV, 319.19-22

³⁷³ This was Michael, Despot of Epiros, who had married Andronikos' sister Anne. Anne had died and in the early 1300s Michael had been given Anne of Terter in marriage. This Bulgarian princess had been the third wife of the Serbian king Stephen Milutin, who had divorced her in order to marry Andronikos II's daughter Simonis. Michael was accused of treason and he, his wife and their children were imprisoned in the Great Palace. When Michael tried to escape, he was brought to the Blachernai palace. Pachymeres IV, 447.19-449.17.

territories: the second son of Andronikos II and Irene, Theodore, left Byzantium in the year 1305 for Montferrat, became a Roman catholic and married a daughter of one of the local aristocrats. He became marquis of Montferrat – his uncle had died childless – and the founder of a local Palaiologan dynasty. According to Pachymeres, Andronikos II had actually his youngest son Demetrios in mind to become ruler of Montferrat, even though the people of Montferrat had demanded John, Andronikos and Irene's oldest son. It was empress Irene who cast the deciding vote and sent their middle son Theodore to her hometown.³⁷⁴

Like the sons of Michael VIII, the sons of Andronikos II made themselves useful by serving in the army. As mentioned above, Michael IX was one of the most important Byzantine military commanders in the early fourteenth century. Also Michael IX's brother Despot Constantine served Byzantium through military activities. He joined the large campaign against the Catalan company, forced his half-sister Simonis to go back to the Serbs (1317) and fought against his nephew Andronikos III during the first civil war until he was halted close to Didymoteichon in 1322, captured and was forcefully made a monk.³⁷⁵ Andronikos II's youngest son, Despot Demetrios, was sent to the Serbian king Stephen Milutin in 1308 in order to seize power there and to check on his sister Simonis. However, the idea of overtaking the Serbs did not suit Demetrios and he soon returned to Constantinople. He married an unknown woman and probably had three children.³⁷⁶ He was on his father's side during the first civil war, but fled to Serbia when his wife and three children were captured by Andronikos III. He later returned to Constantinople and

³⁷⁴ Pachymeres IV, 659.11-23.

³⁷⁵ For Despot Constantine's presence at the battle against the Catalans, see Pachymeres IV, 599.23. For Constantine's capture close to Didymoteichon by his half-brother Andronikos III see: Gregoras I, 354.1-358.5.

³⁷⁶ Averkius Th. Papadopoulos, *Versuch einer Genealogie der Palaiologen, 1259-1453* (Amsterdam 1962, reprint 1938), 40 (hereafter Papadopoulos, *Versuch einer Genealogie*).

Andronikos III seems to have dropped charges against him.³⁷⁷

Emperor Andronikos II's behaviour towards his only daughter was similar to that of his father towards his sisters. While it remains unknown whether Andronikos II's illegitimate daughters were given to foreign rulers in marriage, we know for certain that his only legitimate daughter moved abroad for diplomatic reasons. Irene and Andronikos' daughter, born in 1293, was a girl called Simonis.³⁷⁸ She would be the last child of the imperial couple, and the apple of the eye of her parents.³⁷⁹ This did not prevent the emperor, however, from using her at a very young age for a diplomatic marriage. When she was six years old, in 1299, Simonis was married to Stephen Milutin of Serbia. Stephen was forty years older than Simonis and had to divorce his third wife Anna in order to marry the young princess. Because he was so attached to her, and also for diplomatic reasons, the emperor accompanied the little princess to Thessaloniki, where the wedding would take place in the spring 1299, after a severe winter had detained them in the Blachernai palace.³⁸⁰ In fact, the emperor did not leave for Thessaloniki alone with his daughter, but took with him practically half the residents of the palace: his wife Irene, his son Michael IX and daughter-in-law Maria and even his enchained brother Constantine.³⁸¹ It soon turned out that Simonis was not happily married. In 1317 she tried to escape from her husband by fleeing to a monastery (after attending the funeral of her mother), while travelling through Northern Greece. Her half-brother Constantine had to intervene.³⁸² Much later, in the 1320s, after the death of her husband, she became a nun, returned to

³⁷⁷ For Demetrios' activities during the war: Gregoras I, 409.17-22 and for Demetrios' flight to the Kral of Serbia: Gregoras I, 413.7-8. Gregoras says that Andronikos III is forgiving towards Demetrios because his aunt Simonis (Demetrios' sister) was present at the trial (Gregoras I, 533.1-534.6).

³⁷⁸ Pachymeres III, 305.1-16.

³⁷⁹ Pachymeres III, 303.18-19.

³⁸⁰ Pachymeres III, 305.17-27.

³⁸¹ It is unclear whether great-grandmother Theodora, the teenage sons of Andronikos and the two small children of Michael IX and Maria remained in Constantinople. Pachymeres IV, 307.1-13.

³⁸² Gregoras I, 287.8-288.23.

Constantinople and took care of her father on his deathbed, sharing the imperial residence with him during the last moments of his life.³⁸³

Despite the seemingly good relationship between Andronikos II and his children, the palace household diminished greatly. By the end of the 1290s the imperial palace residency consisted of one great-grandmother, Theodora, a middle-aged imperial couple, Andronikos II and Irene, their four children, a young couple, Michael IX and Maria (formerly Rita of Armenia, in later life known as Xene) and their two infants, the future Andronikos III, and Manuel. From the marriage of the young Simonis onwards (1299) we see how the residential court in Constantinople reduced. Deaths, marriages, but above all the separation between the emperor and empress caused an exodus from the imperial palace. There was for example the death of Theodora, who had been ill for a while and died in February of 1303, while the streets were full of snow and mud.³⁸⁴ And, as mentioned above, also the marriage of the three sons of Andronikos II, half-brothers of heir Michael IX, changed the outlook of the imperial residence.

But it was the bad relationship between the empress and emperor, which drastically changed the court population of the palace in Constantinople in the beginning of the fourteenth century. In the year 1303, the imperial couple Andronikos II and Irene left for Thessaloniki to see their daughter Simonis, although the emperor did not stay long this time.³⁸⁵ It is likely that the empress remained in Thessaloniki from this moment and held her court there until her death in 1317 in Drama (not far from Thessaloniki, Northern Greece). We do not know exactly where Michael IX, who was often away because he was active in the army, and his wife Maria had their base. It is plausible that Maria and her

³⁸³ Gregoras I, 461.15-18.

³⁸⁴ Though this did not stop the emperor from following the coffin through the city until the funeral procession had reached the Lips monastery. Pachymeres IV, 413.1-18.

³⁸⁵ Pachymeres IV, 415.2-5. The empress stayed on.

daughters were in Thessaloniki, while her sons, including the young Andronikos III, remained with their grandfather in the Blachernai palace. Maria had given birth to two daughters in the early 1300s, Theodora and Anna. The young Theodora left Byzantium in 1308, because emperor Andronikos gave her to tsar Theodore Svetoslav of Bulgaria to ensure peace between the Bulgarians and the Byzantines.³⁸⁶ Andronikos III claims later, when Theodora visits him in the 1330s, that he had never seen his sister, implying a separation between the children from a very young age.³⁸⁷ It is possible that the children grew up in different locations and emperor Andronikos II became increasingly isolated from his family. By the year 1310, the imperial family living in the Blachernai palace was significantly smaller than a decade earlier and consisted only of Andronikos II and his young grandson Andronikos III, and most likely also Andronikos III's brother Manuel.

According to Gregoras, emperor Andronikos II was initially extremely fond of his grandson and namesake when he was a child, to such an extent that he thought it necessary to keep his grandson close day and night and to personally give him an imperial upbringing.³⁸⁸ Consequently, Andronikos III enjoyed a privileged and shielded youth in the Blachernai palace. Andronikos II continued Palaiologan succession arrangements in the style of his father and proclaimed his grandson Andronikos III emperor, most likely before 1313.³⁸⁹ In 1318 he arranged for Andronikos III to marry with Adelaide (renamed Irene) of

³⁸⁶ This marriage took place around 1308, the princess must have been very young. See for references: Franz Dölger, 'Einiges über Theodora, die Griechin, Zarin der Bulgaren 1308-1330', in: F. Dölger, *ΠΑΡΑΣΤΙΟΡΑ. 30 Aufätze zur Geschichte, Kultur und Sprache des byzantinischen Reiches* (Ettal 1961), 222-230, 225-226. The other princess, Anna, married in 1313 to Thomas of Epiros (Pachymeres IV, 495.15-31; Kantakouzenos I, 13.3-6) and married again in 1318, with count Orsini, the murderer of her first husband, see Papadopoulos, *Versuch einer genealogie*, 44.

³⁸⁷ Gregoras I, 391.14-16.

³⁸⁸ Gregoras I, 283.21-284.1.

³⁸⁹ In a document of 1313, Andronikos II and Michael IX are mentioned as *basileus* and *autokrator*, while Andronikos III is mentioned as *basileus*. This shows that Andronikos III must have been proclaimed emperor in or before 1313. See Paul Lemerle (ed.), *Actes de Kutlumas* 2 vols. (Archives de l'Athos 2, Paris 1988), vol. 2, 50-53 no. 8, here at 51.

Brunswick.³⁹⁰ In the meanwhile, however, the young Andronikos had begun to feel that his hands were tied by his grandfather – especially compared to his friends – and he started to rebel. The ambitions of the young co-emperor grew and he impatiently awaited his grandfather's death, desiring power to save the declining empire.³⁹¹ In everyday life, while Andronikos III 'did not want to be treated as a child by his imperial grandfather, and forever to do as he was told',³⁹² he spent his grandfather's money (and that of his friends from the Genoese quarter Pera) on amusement in Constantinople. First, he and his friends found entertainment in 'hanging about, going to the theatre and hunting', but soon this lifestyle led to 'nocturnal wanderings of a kind that do not suit an emperor'.³⁹³ In the meanwhile, the old emperor had no intention of dying. Instead, as with many family relations of Andronikos II, the bond between the emperor and his grandson turned sour. Where Andronikos II initially doted upon his grandson, his opinion of the young emperor was now:

how could I entrust so much power and authority to my grandson, a man so young and inexperienced that he cannot even take care of his own affairs (...)? I will not, willingly, betray either my subjects or my own self.³⁹⁴

The 1320s started with a tragic but hugely important event for the imperial family, which can be seen as one of the direct causes of the first civil war between emperor Andronikos II and his grandson Andronikos III. During one night in September 1320, Andronikos III and some supporters were hanging about the house of a courtesan, who was waiting for her

³⁹⁰ Gregoras I, 277.17-19.

³⁹¹ Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 285.

³⁹² μηδὲ γὰρ θέλων ὑπὸ τῷ πάπῳ καὶ βασιλεῖ καθάπερ ὑπὸ παιδαγωγῷ παιδοκομεῖσθαι καὶ ἄλλων λατρεῦειν βουλήμασιν ὥσπερ παιδίον αἰεὶ (Gregoras I, 285.1-3).

³⁹³ καὶ πρῶτα μὲν ἤρξαντο παρεξάγειν αὐτὸν ἐς περιπάτους καὶ θεάτρα καὶ κυνηγέσια· ἔπειτα ἐς νυκτερινὰς περιπλανήσεις οὐ πάνυ τοι βασιλεῦσιν ἁρμοιεύσας. (Gregoras I, 284.8-10).

³⁹⁴ πῶς ἂν δυνηθεῖν τῷ ἐγγόνῳ πιστεῦσαι τοιαύτην ἀρχὴν, νέῳ τε ὄντι καὶ τοσαύτην ἀπειρίαν ἀσκοῦντι, ὥς μηδὲ τὰ κατ' αὐτὸν εἰδέναι διαθέσθαι καλῶς (...); ἀλλ' οὐκ ἂν ποτ' ἔγωγε προδότης ἐκὼν γε εἶναι γενοίμην, οὔτε τῶν ὑπηκόων, οὔτ' ἑμαυτοῦ. (Gregoras I, 404.5-15). The translation is by Angeliki Laiou in Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 285.

new lover to arrive. The young emperor had heard that she had found another sweetheart and a sting of jealousy had made him decide to lie in ambush in front of the house, together with some armed men. At midnight a young man turned up, who was quite invisible in the dark, but because he was assumed to be the new lover of the courtesan, he was attacked. The man fell off his horse and the attackers ran over to identify him. It turned out to be Despot Manuel, who was looking for his brother. The heavily wounded young man was transferred back to the Blachernai palace and died there within a couple of days.³⁹⁵ It is important to note that both Gregoras, friend of Andronikos II, and Kantakouzenos, supporter of Andronikos III, do not point at any deliberate act of sidelining in this fratricide.³⁹⁶

The news soon reached Manuel's father and mother, Michael IX and Maria, who were in Thessaloniki at that time.³⁹⁷ Earlier that year Michael had learned that his first daughter Anna had passed away. Altogether, the death of his children seems to have been too much for Michael and he died in October 1320 of grief and sorrow in Thessaloniki.³⁹⁸ Michael IX's wife Maria took up the name monastic Xene and became a nun. Now, with the death of his father, Andronikos III suddenly came close to real emperorship. However, his position as heir was uncertain, for the old emperor Andronikos II was extremely angry with his grandson. He refused to renew the traditional oath in which the succession to the throne was mentioned (this would have included Andronikos III's position as heir to the throne), and instead used a different formula in which only he himself was confirmed as emperor and in which he left it open who would be his heir.³⁹⁹ He even considered to make

³⁹⁵ For the entire story: Gregoras I, 283.1-286.

³⁹⁶ In fact, Kantakouzenos does not mention the cause of death of Manuel at all: Kantakouzenos I, 13.

³⁹⁷ Gregoras I, 277.19-22.

³⁹⁸ Both Gregoras and Kantakouzenos attribute Michael IX's illness and death to grief over the death of his children (Gregoras I, 286.8-12 ; Kantakouzenos I, 13-14).

³⁹⁹ Gregoras I, 295-296 and Kantakouzenos I, 16-23.

an illegitimate grandson, Michael Katharos, his successor.⁴⁰⁰ For the first time in Palaiologan history, dynastic ties were cut instead of tightened.

The fratricide did not only cause problems between grandfather and grandson, but also resulted in the ultimate isolation of Andronikos II in the Blachernai palace. Through Kantakouzenos we know that Andronikos II refrained from speaking to his grandson for four months, although he seems to have said once ‘go and stay at home from now on’.⁴⁰¹ This, and the fact that during this period of non-communication the young Andronikos III came to the palace every day – staying deliberately longer than necessary – indicates that by that time, if not earlier, Andronikos III and his wife Irene had moved out of the Blachernai palace and were living in either their own or someone else’s Constantinopolitan home.⁴⁰² By then, the exodus from the Blachernai palace was complete. Only old emperor Andronikos II was still there in the winter of 1321.⁴⁰³

The situation would not get better for the palace household. From early 1321 there seem to have been two imperial courts, one main court around Andronikos II in Constantinople and one counter-court around the young Andronikos III, who had left the capital. The two factions started a devastating civil war, which lasted until 1328, with occasional breaks of peace. Andronikos II seems to have been able to rely on his sons for military action and favourites like Theodore Metochites for advice, but even more so did he personally find support in loyal servants and pages, as we will see in the next chapter. After seven years, however, the young emperor Andronikos III appeared victorious and

⁴⁰⁰ Michael Katharos had become one of the imperial pages and was doted upon by the old emperor. For the story of Michael Katharos and references, see the next chapter of this thesis.

⁴⁰¹ “ἄπελθε λοιπὸν πρὸς τὴν σὴν οἰκίαν” ἔλεγε τῷ ἐγγόνῳ (Kantakouzenos I, 40.17-18). See also: Gregoras/Van Dieten, II,1, 102-104n4.

⁴⁰² Nine years later, Andronikos III would return to the city and take up his abode in his younger brother Despot Demetrius’ house. Perhaps he was also there during the winter of 1320/1321?

⁴⁰³ Andronikos II seems to have been leaning on his second son, Despot Constantine, and had also taken Constantine’s illegitimate son Michael Katharos into the palace. See page X of chapter 4 of this thesis.

became the sole ruler of the empire. He returned to Constantinople, while his grandfather Andronikos II was still living in the Blachernai palace.

At the end of the 1320s the tables had turned regarding the bond between the old emperor and his grandson. In the spring of 1328 the old emperor had been joined by his *mesazon* Theodore Metochites, who, hated for his malpractices and extreme wealth, feared the revenge of the population of Constantinople and had abandoned his own home to move into the (more secure) Blachernai palace.⁴⁰⁴ The two men anxiously awaited the arrival of Andronikos III, who stormed into the palace courtyard on the night of May 23-24.⁴⁰⁵ The troops of Andronikos III looted the treasury, thereby aggravating the major wounds of the civil war: the loss of taxable property and the destruction of Andronikos II's already feeble system of taxation.⁴⁰⁶ Kantakouzenos explains that the young emperor arranged for his grandfather to remain in the palace and that his subjects could visit him whenever they wanted. Also the household servants were to stay and serve Andronikos II as they had done before. The old emperor would receive an allowance of 12000 *hyperpera* for his own expenses and for the maintenance of his household. All in all, 'he left him in charge of everything in the palace, while he himself would – when he was residing in the city of Constantine – live in the house of Despot Demetrios, as long as his grandfather was still alive'.⁴⁰⁷ It is unknown where this house of Demetrios, Andronikos III's uncle, was situated. Overall, Kantakouzenos presents the settlement over the habitation of the Blachernai palace as magnanimous gesture of the young emperor. He also shows who pulled the strings during these years: it was Andronikos III who had control over his grandfather.

⁴⁰⁴ Gregoras I, 410.24-411.24 .

⁴⁰⁵ Gregoras I, 419-423; Kantakouzenos I, 302-306.

⁴⁰⁶ Gregoras I, 425. The major loss of the civil war was not the loss of life, but the loss of property, see: Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 298.

⁴⁰⁷ Kantakouzenos I, 312.19-21.

The historian Gregoras, however, gives a less positive – and perhaps more plausible – account of the arrangement. He says that, after long negotiations, the old emperor was allowed to keep his insignia, but was stripped of his political responsibilities and had to stay in the palace – making it sound more like a house arrest than a gesture of goodwill. For his maintenance and that of his pages the old emperor was permitted to keep the yearly fishing profit, worth around 10.000 *hyperpera*.⁴⁰⁸ To make the situation worse; the old emperor's health was deteriorating and the palace was subject to neglect.⁴⁰⁹ Gregoras clearly disapproves of the entire situation when he writes that he 'does not even want to tell' how the blind Andronikos II became the laughingstock of both his guards and his household staff and of *protostrator* Synadenos, who was governor of the city at that time. Of the palace, Gregoras says that washerwomen were allowed to enter the courtyard of the palace freely and to wash clothes in the water flowing in the courtyard whenever they wanted. Livestock from the neighbours – donkeys and horses, cows and chicken – were living in the palace complex and made it into a downtrodden pasture.⁴¹⁰

This situation must have continued until, in January 1330, a sudden illness hit emperor Andronikos III. He was in Didymoteichon at that time and everyone feared for his life. The news was brought to his grandfather in the Blachernai palace, who was given the choice either to become a monk, to become exiled or to be sent to the 'prison of forgetfulness'.⁴¹¹ Gregoras paints the scene in the imperial bedroom vividly, thereby confirming the isolation of the old emperor:

⁴⁰⁸ Gregoras I, 428.15-20. See for a comparison between the two historians' point of view also Gregoras/Dieten II, 2, 301n258.

⁴⁰⁹ According to Gregoras, Andronikos II had become blind. First he lost sight in one eye and then in the other, until he was completely blind: Gregoras I, 431.14-20.

⁴¹⁰ Gregoras I, 431.22-432.1-2.

⁴¹¹ ἐς τὸ τῆς λήθης φρούριον (Gregoras I, 441.19).

the emperor, suddenly surrounded by a whirlwind of danger, lay silent on his bed for a long time. How else could it have gone with a man who was not made of iron and whose heart was not adamant, and who was surrounded by many strange and savage soldiers? For they had expelled all his *oikeioi* and there was no one to walk along with him, this man, who could not see where to stand or step. In short: willy-nilly, so to say, his hair was cut off, he was given a monastic habit and named Antonios. This is what happened.⁴¹²

Was this the end of the old emperor's stay in the Blachernai palace or did he remain there as a monk? The not so reliable account of Ibn Battuta, who must have visited Constantinople between 1330 and 1332, says that 'the emperor of Constantinople is called Takfur, son of emperor Jirjis [George]. His father, the emperor George, was still alive, but had become an ascetic and monk, devoting himself to religious exercises in the churches, and had resigned the sovereignty to his son.'⁴¹³ It is unclear why Ibn Battuta calls the old emperor Andronikos II by the name George.⁴¹⁴ However, somewhat later, the now 74-year old monk Antonios resided apparently still in the Blachernai palace when Gregoras visited him in the winter of 1332. Gregoras claims that he was accustomed to visit the old emperor every three of four days, in order to cheer him up. He also reveals that Andronikos was not the only resident of the Blachernai palace, with him stayed his daughter Simonis. Like Gregoras, some other friends would visit him now and then. It seems that the old emperor

⁴¹² ὁ μέντοι βασιλεὺς τοσούτου χειμῶνος δεινῶν περιστάντος ἐξαίφνης αὐτῷ ἄφωνος ἐπὶ πολὺ τῆς ὥρας ἔκειτο ἐπὶ κλίνῃς. καὶ τί γὰρ ἄλλο εἰκὸς, εἰ μὴ σίδηρος ἦν, εἰ μὴ ἐξ ἀδάμαντος ἔλαχε τὴν καρδίαν ἐσκευασμένος, πολλῶν μὲν ὀπλιτῶν ἀλλογλώσσων τε καὶ ἀγρίων περιχυθέντων αὐτῷ, τῶν δ' οἰκειακῶν ἐξωσθέντων ἀπάντων καὶ μηδενὸς ὄντος τοῦ ὁδηγήσοντος ἀνθρώπου, ἐστερημένον τοῦ βλέπειν πῇ μὲν στήσεται, πῇ δὲ διαβήσεται; ἀλλ' ἵνα μὴ διατρίβωμεν, ἄκοντος ἐκόντος, εἰπεῖν, τὴν τε κόμην κείρουσι τοῦτου καὶ τὸ μοναχικὸν σχῆμα περιτιθέασι καὶ ἐς Ἀντώνιον τοῦνομα μεταφέρουσι. καὶ ταῦτα μὲν οὕτως ἔσχεν (Gregoras I, 441.21-442.6).

⁴¹³ Ibn Battuta, *Travels*, 158.

⁴¹⁴ Ibn Battuta is not trustworthy when it comes to his description of the old emperor's life. In his account Ibn Battuta describes how he meets the pious old emperor-monk in the streets of Constantinople and walks towards the Hagia Sophia with him: 'I was out one day with my Greek guide, when we met the former king George [=Andronikos II/Antonios] who had become a monk. He was walking on foot, wearing haircloth garments and a bonnet of felt, and he had a long white beard and a fine face, which bore traces of his austerities. Behind and before him was a body of monks, and he had a staff on his hand and a rosary on his neck. When the Greek saw him he dismounted and said to me "Dismount for this is the king's father". (...) Then he [Andronikos II/Antonios] took my hand and as I walked with him asked me about Jerusalem and the Christians who were there, and questioned me at length. I entered with him the sacred enclosure of the church which we have described above [Hagia Sophia]' (Ibn Battuta, *Travels*, 163).

did receive support from certain family members and friends, even though most others had turned against him. On one occasion when Gregoras and the old emperor had spent an evening together, Andronikos/Antonios became unwell and died in the early morning of the thirteenth of February 1332.⁴¹⁵

Emperor Andronikos III's relationship with his nuclear family and the extent to which he relied on and controlled the people closest to him differed significantly from that of his predecessors. Andronikos III's reign is described as relying on his supporters, especially the *megas domestikos* Kantakouzenos, while he himself spent time on military affairs, western-style sports and hunting.⁴¹⁶ The re-establishment of an imperial fleet, some military successes and the instituting of four *katholikoi kritai*, high judges, are seen as his main achievements.⁴¹⁷ We get the impression that he was completely the opposite of his religious, homely grandfather, and also that he differed greatly from his great-grandfather Michael VIII.

However, the above picture can partially be attributed to the tendency of contemporary historians to focus on the military actions of Andronikos and the friendship with Kantakouzenos. They characterise his style of governance and dealings with his close relatives as informal, down-to-earth, with foreign elements (according to Gregoras), and with an emphasis on friendship rather than on kinship (Kantakouzenos). We should take into account that Kantakouzenos has his reason to hail the importance of Andronikos III's friendship with his loyal supporters (himself), while Gregoras disliked anything foreign and thus criticised Andronikos III's preference for western entertainment, his western wife and the decline of Byzantine customs. Another problem concerning Andronikos III's family relations is that his court was itinerant and that he and his family were caught up in

⁴¹⁵ Gregoras I, 461.8-463.20.

⁴¹⁶ Donald Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium 1261-1453* (London, 1972), 172-173.

⁴¹⁷ *ODB* I, 95.

a civil war during the first seven years of his co-emperorship. After the conclusion of the war, Andronikos III's reign remained dominated by military matters. Also of imperial family life during the more stable 1330s we know very little.

Moreover, the fact that Andronikos III simply did not have many family members to rely on make an investigation of his family relations difficult. Having started a rebellion against his grandfather in the early 1320s, Andronikos III's father Michael IX, his brother Manuel and sister Anne had died, while his mother had become a nun and was living in Thessaloniki. His sister Theodora was abroad and his uncles chose the side of his grandfather. There was simply no family to rely on. The lack of support from his next of kin coincided with Andronikos III's initial preference for being with friends, hunting and military action. In the early 1320s Andronikos III was married with Irene of Brunswick, but seems to have valued good relations with his fellow conspirators and military men over closeness with his wife. Kantakouzenos' history implies that this attitude was more prompted by necessity than by choice: when plans were made to leave Constantinople in 1321, Andronikos III wanted to take Irene with him, but was persuaded by his friend Kantakouzenos to leave his pregnant wife behind, because she would slow the men down and it would be difficult to protect her.⁴¹⁸ She later followed him to Adrianople and we know that, once the civil war was in full swing and Andronikos III held his court in several locations, Irene also resided in different imperial residences. She bore him children there, but they died in their infancy, and soon after, Irene herself died, in 1325.⁴¹⁹

During this same period, Andronikos III's mother took up the role of peacemaker. Initially, Xene (formerly known as Maria-Rita) may have been supportive of her son. A passage in Kantakouzenos confirms that Andronikos II had asked his son the Despot

⁴¹⁸ Kantakouzenos I, 52.13-53.21.

⁴¹⁹ Gregoras I, 383.23-384.1.

Constantine to fetch Xene from Thessaloniki and bring her to Constantinople – possibly to avoid her using her influence in Thessaloniki in favour of the troops of Andronikos III.⁴²⁰ A little later, however, Xene acted as an intermediate between her father-in-law and her son. She instigated a reconciliation between grandson and grandfather in the summer of 1322, out of fear of domination by Kantakouzenos, implies Gregoras.⁴²¹ Kantakouzenos, on the other hand, highlights that Xene was sent to her son by order of Andronikos II, but also says that the reconciliation of mother and son was an emotional occasion, because Andronikos had not seen his mother since the death of his father.⁴²² It appears that the bond between mother and son was not so close, perhaps due to the struggles of the civil war, or because Andronikos III had been raised by his grandfather, while his mother resided in Thessaloniki.

In 1326 Andronikos III married Anna of Savoy, who brought with her several knights who joined Andronikos in his pursuit of western-style tournaments and games. About their marriage very little is known.⁴²³ We know that Anna gave birth to a daughter in 1327 and that the main base of Andronikos III's court was Didymoteichon. A passage about the close relationship between the emperor and his *meas domestikos* Kantakouzenos, both on the battlefield and at home [in a palace in Didymoteichon?], reveals how unconventional and seemingly down-to-earth Andronikos III's lifestyle was. Kantakouzenos says how the emperor often offered to make him emperor and clothe him in imperial attire, which he always declined, even though he already behaved like an emperor:

⁴²⁰ Kantakouzenos I, 129-130.

⁴²¹ Gregoras I, 358.

⁴²² Kantakouzenos I, 166.10-19.

⁴²³ I will give more detailed information in the next paragraph on both Irene and Anna's relation to the emperor.

Concerning the appearance and dress, it did not happen as the emperor wished, but in practice the *megas domestikos* differed hardly from an emperor. For he held the entire execution of the government under him and he undersigned the *prostagmata* of the emperor like the emperor himself with red colour, and what he commanded had the same value as the commands of the emperor and everything which the emperor was allowed to do, he would do also. He would for example use the blanket of the emperor when he was on campaign and his own baggage-carriers were not there, and he would without hesitation lie down on the emperor's bed, which not even an emperor's son or young emperor was allowed to do without permission, both in presence and in absence of the emperor. And when he would spend the night at the emperor's, he would use both the emperor's slippers and his own. In one word; he behaved like an emperor in every way, so that the emperor, who noticed all this, was extraordinarily content and let the others know how this pleased him. This [behaviour] was also not unknown to empress Anna, because it happened often in her presence, so that the emperor would say: 'what would be the problem, if it were made public, what already happens here in private, and everyone would know about it?' The *megas domestikos*, however, declined as he had before and said he was satisfied with the current situation.⁴²⁴

We should not attach too much value to Kantakouzenos' claim that he was asked to be emperor (he says this several times throughout his History, probably to justify his own usurpation), but the passage shows that in the private sphere of Andronikos III, empress Anne had to share the attention of her husband with Kantakouzenos. The passage is also an indication that physical proximity (literally being close to the emperor, sleeping in his bed, using his shoes) points at a position of power. Moreover, the fact that the empress was able to often witness the close friendship between her husband and Kantakouzenos, implies that the interaction between her, her husband and the *megas domestikos* was relatively

⁴²⁴ τῷ μὲν δὴ ἔξωθεν σχήματι καὶ τῇ περιβολῇ οὐχ ἢ ἡξίου ἐγεγόνει ὁ βασιλεὺς· ἔργοις δὲ οὐδὲν ἦν σχεδὸν διαφέρων βασιλέως, ἢ τε γὰρ διοίκησις τῶν πραγμάτων πᾶσα ὑπ' αὐτῷ ἦν, καὶ τὰ βασιλέως προστάγματα οὐχ ἥττον ἢ αὐτὸς βασιλεὺς ἐρυθραῖς ὑπεσημαίνετο ὑπογραφαῖς, καὶ ἃ ἐξέφερετο παρ' ἑαυτοῦ, τὴν ἴσιν καὶ ὁμοίαν δύναμιν τοῖς βασιλέως εἶχεν, καὶ τᾶλλα ὅσα βασιλέως ἔργα ἦν, καὶ αὐτῷ ἐξῆν. στρώμασι τε γὰρ ἐφύπνωτε βασιλέως, εἴποτε στρατευομένῳ συνέβαινε τοῖς αὐτοῦ σκευοφόροις μὴ παρῆναι, καὶ τῇ βασιλέως κλίνῃ, ἢ μὴδὲ νύτῳ καὶ βασιλεῖ, εἰ μὴ ἐπιτραπεῖν, ἔξεστιν, αὐτὸς ἀνεκλίνετο ἀκωλύτως ὁμοίως τε ἀπόντος καὶ παρόντος βασιλέως, ἐμβάσι τε ἐχρήτο ταῖς βασιλικαῖς ἀδεέστερον ἢ ταῖς ἰδίαις, ὅποτε συνδιανυκτερεύσειε βασιλεῖ, καὶ πάντα ἔπραττε βασιλικῶς, ὥς καὶ βασιλέα ὁρῶντα τὰ τοιαῦτα ἠδεσθᾶν τε ἄγαν ὑπερφυῶς καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐνδείκνυσθαι ὥς εἴη αὐτῷ καθ' ἡδονήν. τὰ τοιαῦτα δὲ οὐδὲ τῇ βασιλίδι Ἄννῃ ἄγνωστα ἦν, ἀλλὰ παρούσης καὶ αὐτῆς, ἐπράττετο πολλάκις, ὥς καὶ βασιλέα πρὸς τὸν μέγαν δομέστικον λέγειν, ὅτι "τί δ' ἂν εἴη δεινόν, εἰ ἃ ἰδία, ταῦτα καὶ δημοσίᾳ πραχθεῖν καὶ τοῖς πᾶσι γένοιτο καταφανῆ"; ὁ δ' οὐδὲν ἥττον ἢ πρότερον ἀπεωθεῖτο, ἀρκεῖσθαι τοῖς παροῦσι φάσκων. ἀλλὰ περὶ μὲν τούτων τῆς ἀληθείας ἕνεκα τοσαῦτα εἴρηται ἡμῖν (Kantakouzenos I, 369.10-370.9).

informal. Yet, the passage implies that her place in the life of her husband was a rather modest one: according to Kantakouzenos she was only to observe how Kantakouzenos and Andronikos behaved as equals, while she would have no part in her husband's life in the army nor share his friendship with Kantakouzenos.

The victory of Andronikos III over his grandfather in 1328 did not change the style of governance or family relations of the new sole emperor. However, Andronikos III did display forgiveness towards his former enemies, including family members who had fought against him.⁴²⁵ As we have seen, he was reconciled with his grandfather and let him stay in the palace, and he agreed to officially share imperial power with him – though *de facto* the old emperor had no real power and was to keep away from politics. This solution was a compromise between Andronikos III's inclination to be lenient and his followers' advice to abandon this mildness towards his grandfather.⁴²⁶

Andronikos can be seen as a practical military ruler and not someone who cared much about old Byzantine traditions. Costas Kyrris notes that Andronikos III is often portrayed as a soldier-king, someone who strengthened his position as emperor by relying on and supporting the middle and lower classes, which implies avoidance of support from the aristocracy, ie. Kantakouzenos and the like, let alone from his family members.⁴²⁷ However, during one critical moment in 1330 we see that Andronikos III was forced to be concerned with his family and his succession. In that year, namely, Andronikos was very ill and feared for his life.⁴²⁸ Upon his near deathbed he made arrangements in the case of

⁴²⁵ Costas Kyrris, 'Continuity and differentiation in the regime established by Andronicus III after his victory', *EEBS* 43 (1977-1978), 278-328, here at 313ff (hereafter Kyrris, 'Continuity and differentiation').

⁴²⁶ Gregoras I, 428. As Ursula Bosch has observed, the compromise, together with Andronikos III's practical solution concerning his place of residence (leaving the palace to the old emperor, while staying in the house of his uncle Despot Demetrios whenever he was in Constantinople) can be seen as an example of as *Realpolitik*, see Bosch, *Kaiser Andronikos III*, 165.

⁴²⁷ Kyrris, 'Continuity and differentiation', 285.

⁴²⁸ Ursula Bosch thinks he suffered from malaria attacks throughout his life, see: Bosch, *Kaiser Andronikos III*, 177n4.

his death.⁴²⁹ Gregoras says that he first ordered that the prisoners of war be freed, such as his uncle the Despot Constantine, Theodore Metochites and others, then he called upon his followers and in an oral testament he said

that all the Romans should vow to pay honours to his wife, the empress – she was personally present, even though she was pregnant, and listened to what was spoken – and also to her child, to which she would give birth, as emperor, in case it were a boy. The regent should be *megas domestikos* Kantakouzenos. Only these arrangements were written down and would count as testament. On this occasion he did not utter one word about his grandfather, the emperor, nor about his mother, the empress, who lived in Thessaloniki at that time.⁴³⁰

As Gregoras explains, the rulership would fall to Anna and her child (should it be a boy), while Kantakouzenos would be regent (*epitropos*). Two other sources (Kantakouzenos' history and Enveri's *Düsturname*) agree on this arrangement, although Enveri does not name the presence of empress Anna and Kantakouzenos emphasizes his own role and claims he declined Andronikos III's offer.⁴³¹ It is important to note that Kantakouzenos was only made regent and not emperor in this will. If there is any truth in Kantakouzenos's claim that he was frequently offered co-emperorship by Andronikos III – his history is full of this idea – this should have been expressed at this occasion in 1330, in the case of Andronikos III's death. However, Kantakouzenos was only to be made regent and not

⁴²⁹ There are three sources which mention the arrangement: Gregoras I, 440, Kantakouzenos II, 91 and the Turkish *Düsturname* of Enveri, see Irene Mélikoff-Sayar (ed.), *Le destan d'Umur Pacha (Düsturname-I Enveri)*. *Texte, traduction et notes par Irène Mélikoff-Sayar* (Paris, 1954), 93.1313-1315 (hereafter Enveri, *Düsturname*).

⁴³⁰ πάντας Ῥωμαίους, σέβας ἀποδιδόναι τῇ τε συζύγῳ δεσποίνῃ (παρὴν γὰρ καὶ αὕτη ἔγκυος οὖσα καὶ ἤκουε τῶν λεγομένων) καὶ ἅμα τῷ τεχνησομένῳ παιδίῳ, ὅσα καὶ βασιλεῖ, εἰ ἄρρεν ἔσται· ἐπίτροπον δ' εἶναι τὸν Καντακουζηνὸν τὸν μέγαν δομέστικον. ἃ δὴ μόνα γραφῇ παραδοθέντα ὡς διαθήκη νενόμισται. Μνεῖα δ' οὐδεμία τοῦτω γεγένηται τέως οὔτε μὴν τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ πάππου, οὔτε τῆς μητρὸς καὶ δεσποίνης ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ τῷ τηνικαῦτα τὴν δίκαιαν ποιουμένης (Gregoras I, 440.1-8).

⁴³¹ See note 143. Ursula Bosch thinks it unlikely that Kantakouzenos actually declined the offer: Bosch, *Kaiser Andronikos III*, 180.

emperor in case the Andronikos III should die. We may conclude that Palaiologan family succession was preferred over friendship with Kantakouzenos.⁴³²

Although his wife and children may have been essential for Andronikos III's future plans, the emperor did not mention his other two family members in his will: the old emperor and his mother Xene. There was no need to, but still, this implies a certain hostility, or at least indifference, towards these family relations. This is also implied by their reaction. Gregoras explains that when empress-mother Xene heard of the arrangement she feared for her life (she was an opponent of Kantakouzenos and his mother),⁴³³ adopted Syrgiannes as her son and made the citizens of Thessaloniki swear that they would acknowledge her as their ruler. The Thessalonians also had to confirm that they, in case emperor Andronikos III died, would be loyal to the imperial son who would hopefully be born soon.⁴³⁴ We have already seen how the old emperor, still living in the Blachernai palace, was forced to become a monk at the critical moment of Andronikos III's illness. Also other members of the family were seen as a threat. Gregoras tells of a rumour that went round at that time: that the name of the next emperor would start with a 'K' and that for that reason Andronikos III's uncle the Despot Constantine, who was just released from an eight-year imprisonment (he had been captured at the beginning of the civil war), was forced to go into hiding again.⁴³⁵

Andronikos III survived this severe illness and not the year 1330 but 1332 became a crucial year in the history of the imperial family and the Byzantine state: the old emperor died and finally a successor was born.⁴³⁶ It is most likely that Andronikos III was present at

⁴³² Bosch, *Andronikos III*, 181ff.

⁴³³ On Xene vs. Kantakouzenos' mother and empress Anna vs. Kantakouzenos' mother see: Gregoras/ Van Dieten II,2, 312-317n279.

⁴³⁴ Gregoras I, 440.16-441.2.

⁴³⁵ Gregoras I, 441.4-14.

⁴³⁶ The child born in 1330 was a daughter.

the funeral of his grandfather in the Lips monastery in 1332, because Gregoras says that in the same year he rushed back to Didymoteichon when he heard that his wife Anna of Savoy had given birth to a son, whom they named John. Andronikos celebrated this with some Western entertainment: jousting and a tournament.⁴³⁷ It is unclear, however, whether the imperial family remained in Didymoteichon from that moment and if Simonis had stayed on in the Blachernai palace after Andronikos II died. Gregoras indicates that Andronikos III, his wife Anna and their children, four in total, were in ‘the imperial palace’ – presumably the Blachernai – in the year 1334 and that the emperor fortified the palace against the Serbs.⁴³⁸ We may assume that from at least 1334 on the main residence of the emperor was the Blachernai palace and that – whenever the emperor was at home in Constantinople – he would share his residence with empress Anna, his sons John and Michael, and two daughters. Andronikos III may have had an illegitimate daughter, who was given to one of the Mongols in marriage, but it is uncertain whether she was part of Andronikos III’s court.⁴³⁹ Gregoras also speaks of another illegitimate daughter (Irene), who had married the emperor of Trebizond.⁴⁴⁰

The appointment of patriarch Kalekas in 1334 as regent and caretaker (*epitropos* and *phylax*) of empress Anne and her children in Constantinople – instead of Kantakouzenos – shows again that Andronikos III now felt secure about his succession and that the safety of his family was of the utmost importance to him. Kantakouzenos was not mentioned as possible heir or regent. However, despite the dynastic importance of his son John, Andronikos III never made him emperor during his lifetime. Ursula Bosch thinks that this may have been due to the youthfulness of the child, or that Andronikos III did not

⁴³⁷ Gregoras I, 882.1-483.20.

⁴³⁸ Gregoras I, 496.10-13.

⁴³⁹ Ibn Battuta, *Travels*, 149.

⁴⁴⁰ Gregoras I, 678-679.

feel the need to do so because the dynasty was simply firmly established by this time. She also suggests that Andronikos III may have based his decision on his own experience with the succession-policy of Michael VIII and Andronikos II (who, as we have seen, proclaimed and crowned their sons and grandsons emperor during their lifetime), which had made succession more complicated than necessary.⁴⁴¹

From 1334 until his death in 1341 emperor Andronikos III was mostly away from the capital and the palace, together with fellow military commanders and supporters like Kantakouzenos and Synadenos. Despite having the possibility of withdrawing in the palace, he never took the opportunity to become a family man – let alone a secluded, inaccessible emperor. Gregoras portrays the emperor as an example of stubbornness and wilfulness, someone who did not care about imperial ceremonies or hierarchy. Neither his family, nor anyone else, was able to persuade Andronikos to behave in a more dignified and imperial manner: in 1335 (or 1336), for example, he spontaneously insisted on commanding the newly instituted imperial fleet (twenty ships) himself, despite the objections of his wife and others, who said that this would not suit his imperial status.⁴⁴² Andronikos sailed off anyway and left Anna and children in the palace, after having asked the mother of Kantakouzenos to act as caretaker. Like the earlier arrangement with the patriarch, this indicates that the emperor was concerned with the well-being of his next of kin. An unintentional effect was, however, that the absence of the emperor and ‘a sense of great freedom in the palace’ instigated a revolt in Constantinople, which the women were able to suppress – though with difficulty.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ Bosch, *Kaiser Andronikos III*, 188.

⁴⁴² Gregoras I, 524.24-525.4.

⁴⁴³ ἀδείας μακρᾶς ἐπιχωριαζούσης ἐς τὰ βασιλεια (Gregoras I, 530.2). For the entire passage see Gregoras I, 530.1-17.

Furthermore, Gregoras describes Andronikos III's style of government as unusual: he would live without guards, even without the imperial axe-bearers, he would live under one roof with people whom he suspected of plotting against him, he would not care about the imperial dignities or customs and in the palace he would put himself literally at the same level as his subjects, denying his family their rightful elevated place:

This can be shown by giving one of many examples. It is known to all that both sides of the floor of the opposing far ends of the imperial *triklinos* lie above the floor in between as far as a third of a span higher, especially there where the imperial throne is situated. The aim of this is that the emperor is standing above the others during the sacred hymn singing or when he is speaking with his subordinates or with ambassadors from abroad. And no-one but his wife, his sons and his siblings – and I should add the brothers of his father – should come forward to stand on this place together with the emperor. But when he [Andronikos III] stood and spoke from there with those whom he had to, not only young aristocrats, but also common people and those from the body of servants would ascend and stand with him, whoever felt like it. When there happened a lot of this kind of jostling around him, he would give way and concede, leave the stage to the others and step quietly down to the lower part of the floor, not objecting to any of it all.⁴⁴⁴

The passage shows that it was the custom for the emperor and the imperial family to be raised above anyone else when they would be present in the reception hall (*triklinos*) of the palace. For this reason the *triklinos* was equipped with two platforms at both far ends; the area where the thrones were would be elevated higher. This confirmed the high status of the emperor and his family in a visual way. The fact that only close family ('empress, sons, siblings, uncles from father's side') were allowed to stand on the stage had to show the

⁴⁴⁴ δῆλον γάρ ἐστι τοῖς ἅπασιν, ὥς αἱ τοῦ ἐπιπέδου ἐκ διαμέτρου ἀκρότητες τῶν βασιλικῶν τρικλίνων ἀμφοτέραι ὑπέρκεινται· πού τοῦ μεταξὺ ἐπιπέδου ἄχρι καὶ ἐς τρίτον σπιθαμῆς, καὶ μάλιστα ὅπη καὶ ὁ βασιλικὸς ἔστηκε θρόνος· ἴν' ἴσως ἔχη τι κἄν τοῦτο πλεον τῶν ἄλλων ὁ βασιλεὺς ἰστάμενος ἐν τε ταῖς ἱεραῖς ὑμνωδίαις καὶ ὅτε διαλέγοιτο νῦν μὲν τοῖς ὑπηκόοις, νῦν δὲ τοῖς ἐξ ἐθνῶν πρέσβεσιν. ἐξεῖναι γέ μὴν ἐπ' ἐκείνης τῆς στάσεως οὐδενὶ τῶν ἀπάντων τῷ βασιλεῖ συνίστασθαι, πλὴν τῆς συζύγου καὶ τῶν υἱέων καὶ ἀδελφῶν· προσθεῖν δ' ἂν καὶ τῶν πατραδέλφων. ἀλλὰ τοῦτο γέ ἰσταμένου καὶ ὁμιλοῦντος ἐκεῖθεν οἷς ἐχρὴν ἀνῆεσαν καὶ συνίσταντό οἱ οὐχ ὅπως ἅπαντα τῶν εὐγενῶν ἢ νεότης, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν χυδαίων καὶ ὑπηρέτου τάξιν ἐχόντων, οἷς πρὸς βουλήσεως ἦν. ὥς καὶ τοσοῦτους ἐντεῦθεν γίνεσθαι τοὺς συνωθισμοὺς περὶ αὐτὸν πολλάκις, ὥς ὑπέειπεν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐνδιδόναι καὶ ἄλλοις μὲν τῆς ὑπερτέρας παραχωρεῖν στάσεως, αὐτὸν δ' ἡρέμα κατιέναι πρὸς τὸ τοῦ ἐδάφους χαμαιζηλότερον, μηδενὶ τῶν ἀπάντων ἀχθόμενον (Gregoras I, 566.23-567.16).

unity of the family and the dynasty – perhaps this elevation had a similar performative meaning as the *prokypsis* ceremony in which the imperial family would be shown to the public on a platform. Gregoras claims that during Andronikos III's reign the tradition of the high position of the emperor and his family in the *triklinos* was abandoned, the stage was open to all (aristocrats and servants alike) and Andronikos III would even step down to intermingle with the people. His behaviour – if we can trust Gregoras in this – means that Andronikos did not care much about Byzantine ceremonial and thus was ready to put informality above the traditional right of his family to be elevated above others.

Typically, upon his fatal illness in June 1341, Andronikos III did not withdraw to the palace, but stayed in the Hodegetria monastery (where a synod was held) where he died three days later. Kantakouzenos says that he, the *mezas domestikos*, had a conversation with empress Anna of Savoy and subsequently brought John and his brother Michael, respectively nine and five years old, to the Blachernai palace and arranged bodyguards for them and heavy security for the entire palace.⁴⁴⁵ This shows that they were not in the palace in the first place, but that the empress and her children had joined the emperor in the Hodegetria monastery. Again, this is an indication that the relation between the emperor and the empress was relatively informal.

Anna returned to the palace after the death of Andronikos III, without observing the nine days of mourning but only after three.⁴⁴⁶ From then on, the empress and her children seem to have been the only residents of the Blachernai palace. In the same year of the death of Andronikos III, however, a second civil war broke out, this time between Anna and the patriarch on the one side and the powerful Kantakouzenos, who had proclaimed

⁴⁴⁵ Kantakouzenos I, 560.6-14.

⁴⁴⁶ Gregoras II, 578.23-579.2.

himself emperor, on the other side. Again, we can speak of two courts, one official women's court in the centre of the realm and one usurper's counter-court on the move.

The empress' court can be characterized as small and relying on the empress' close supporters and attendants, not on family – there were no adult relatives present and the empress' children were too young to provide any support. One of the empress' confidants was patriarch Kalekas, who worked so closely with the empress that he practically lived in the palace himself.⁴⁴⁷ But the empress also relied on her servants and others attending on her in the women's quarters of the palace.⁴⁴⁸

After many years of devastation during the second civil war, Kantakouzenos proclaimed himself emperor in Didymoteichon (1346). A move towards Constantinople was made in 1347, when the two courts reconciled. For the emperor Kantakouzenos, after having entered the Blachernai palace with force (against the troops of empress Anna of Savoy and John V), there was no suitable living space in the palace – even though his wife was not yet with him. The spaces, which could have been suitable for the emperor, were already occupied by the empress Anna and her children. It appears that Anna's two daughters had left by this time. However, Kantakouzenos was satisfied with the rooms around 'the great hall of the old Alexios, or rather their ruins'.⁴⁴⁹ In his History, Kantakouzenos recalls the arrival of his wife with their daughters from Adrianople (she was crowned empress there just before her arrival in Constantinople), but does not say anything about the rooms they occupied in the palace. His daughter Helen 'was soon to take up her abode with the young emperor, as her father and the empress had arranged',

⁴⁴⁷ This may have been meant metaphorically: Gregoras II, 698.4-9. However, the following passage on the situation on 1347 implies that the patriarch perhaps had his own space in the palace: 'While the patriarch John [Kalekas] was still lingering in his apartment at the palace, the emperor [Kantakouzenos] came to him and addressed him gently.' (Miller, *The History*, 158).

⁴⁴⁸ More about empress Anna's household follows in the next paragraph. For the influence of servants see chapter 3.

⁴⁴⁹ τοῖς περὶ τὸν Ἀλεξίου τοῦ πάλαι μέγιστον τρίκλινον ἐρείπιοις μᾶλλον (Gregoras II, 784.9-10). For the entire passage: Gregoras II, 783.24-784.10).

meaning that the two families were reconciled through intermarriage.⁴⁵⁰ At that time, right after the civil war, the Blachernai palace was finally full of people again. Two emperors and three empresses lived in the palace: the emperor Kantakouzenos and his wife Irene, their daughter Maria and sons Matthew and Andronikos, empress Anna of Savoy, her son emperor John V (sixteen years old) and his wife Helena, who also was Kantakouzenos' daughter (14 years old) and John's brother Michael. But the furnishings of the Blachernai looked nothing like those under Michael VIII or Andronikos II. The household was impoverished: the plates and cups were not made of gold, a few were made of tin, the rest of clay and earthenware. The imperial clothes were made of gilded leather and most of the precious gemstones were made of glass, narrates an embarrassed Gregoras.⁴⁵¹

Kantakouzenos' attitude towards his family seems to have differed from his Palaiologan predecessors, or was at least more complicated. He was an usurper, but his reign was supposed to be shared with the Palaiologan heir to the throne, John V. To the misfortune of Kantakouzenos, the legitimacy of the reign of the Palaiologoi was firmly established in the minds of the Byzantines by this time. Franz Dölger thinks that Kantakouzenos therefore made attempts to legitimize his own co-emperorship by calling the late Andronikos III 'brother', co-regent empress Anne 'sister' and himself 'father' of John V Palaiologos in some documents he signed during his reign – confirming the spiritual bond between himself and the Palaiologan family.⁴⁵² Besides emphasizing his

⁴⁵⁰ Miller, *The History*, 44 and 150.

⁴⁵¹ Gregoras II, 788.15-18.

⁴⁵² Franz Dölger, 'Johannes VI. Kantakouzenos als dynastischer Legitimist', *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 10 (1938), 19-30 (hereafter Dölger, 'Johannes VI. Kantakouzenos'). Kantakouzenos calls Andronikos III his brother: Zepos and Zepos, *Jus graecoromanum* I, 593 ; Kantakouzenos III, 315.6 ; Kantakouzenos III, 167.12. On empress Anna as Kantakouzenos' sister: R. Predelli and G. M. Thomas (eds.), *Tabularium Veneto-Levantinum* 2 (Venice 1899), 4.35. Kantakouzenos as father of John V Palaiologos: in a *chrysobull* of 22 September 1355, see Dölger, 'Johannes VI. Kantakouzenos', 21n10. Likewise, legitimization of Palaiologan dynasty had been essential for Michael VIII and to a certain extent Andronikos II: both signed documents with the surnames 'Komnenos Doukas Angelos Palaiologos', through which they placed the name Palaiologos at the same level with the three imperial families to which Michael VIII was related.

proximity to the Palaiologoi, we also see the emperor compromising between the Kantakouzenoi and the Palaiologoi. Officially he may have been emperor and regent until John V was ready for sole rulership, but during the course of his short reign (1347-1354), Kantakouzenos occasionally put his own family first. It is important to note that Kantakouzenos had been an only child and his powerful mother had died in captivity during the second civil war, after which his only family members were relatives of his wife, Irene Asasina. These family members received important positions. Irene's brothers were made *sebastokratores* and were given the appropriate clothing and insignia.⁴⁵³ Kantakouzenos' son-in-law Nikephoros II Doukas Angelos (formerly Orsini) was made Despot in 1347, after having held the dignity of *panhypersebastos* during the 1340s.

With regards to the relationship with his wife, empress Irene, Kantakouzenos seems to have had a supportive spouse. This became evident in the second civil war, when most of their six children had grown up (they were born between the years 1325 and 1334) and she was able to take over the rulership of Didymoteichon when her husband was away. During Kantakouzenos' short reign she lived in the Blachernai palace and was granted rule over Byzantium (Constantinople) when he was not in the city – just as previously in Didymoteichon. It appears that Kantakouzenos, more than his Palaiologan predecessors, entrusted his wife with governing power. But this may also have been the result of the fact that Irene was beyond her childbearing years. Empress Irene not only yielded power, but

Andronikos II used this template until ca. 1315, after which he used only the name Palaiologos. Franz Dölger reckons the emperor did so perhaps because he thought the dynasty was established by then. From then on the Palaiologan emperors just signed with the surname 'Palaiologos'. See Dölger, 'Johannes VI. Kantakouzenos', 28-29.

⁴⁵³ Gregoras II, 797.2-6.

also acted as an intermediate, persuading her son Matthew to refrain from taking power in 1353.⁴⁵⁴

Kantakouzenos was also generous in giving his children a share of his power or high positions. As we have seen, Kantakouzenos' daughter Helena had married the rightful heir to the throne John V Palaiologos. Kantakouzenos' son Manuel had already been granted governorship in the mid 1340s, but was made Despot and governor of Morea in 1348 – a move that proved beneficial for the Kantakouzenos family.⁴⁵⁵ Like his brother Manuel, Matthew had been granted a high position when he was appointed governor of Thrace by his father, most likely before Kantakouzenos had entered Constantinople in 1347.⁴⁵⁶ The emperor displayed true preference for his next of kin when in 1353 Matthew was granted emperorship, which caused a power struggle between John V Palaiologos and the Kantakouzenoi. There was another son, Kantakouzenos' and Irene's youngest son, Andronikos, but he died in 1347 of the bubonic plague.⁴⁵⁷

Emperor Kantakouzenos' daughters were used for diplomatic marriages, like the princesses before them. We have already seen that Helena Kantakouzenos married John V Palaiologos in 1347 (she must have lived in the Blachernai palace) and that Theodora had married the Ottoman emir Orhan one year before. Already in the late 1330s Kantakouzenos daughter Maria had been promised to Nikephoros II Orsini of Epiros by Andronikos III, who wanted to appease his military opponent in this way. At the outbreak

⁴⁵⁴ The whole episode, including the long persuasive speech by Irene, is narrated by Gregoras (Gregoras II, 805.2-813.3).

⁴⁵⁵ When John VI Kantakouzenos was forced to abdicate in 1354, Manuel was capable of defending his position as governor with military force and remained in power. Later, Morea became a safe haven for the Kantakouzenoi. Manuel's brother Matthew, for example, came to the Morea around 1360, after he had been captured and delivered to John V.

⁴⁵⁶ Gregoras II, 798.21-23.

⁴⁵⁷ Gregoras II, 798.16-17.

of the second civil war Maria indeed married Nikephoros, who then fought for the Kantakouzenoi during the second civil war, and was given the title of *panhypersebastos*.⁴⁵⁸

Again, the above confirms that Kantakouzenos, once in real power, was able to grant positions and titles to all of his children, with the result, however, that some of them used their new status and their father's support to become a threat to the dynastic heir to the throne, John V Palaiologos. The reign of the Kantakouzenoi therefore did not last long. After having found enough supporters to launch an attack on Kantakouzenos' son Matthew, in 1352, John V needed two years to force emperor Kantakouzenos out of the palace. When Kantakouzenos had surrendered and was told to leave the palace, he and his wife chose monastic names and prepared for their departure. Gregoras says that they did not only take the bare necessities with them, but also all the riches of the imperial treasury, in short, the entire moveable household.⁴⁵⁹ The people that remained had to make the best of what was left.

⁴⁵⁸ Kantakouzenos II 195 ; Kantakouzenos III 315-319 ; Gregoras III, 100 ; 249 ; 557.

⁴⁵⁹ Gregoras III, 243.22-244.3.

2.2 THE EMPRESS AND THE COURT OF WOMEN

Evidence from the early Palaiologan period shows that many of the elements of a women's court, as it was known from earlier centuries, were still present. This implies that we should be careful in assuming a retreat of gender segregation, as has been proposed by Michael McCormick and Alexander Kazhdan. Firstly, they perceive the situation in the ninth and tenth century as normative: the empresses' public life was largely separate from their husbands. The empress was the pinnacle of a separate social and institutional group, the court of women. This meant that the wives of court officials were part of the social and ceremonial sphere around the empress, who received them in audience during the Easter liturgy.⁴⁶⁰ Also two separate banquets were held, one for men and one for women, at the visit of princess Olga of Kiev in the tenth century.⁴⁶¹

Kazhdan and McCormick believe that this situation changed under the Komnenoi, when imperial women seem to have participated in palace banquets and followed the court outside the capital. This apparent retreat of gender segregation caused 'yet another significant social shift' in court society, which may have been inspired by a western European lifestyle.⁴⁶² They give examples of the retreat of gender segregation from two episodes of Choniates' History, who says that imperial women were present at a palace banquet, and that a female relative of the emperor was in a camp with other members of the court, and from a passage in Zonaras who claims that the empress went with Alexios I on campaign.⁴⁶³ However, evidence from Palaiologan Byzantium shows that the women's court still existed and that the life of imperial women was still largely separate from the male court.

⁴⁶⁰ Kazhdan and McCormick, 'The Social World', 182-184.

⁴⁶¹ *De Ceremoniis*, 2.15.

⁴⁶² Kazhdan and McCormick, 'The Social World', 185.

⁴⁶³ Imperial women at a banquet: Choniates, 441.23-27 and imperial women on expeditions: Choniates, 104.49-52 ; Zonaras III, 18.26.9, 373.12-15. See: Kazhdan and McCormick, 'The Social World', 184.

The first thing to acknowledge is that a women's court is both a spatial and a social entity. In the first place there was a physical space in the imperial palace: the *gynaikonitis* or 'women's quarters'.⁴⁶⁴ Linda Garland has shown that several sources confirm the existence of women's quarters in the Middle Byzantine period, also under the Komnenoi.⁴⁶⁵ As Anna Komnene says in the *Alexiad*, the twelfth century women's quarters in the palace were nothing more than private apartments, divided by a curtain from a space where emperor Alexios received guests. Anna mentions that she could hear through the curtain how the emperor examined a heretic Bogomil monk named Basil. The emperor, together with the co-emperor, pretended to respect the monk and received him with honours in order to extort a confession:

finally Basil spewed out the dogmas of his heresy. And how was this done? A curtain divided the women's apartments from the room where the two Emperors sat with the wretch who blurted out and openly declared all he had in his soul; whilst a secretary sitting on the inner side of the curtain committed his words to writing.⁴⁶⁶

It appears that the Komnenian *gynaikonitis* was closed off by a curtain, but was next to spaces where visitors were received. This means that the women's quarters cannot have been very secluded. However, Garland's conclusion, based on this passage in the *Alexiad*, that the *gynaikonitis* must have been centrally situated in the palace requires more evidence.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁴ The *LBG* also gives the entry ὁ γυναικῶν, which would mean 'Frauengemach' (*LBG*, 333).

⁴⁶⁵ Lynda Garland, 'The Life and Ideology of Byzantine Women: A Further Note on Conventions of Behaviour and Social Reality as Reflected in Eleventh and Twelfth Century Historical Sources', *Byzantion*, 58 (1988), 361-393, 382, and footnote 91 (hereafter Garland, 'Life and Ideology').

⁴⁶⁶ ὁ δὲ τὰ τῆς αἰρέσεως δόγματα ἀπήμεσε. καὶ ὁ τρόπος ὁποῖος· παραπέτασμα γὰρ μεταξὺ τήν τε γυναικωνίτιν ἀπετείχιζε καὶ τοὺς βασιλεῖς μετὰ τοῦ βδελυροῦ τούτου πάνθ', ὅπως εἶχεν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, ἐξερευνομένου καὶ ἀναφανδὸν λέγοντος· ὁ δὲ γραμματεὺς ἀπεγράφετο ἔνδοθεν τοῦ πετάσματος τὰ λεγόμενα (Komnene, *Alexiad*, 15.8.5.1-6). Translation by Elizabeth Dawes: *Anna Komnene (Komnene). The Alexiad. Edited and translated by Elizabeth A. Dawes* (London 1928), 413.

⁴⁶⁷ Garland, 'Life and Ideology', 382.

Was there still a physical women's quarter in the palace under the Palaiologoi? In the early fourteenth century *Lexicon Vindobonense* of Andreas Lopadiotes we find the lemma *gynaikonitis* explained as: 'the gathering of women. The great imperial [*gynaikonitis*]'.⁴⁶⁸ After this short explanation follows an example of the use of the word *gynaikonitis*, which is taken from Basil of Caesarea's *Hexaemeron* (fourth century) and concerns astronomers standing outside the *gynaikonitis*, while something else is happening inside.⁴⁶⁹ This means that according to the fourteenth century lexicon, the *gynaikonitis* should be seen as the gathering of the imperial women and their attendants, but the term contains a spatial element too.⁴⁷⁰ Apart from this there are no descriptions of the spatial imperial *gynaikonitis* by Palaiologan authors (was it still an area closed off by a curtain?), although the existence of women's apartments is implied in certain passages. For example, Gregoras says that the official Alexios Apokaukos rushed to the palace in Constantinople during the second civil war and decided not to appear before the empress, but rather 'went around the women's quarter' (περιελθεῖν τὴν γυναικωνῖτιν) in order to bribe the servants there:

⁴⁶⁸ γυναικωνῖτις· ἡ συνάθροισις τῶν γυναικῶν. ὁ μέγας Βασίλειος· (A. Nauck (ed.), *Lexicon Vindobonense* (1867 repr. Hildesheim 1965), gamma, 20.1-3).

⁴⁶⁹ ἄλλως τε καὶ εἰ τύχοι ἔξω τῆς γυναικωνίτιδος ἐστὼς ὁ τὴν ὥραν ἀποτιθέμενος. (S. Giet (ed.), *Basile de Césarée. Homélie sur l'hexaéméron* (Sources chrétiennes 26 bis, Paris 1968), 6, 5.44). I am grateful to Paul Magdalino for identifying the passage.

⁴⁷⁰ There are other meanings of the word *gynaikonitis* too, which are less relevant for descriptions of the imperial *gynaikonitis*. Kantakouzenos uses the term *gynaikonitis* for his own aristocratic women's household, when he says to leave his wife and her *gynaikonitis* at home, because it is too much trouble to take them with him. Here, the *gynaikonitis* must have meant the social group of female members of a household, distinct from the male household, and probably consisting of the people surrounding the lady of the house: her daughters perhaps, and her servants (Kantakouzenos I, 24.24-25). Sometimes, another, more negative, sexual connotation of the word *gynaikonitis* is implied. In Gregoras' history we find a negative portrait of patriarch Niphon, who took up his office in 1310, and who was not only uneducated, ambitious, greedy and gluttonous, but also spent some of his time in the *gynaikonitis* (Gregoras I, 260.10). Likewise, the fourteenth century monk Joseph Calothetos, in his fourth speech against Akindynos and Barlaam, uses the word in a metaphor, to explain that it are women, the *gynaikonitis* in fact, who are a threat to the purity of Mount Athos, see D.G. Tsames, *Ἰωσήφ Καλοθέτου συγγράμματα* (Thessaloniki 1980), Oration 4.459-474. A *gynaikonitis* in the sense of 'women for pleasure' can also be found in Pachymeres' history (Pachymeres II, 563.22). See also: A. Failler, 'La tradition manuscrite de l'Histoire de Georges Pachymere (Livres I-IV)' in *REB* 37 (1979) 123-220, 143.

He thought upon his return, before visiting the empress with ashamed eyes, to go around the women's quarter with an abundance of money, [the women's quarter] which was powerful at that time, and also the entire body of servants, which filled the imperial residence. Having done this quickly and having proclaimed through them that he also would bring the empress the most beautiful and valuable treasures, he restored his former good repute.⁴⁷¹

In this episode the *gynaikonitis* may have been a place which was accessible to a high courtier like Apokaukos, where someone could 'go around', but in any case it was a group of people around the empress, her women's household. The passage implies furthermore that the *gynaikonitis* and the people in it were a part of the entire imperial body of servants.⁴⁷²

Also emperor-historian John Kantakouzenos tells us about empress Anna's *gynaikonitis* and implies that this was both a space and a group of women confidants:

Sometimes, when she [Anna of Savoy] was alone in the women's quarters, she would say: "It appears to me that I have been deceived a lot, having been persuaded [to believe] certain things about Kantakouzenos that are not [true]." For when she examined all he did in time of the war, she found nothing by which she might be persuaded [to believe] that he plotted against her children. She overlooked, however, the evidence for these things which was the most clear – none of her words had anything sound to offer – by which she did not only harm herself, but also some affairs of the Romans. When the women asked what sort of remedy might be contrived for the evil things now he had already become emperor, the empress said "that is easy, for Kantakouzenos, when the emperor [Andronikos III] was still alive, had the power of an emperor, even though he was not dressed in imperial attire. Is it surprising that he does the same things as he did when he was wearing private clothing, now he wears imperial dress? Regarding his benevolence towards me and my son the emperor, when the war had not yet started, we agreed for his daughter Helena and my son the emperor to get married. If this happens now, the war will easily be dissolved, and the affairs will be controlled by him, just like before. If not, there will be nothing to prevent the destruction of the sovereignty of the Romans by itself." These women approved of the things said and deliberated how true and useful they would be. To them they did not appear

⁴⁷¹ ἔδοξεν οὖν ἐπανιόντι, πρὶν αἰσχυνομένοις ὄμμασι τὴν βασιλίδι θεάσασθαι, χρήμασι παμπληθέσι περιελθεῖν τὴν γυναικωνίτιν, ἐν ἣ τὸ μάλιστα δυνάμενον ἦν τῆνικαῦτα, καὶ ἅμα τὴν θεραπείαν ἄπασαν, ὅση τὴν αὐτοκρατορικὴν οἰκίαν ἐπλήρου. ὃ δὲ τάχιστα πεπραχώς, καὶ δι' αὐτῶν καὶ βασιλίδι τὰ κάλλιστα τε καὶ τιμιώτατα τῶν κειμηλίων προσοίσειν ἐπαγγειλάμενος, τῆς προτέρας αὐτῆς ἔτυχεν εὐδοξίας. (Gregoras II, 711.5-12).

⁴⁷² These and other servants will be investigated in the next chapter.

profitable. But the next day the discussed was revealed to the *parakoimomenos* Apokaukos...⁴⁷³

This discussion between the empress and her ladies, at which the author was not present, gives in passing insight of the whereabouts of the empress in the palace: we learn that in the mid 1340s empress Anna of Savoy would sometimes withdraw into her *gynaikonitis* and would discuss her adversary Kantakouzenos' movements with her ladies. It is interesting that Kantakouzenos specifically mentions that several women were present, that they would ask the empress questions and discuss her words among themselves. It appears that the empress was surrounded in her *gynaikonitis* by women whose opinion she appreciated, which gave these women a position of power, at least to a certain extent. It remains unclear if they were household servants permanently living in the palace or ladies of the ruling class who were part of the *gynaikonitis* occasionally. But we do learn that the *parakoimomenos* Apokaukos had ready access to information discussed in the *gynaikonitis*, which confirms that the women's quarter was not very secluded and that its members freely interacted with male courtiers.

A passage in Gregoras corroborates the power of the *gynaikonitis* of empress Anna. Gregoras claims that in the 1340s, during the second civil war and the dispute about the doctrine of Gregory Palamas, when the influential Constantinopolitan supporters of

⁴⁷³ ὅθεν καί ποτε, τῆς γυναικωνίτιδος συνούσης μόνης, “δοκεῖ μοι,” ἔφασκεν, “ἅπαστην ἠπατήσθαι οὐ μετρίαν, τὰ οὐκ ὄντα πεισθεῖσαν περὶ Καντακουζηνοῦ.” ἐξετάζουσιν γὰρ, ὅσα ἐκεῖνος παρὰ πάντα εἴργαστο τὸν τοῦ πολέμου χρόνον, μηδὲν εὐρίσκειν, ᾧ πεισθεῖν, ὡς ἐπεβούλευε παισὶ τοῖς αὐτῆς ἐκεῖνος. αὐτὴν δὲ τὴν ἐκ τῶν πραγμάτων ἀπόδειξιν ἐναργεστάτην οὖσαν παριδοῦσαν, λόγοις μηδὲν ἔχουσιν ὑγιὲς προσχεῖν, ἐξ ὧν οὐχ ἑαυτὴν μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ Ῥωμαίων βλάβειε πράγματα οὐ μέτριά τινα. ἐρομένων δὲ τῶν γυναικῶν, καὶ ποία ἂν τις ἐπινοηθεῖν θεραπεία τῶν κακῶν, βασιλέως ἐκείνου ἤδη γεγονότος· “ῥαδία,” ἔφασκεν ἡ βασιλίς. “Καντακουζηνὸν γὰρ, καὶ βασιλέως ἔτι περιόντος, ἐσθῆτα μὲν οὐ περιβεβλησθαι βασιλικὴν, δύναμιν δὲ ἔχειν βασιλέως. τί οὖν θαυμαστόν, εἰ ἂν ὑπὸ τὴν ἰδιωτικὴν ἐσθῆτα ἔπραττε, τὰ ἴσα νῦν καὶ τὴν βασιλικὴν ἔχων πράττοι; εὐνοίας δὲ ἕνεκα τῆς πρὸς ἐμὲ καὶ βασιλέα τὸν υἱόν, καὶ μήπω τοῦ πολέμου κεκινημένου, τὴν θυγατέρα Ἑλένην βασιλεῖ τῷ ἐμῷ υἱῷ συνεθέμεθα πρὸς γάμον ἀγαγεῖν. οὐ δὴ γεγενημένου νῦν, ὅ,τε πόλεμος καταλυθήσεται ῥαδίως, καὶ τὰ πράγματα ὑπ’ ἐκείνῳ, ὥσπερ καὶ πρότερον, διοικηθήσεται. εἰ δὲ μή, οὐδὲν ἔσται τὸ κωλύσον τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίαν αὐτὴν ὑφ’ ἑαυτῆς διαφθαρῆναι.” αἱ μὲν οὖν τῶν γυναικῶν ἐπενηφίσαντο τὰ εἰρημένα ὡς ὀρθῶς καὶ λυσιτελῶς βεβουλευμένα. ταῖς δὲ ἐδόκει μὴ λυσιτελεῖν· ἅμα δὲ ἡμέρα εἰς τὴν ὑστεραίαν Ἀποκαύκῳ ἐμηνύετο τῷ παρακοιμωμένῳ τὰ εἰρημένα. (Kantakouzenos II, 202.19-203.20).

Palamas noticed the strengthening of the position of John Kantakouzenos against the empress and the patriarch, they attempted to make an alliance with the empress.⁴⁷⁴ The Palamite monks offered their support to the empress ‘with the help of the *archontes* who were associated with her and the mass of people which filled the imperial *gynaikonitis*’.⁴⁷⁵

In all three cases, two passages in Gregoras and one in Kantakouzenos, the authors want us to believe that empress’ Anne’s governance heavily relied on the opinion of the people who surrounded her, especially on the *gynaikonitis*, and that the empress could be influenced politically through her servants. This may well have been an attempt to discredit the government of a female ruler. However, I am inclined to see these references to Anne’s women’s quarters also as a social reality: there was an actual space in the Blachernai palace (ie. the empress’ private apartments) and there were meetings of the empress with her attendants. Despite elements of negative portrayal, the evidence shows that the empress had private quarters where she was served by her personal attendants and could discuss political issues. We also learn that the space was not closed off; male visitors could walk in freely. This supports Lynda Garland’s claim about twelfth century Byzantium: imperial women were not secluded in their apartments.⁴⁷⁶

Less is known about the *gynaikonitis* of earlier Palaiologan women. The only other mention of a *gynaikonitis* is by Pachymeres, in relation to Michael VIII. Pachymeres says how Michael VIII, before the reconquest of Constantinople in 1261, was joined by sultan Izz al-Din Kaykaus II and his entire household, including women and children. Shortly before, the sultan and his retinue had fled Konya. Michael VIII welcomed the sultan, but

⁴⁷⁴ For a discussion of Gregoras’ statement that the Palamite supporters changed side once Kantakouzenos appeared victorious, see: Gregoras/Van Dieten III, 376n473.

⁴⁷⁵ *διὰ τε τῶν αὐτῇ προσφκειωμένων ἀρχόντων καὶ ὅσον τὴν βασιλείου ἐπλήρου γυναικωνίτιν πλήθος* (Gregoras II, 785.14-15).

⁴⁷⁶ Linda Garland, ‘Imperial Women and Entertainment at the Middle Byzantine Court’, in Lynda Garland (ed.), *Byzantine Women AD 800-1200: Varieties of Experience* (London 2006), 177-191, 179-180 (hereafter Garland, *Imperial Women and Entertainment*).

thought it not a good idea to take his *gynaikonitis* (consisting of the sultan's mother, several wives and children and their attendants) with him on campaign:

the emperor sent those around him [the sultan], and especially the women and children, to Nicaea for safekeeping; seemingly in order to secure their safety, so that those without defense would not be harmed. For it did not seem a good idea that those people, inexperienced and deriving from the *gynaikonitis*, should march out together with the emperor.⁴⁷⁷

Here we learn that according to Michael VIII it was undesirable to take the sultan's *gynaikonitis* on military campaign, the main reason being the vulnerability of the women and children and that they would not be able to protect themselves in case of danger.

The question is now if Michael VIII made an exception for the sake of the security of the sultan's *gynaikonitis* or that it was also considered unusual for the empress and her *gynaikonitis* to follow the emperor on his expeditions. It is important to address this question, because the presence of women during a campaign of the emperor is one of the arguments of Kazhdan and McCormick in favour of a retreat of gender segregation.⁴⁷⁸ But as Pachymeres' passage indicates, we cannot assume that this was customary in late Byzantium. Michael VIII thought that there was no place for imperial women and children on his military expeditions. We have also no evidence that Michael VIII's wife Theodora accompanied her husband on expeditions, travels or campaigns before or after they had moved into the palace in Constantinople. On the contrary, we know that Theodora was not about to leave the palace when she learned of her husband's plans to go on campaign in 1282. Instead, she asked her husband to remain in Constantinople in 1282, but he ignored

⁴⁷⁷ Ἀλλὰ τότε, τὸν καιρὸν θεραπεύων, ὁ βασιλεὺς τοὺς μὲν περὶ αὐτόν, καὶ μᾶλλον γυναῖκας καὶ τέκνα, κατὰ συντήρησιν πρὸς Νίκαιαν πέμπει, τῷ μὲν δοκεῖν τὸ ἀσφαλὲς ἐκείνοις παρέχων, ἐφ' ᾧ μὴ βλαβεῖεν, ἀφύλακτοι ὄντες· οὐδὲ γὰρ καλὸν ἐδόκει συνεκστρατεύειν τῷ βασιλεῖ, ἀήθεις ὄντας καὶ τῆς γυναικωνίτιδος· (Pachymeres I, 185.12-16).

⁴⁷⁸ Kazhdan and McCormick, 'The Social World', 184.

her plea and went on campaign together with his ‘sons and male relatives’⁴⁷⁹ despite his old age and weak health – after which he died close to Rhaidestos. From Pachymeres’ narrative of the campaign and the emperor’s death we learn that she was not with him when he died.⁴⁸⁰ Thus, Theodora seems to have been confined to the palace, and gender segregation at the reign of Michael VIII may have been relatively strong.

Did the other Palaiologan empresses accompany their husbands on expedition? Did they ever stay in military camps? Is there any evidence of the empresses sharing spaces with their husbands? Very little is known about the life of Anna of Hungary, the first wife of Andronikos II. We know, however, that she did accompany her husband on expedition. In 1280, some time before Michael VIII died, Andronikos II had been sent on campaign by his father with the aim of fighting off the Turks, who had just captured the regions of the Maeander: ‘He [Andronikos II] then took off with the empress to restore the situation there, accompanied by, among others, a great number of grand men....’⁴⁸¹ The campaign was not very successful and Andronikos awaited in Nymphaion for the right moment to return to his father.⁴⁸² Although it has not been specified where Anna stayed during the expedition, we may assume that she resided in the palace in Nymphaion too. She was left in Anatolia when Andronikos II returned to the capital: ‘in the same year emperor Andronikos returned from Anatolia, having left the empress there’, ie. most likely in Nymphaion.⁴⁸³ Several months later, in Andronikos II’s absence, in June 1281, the young empress died. Her body was taken to Nicaea and was buried there.⁴⁸⁴ Although Pachymeres makes clear that Anna went on expedition with Andronikos II, nothing is said

⁴⁷⁹ υἱέσι τε καὶ γαμβροῖς (Pachymeres II, 661.10).

⁴⁸⁰ Pachymeres II, 659-663. See also: Talbot, ‘Empress Theodora Palaiologina’, 297.

⁴⁸¹ Καὶ δὴ παραγεγονῶς ἅμα δεσποίνῃ, τάκει καθίστα, ἔχων ἄμφ’ αὐτὸν σὺν πολλοῖς ἄλλοις μεγιστᾶσι (Pachymeres II, 593.6-7).

⁴⁸² Pachymeres II, 599.15-16.

⁴⁸³ Τοῦ δ’ αὐτοῦ ἔτους ὑποστρέφει μὲν ἐξ ἀνατολῆς βασιλεὺς Ἀνδρόνικος, τὴν δέσποιναν ἐκεῖσε καταλιπὼν (Pachymeres II, 627.14-15).

⁴⁸⁴ On her death and funeral arrangements in Nicaea: Pachymeres II, 629.18-633.11.

about her actually following her husband into the battlefield. It is plausible that she stayed in Nymphaion, where there was an imperial palace. Unfortunately, we are not informed about the residence of her children, nor whether she gave birth to her second son in Anatolia (she had two sons with Andronikos II: Michael, born in 1277, and Constantine, born around 1280), nor whether a *gynaikonitis* had accompanied her to Anatolia. However, it seems unlikely that she would have stayed in Nymphaion for about a year without support from servants.

When Andronikos II became the sole emperor of Byzantium, he married Yolanda (Irene) of Montferrat. There is no evidence of unusual mixtures of male and female elements at court or the empress joining her husband on campaign. In fact, after 1280 Andronikos II did not go on campaign at all, but instead left the campaigning to his sons, relatives and generals. He did move the entire court occasionally to different locations. We know that Irene was with her husband in Nymphaion, when the emperor held court there around 1292.⁴⁸⁵ And in 1299, they left together for Thessaloniki, in order to say goodbye to their sole daughter Simonis, who married the Serbian ruler Stephan Milutin. On that occasion, the emperor took with him nearly all the residents of the imperial palace.⁴⁸⁶ The situation changed in 1303, when Irene started to live separated from her husband and held her own court in Thessaloniki.⁴⁸⁷ From that moment onwards, we can assume that there was an imperial *gynaikonitis* in Thessaloniki, which had transformed itself into a court in its own right. The empress issued decrees, received visits from monks and aristocratic

⁴⁸⁵ Pachymeres III: 173.2-4.

⁴⁸⁶ Pachymeres IV, 307.1-13. Gregoras suggests that empress-mother Theodora stayed behind. Andronikos II took his brother Constantine, who was imprisoned in the palace at that time, with him in a cage, for fear of giving his mother a chance to free him when the emperor was away (Gregoras I, 203.22-24). See also Talbot, 'Empress Theodora Palaiologina', 298.

⁴⁸⁷ Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady*, 52-57.

ladies.⁴⁸⁸ The mention of ‘*paidopoula* of the empress’, young servants, in a document from the region of Serres can also be connected to Irene’s court in Thessaloniki.⁴⁸⁹ The palace(s) in Thessaloniki also served Maria, the wife of Michael IX, and their daughters Anna (born in October 1295) and Theodora (born in June/July 1296), while Andronikos III (and most likely his brother Manuel) stayed with his grandfather in the palace in Constantinople.⁴⁹⁰ We know that co-emperor Michael IX often went on campaign, but there is no evidence of Maria accompanying him. It seems likely that from ca. 1305 there were no female members of the imperial family living permanently in Constantinople. Also the old empress Theodora had died by this time.

Evidence of gender segregation between imperial women and men of Andronikos III’s court in the violent 1320s is hard to establish. We know that Kantakouzenos persuaded Andronikos III to leave his young wife Irene in Constantinople at the start of the first civil war, when Andronikos III and his supporters had to flee Constantinople in 1321. His reasons: firstly, their flight would be dangerous and they would not be able to protect their women until they held a city or stronghold, secondly, women would slow them down, and Irene would not be able to follow the men quickly because of her pregnancy.⁴⁹¹ Later in the same year, however, she joined him in Adrianople, after Andronikos III had sent ships to fetch her from Constantinople.⁴⁹² After a couple of months the imperial couple moved their base to Didymoteichon. From there, Andronikos III went on military campaign again, while leaving his wife and the city in the capable hands of the mother of

⁴⁸⁸ Gregoras says that she discussed with them the shortcomings of her husband, as I mentioned earlier in this chapter.

⁴⁸⁹ Lisa Bénou (ed.), *Le codex B du Monastère Saint-Jean-Prodrôme (Serrès). A (XIIIe-XVe siècles)* (Paris 1998), 212.

⁴⁹⁰ This can be deduced from a passage in Gregoras, who says that emperor Andronikos III had never seen his sister until she visited him in the 1330s: Gregoras I, 391.14-16.

⁴⁹¹ Kantakouzenos I, 52.13-53.21.

⁴⁹² Kantakouzenos I, 119.8-11.

Kantakouzenos.⁴⁹³ Irene did not follow Andronikos III after he and the old emperor had temporarily made peace in Constantinople in 1322. Instead, Andronikos III returned to Didymoteichon where she was still staying.⁴⁹⁴ In 1324, while she was ill, Andronikos III sent her to Constantinople, where he would join her later, but she died in Rhaidestos in Thrace. Thus, although Kantakouzenos' history indicates that Irene followed her husband, it would be misleading to see this as evidence of a lack of gender segregation. It was a period of war and Andronikos III's court was itinerant at that time. Besides, there is no evidence that Irene followed accompanied her husband during his military expeditions.

In 1326 Andronikos III married Anna of Savoy in Constantinople, but soon after the wedding celebrations the couple left for Didymoteichon. A passage I cited earlier shows that the empress rather informally intermingled with the emperor and Kantakouzenos, implying that her life was not confined to the women's quarters.⁴⁹⁵ The imperial family stayed for a long time in Didymoteichon. As we have seen, in 1330 Andronikos III became gravely ill. A description of his near-death shows that Anna, pregnant at that time, was present at Andronikos III's deathbed, holding hands with him in front of all officials, while the emperor allegedly gave an emotional speech.⁴⁹⁶ Again, this points to informality in the emperor's manners and a lack of strict gender rules. However, despite the relative informal relationship between the imperial couple, there is no evidence that the empress shared in the frequent military activities of her husband, neither during the itinerant years of the court, nor when the household resided in Constantinople.⁴⁹⁷ Later,

⁴⁹³ Kantakouzenos I, 125.14-17.

⁴⁹⁴ Kantakouzenos I, 169.8-11.

⁴⁹⁵ Kantakouzenos I, 369.10-370.9.

⁴⁹⁶ Kantakouzenos I, 392.21-393.1.

⁴⁹⁷ Andronikos III's household resided in Constantinople between 1334 and 1339. During the last years of the reign of Andronikos III, the court was itinerant again and empress Anna moved with her husband from stronghold to stronghold. Gregoras says that in 1339 the imperial family was in Adrianople (Gregoras I, 546.16-17), but in 1339/40 they shortly resided in Thessaloniki, while the emperor was on expeditions (Gregoras I, 550.9-10). In the spring of 1341 'the emperor left Thessaloniki with wife and children and

after the death of Andronikos III in 1341, Kantakouzenos and Gregoras emphasize the influence of the *gynaikonitis* of empress Anna and claim that her life was shaped by servants in the palace in Constantinople, as I have pointed out above. It remains unclear whether her *gynaikonitis* was equally important to her when her husband was still alive.

With regards to Kantakouzenos' household, from his history we get the impression that his wife was the ideal Byzantine woman; humble, reliable, supportive of her husband, stepping in when necessary and taking up a political role, but in fact more concerned with her children and the household. Like Andronikos III, Kantakouzenos was very often on campaign and lived frequently separate from his wife. On one occasion, Kantakouzenos tells his wife that he is leaving her and her *gynaikonitis* at home, under the pretence that it was too much trouble to take them with him out of their house in Gallipolis,⁴⁹⁸ where the Kantakouzenos family resided in the early 1320s. In fact, he left for Constantinople to meet up in secret with a political opponent. This makes clear that Kantakouzenos had no intention of sharing political secrets with his wife.

We do not get the impression that Irene Kantakouzene followed her husband on any of his campaigns. When in 1341 Kantakouzenos had been proclaimed emperor by his supporters and the second civil war set in, his household was based in Didymoteichon. Kantakouzenos and two of his sons left their residence to defend or win over strongholds in Thrace, while his youngest son was with his mother in Constantinople and Irene was left in Didymoteichon with her three daughters. She led the defense of the city until Kantakouzenos returned in 1343. We know nothing of her *gynaikonitis* during this period, while, as I have shown above, during the same period, the *gynaikonitis* of empress Anna was considered influential. In 1346 Irene was crowned empress by her emperor husband in

entered after twelve days a city, which is called Didymoteichon. He stayed there many days and came to Constantinople at the end of spring' (Gregoras I, 554.8-10).

⁴⁹⁸ Kantakouzenos I, 24.24-25.

Adrianople.⁴⁹⁹ In the following year she moved to Constantinople and moved into the palace, after having been crowned again in the Blachernai church. Gregoras describes how the imperial men and women left the church on horseback together and then celebrated a joint dinner in the palace:

When the ceremony had ended, around the tenth hour [ca. 4pm] of the 21st of May, they mounted horses, dressed in imperial attire, and made their way to the palace. There they made the usual display from a high platform and then they came down and, a meal having been prepared, they sat on the five thrones again.⁵⁰⁰

The five thrones at the dinner table were meant for empress Anne, her son John, emperor John Kantakouzenos, his wife empress Irene and their daughter Helena. This means that on this ceremonial occasion, the imperial women shared their space with their husbands. There was no separate coronation banquet for them and their *gynaikonitis* as there had been in earlier times.

Sources also point at a female social sphere within the imperial family, in addition to an actual space or a women's household, a *gynaikonitis*, and evidence about the semi-segregated lives of the empresses. Kantakouzenos talks about a sort of kindergarten for imperial daughters and for

young girls of exceptional beauty, not only of good origin but also of lower background, to be reared in the imperial palace like imperial daughters, and, as need arose, to be betrothed to the satraps of the Mongols.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁹ Kantakouzenos I, 564.10-22.

⁵⁰⁰ τούτων δ' οὕτω τετελεσμένων, περὶ δεκάτην ὥραν που τῆς πρώτης καὶ εἰκοστῆς τοῦ μαΐου ἵππων εὐθὺς ἐπιβάντες, ὡς εἶχον, μετὰ τῶν βασιλικῶν ἐνδυμάτων ἐκείνων ἦκον ἐς τὸ παλάτιον. κάκεῖ τὴν συνήθη πεποιηκότες ἐμφάνειαν ἀφ' ὑψηλοῦ τοῦ βήματος εἶτα κατήεσαν, καὶ τράπεζαν παρετίθεσαν, ἐπὶ πέντε θρόνων αὐθις καθίσαντες. (Gregoras II, 788.10-15).

⁵⁰¹ ὁ δὲ καὶ οἱ Ῥωμαίων βασιλεῖς εἰδότες, παρθένους τὴν ὄψιν διαπρεπεῖς, οὐκ εὖ γεγονυίας μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ ἀσήμεων γενῶν ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις ἐκτρέφοντες, ὡς θυγατέρας ἑαυτῶν, ὁπότε δέοι, τοῖς Σκυθῶν σατράπαις κατηγγύων. (Kantakouzenos I, 188.14-18). See also Joseph Gill, 'Matrons and Brides of 14th Century Byzantium', *ByzF* 9 (1985), 39-56, 48 (hereafter Joseph Gill, 'Matrons and Brides').

In this passage, Kantakouzenos is referring to practices during the reign of Michael VIII and Andronikos II, who married their illegitimate daughters to Mongol rulers. It seems likely that the girls mentioned by Kantakouzenos were raised together in the women's quarters of the palace. Besides this glimpse into the life of the female inhabitants of the palace, there is some information about the closeness between the empress and her young daughters, which points at a female social sphere. For example, Pachymeres says that it was empress Theodora (and not Michael VIII) who prepared for her daughter Anne a retinue in 1269, when she was about to be married off to the Serbian heir to the throne. Theodora specifically requested the negotiators to investigate the circumstances under which her daughter would have to live in Serbia.⁵⁰² Pachymeres also talks about the special bond between Andronikos II's wife empress Irene and her only surviving daughter Simonis: the girl is described as being very dear to the emperor, but 'even dearer to her mother'.⁵⁰³ After Simonis' marriage to the Serbian Kral in 1299, which took place when the princess was only five years old, empress Irene went to see her daughter in Thessaloniki (in 1303) 'for the affection for her daughter pressed her hard – that she would be able to see her and embrace her'.⁵⁰⁴

There is more evidence that female members of the imperial family spent time with each other, separately from the male members of the court. For example, in the early 1300s, Maria, Michael IX's wife, lived in Thessaloniki with her two daughters, Anna and Theodora, while her son Andronikos (and most likely also Manuel) grew up with his grandfather in Constantinople. For that reason, when in 1327 Andronikos III receives his sister Theodora in Didymoteichon, Gregoras claims that Andronikos 'has never seen her'. Also their mother Maria was there at that moment, and Gregoras says that mother and

⁵⁰² Pachymeres II, 453.1-26.

⁵⁰³ ἀγαπητὸν δ' ἐκτόπως καὶ τῇ μητρὶ (Pachymeres III, 303.18-19). See also Pachymeres IV, 323.20-21.

⁵⁰⁴ ἤπειγε γὰρ αὐτὴν ἢ ἐπὶ θυγατρὶ στοργή, ὥς ἐλθοῦσαν ἴδοι καὶ περιπτύξαιτο (Pachymeres IV, 415.2-3).

daughter looked forward to seeing each other again after a separation of 23 years.⁵⁰⁵ We also have evidence that there was a gender division in the Kantakouzenos family. While Kantakouzenos and two of his sons went to defend or win over strongholds in Thrace in 1343, his youngest son was with his grandmother in Constantinople and Irene was left in Didymoteichon with her three daughters. Somewhat later, in 1346, they were given the imperial tent by way of women's quarters upon the marriage of one daughter, Theodora, with Orhan, outside of Constantinople, while the emperor was staying with the army.⁵⁰⁶ Later, when Kantakouzenos's daughter, now married, came to Constantinople for a short visit, we are told explicitly that she 'stayed with her mother and sisters for three days' before going back to her husband.⁵⁰⁷

There are also references to servants of the female members of the imperial household, indicating that there was a special body of servants attending on imperial women. In the abovementioned passages, we have already seen that the meaning of *gynaikonitis* was a group of people surrounding and serving the empress. At times, the people who made up the women's household are described as influential. There may have been personal attendants among them, who were living in the palace and were serving the empress on a daily basis. Very little is known about such women's servants. It is likely that there were eunuchs among them, because these servants were still associated with attendance on imperial women, as in former times. In her essay on imperial women in Byzantium, Kathryn Ringrose points at the importance of eunuchs as mediators between a female and male spaces in the palace. She argues that in ninth and tenth century Byzantium empresses had a structural need for eunuchs as they gave her access to people outside the

⁵⁰⁵ Gregoras I, 391.14-16. The 23 years separation between mother and daughter and the fact that Andronikos III claims never to have seen his sister might be an overstatement, thinks Van Dieten: Gregoras/Van Dieten II, 1, 193-194.

⁵⁰⁶ Kantakouzenos II, 587.24-588.1.

⁵⁰⁷ Kantakouzenos III, 28.21-22.

imperial household.⁵⁰⁸ I did not find examples to confirm this for Palaiologan empresses, but the association of eunuchs with empresses was still there.⁵⁰⁹

Besides eunuchs, the empress may have had female servants or even aristocratic ladies assisting her in her household. We know of one such lady in the court of Anna of Savoy. Kantakouzenos says that one Italian lady stayed on after the wedding of Andronikos III with Anna:

When the wedding celebrations were over, most of the men and women who had come with the empress from Savoy returned home. A few of them remained with her, however, and among them was a certain Zampea, one of the women, with her sons. She surpassed the other women in intelligence and based on her upbringing and other faculties it suited her to dwell in the imperial palace.⁵¹⁰

It is very well possible that Zampea became a lady-in-waiting of empress Anna and was one of the trusted ladies with whom Anna used to discuss politics in her *gynaikonitis*.⁵¹¹ We know that she was still around twenty years later, because Kantakouzenos refers to her again in his narrative of the second civil war.⁵¹² There is no trace of her during the years in-between, however, and we can only guess that she accompanied the empress to Didymoteichon and the other residences of the court of Andronikos III.

Of female servants of lower background we have hardly any information. The word *therapaina* is used for female servant, but we find only one named example of such a female servant, and not even in the imperial household. This servant was working for the

⁵⁰⁸ Kathryn Ringrose, 'Women and Power at the Byzantine Court', in Anne Walthall (ed.), *Servants of the Dynasty: Palace Women in World History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 2008), 65-81, 74ff (hereafter Ringrose, 'Women and Power at the Byzantine Court').

⁵⁰⁹ The role of eunuchs will be discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis.

⁵¹⁰ μετὰ δὲ τὸ τὴν τῶν γαμηλίων ἐορτὴν παραδραμεῖν τῶν μετὰ τῆς βασιλίδος ἐκ Σαβωΐας ἐλθόντων ἀνδρῶν τε καὶ γυναικῶν οἱ πολλοὶ μὲν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν ἐπανήλθον· ἔμειναν δὲ μετ' αὐτῆς ὀλίγον τινὲς καὶ Ζαμπέα μία τῶν γυναικῶν ἅμα τοῖς υἱέσι, φρονήσει τε ὑπερέχουσα τὰς ἄλλας, καὶ βασιλικοῖς οἴκοις διὰ τε παιδείαν καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ἐπιτηδειότητα πρέπουσα ἐνδιατρίβειν. (Kantakouzenos I, 205.2-8).

⁵¹¹ Zampea has been identified with Isabella de la Rochette. See Miller, *The History*, 313. Also Tudor Teoteoi, 'La conception de Jean Cantacuzène sur l'état byzantin, vue principalement à la lumière de son *Histoire*', *RESEE* 13.2 (1975), 167-185, 171.

⁵¹² Kantakouzenos then spells her name as 'Zampaia': Kantakouzenos III, 54.19.

wife of Despot Constantine, the second son of Andronikos II and Anna of Hungary, who was married to a daughter of the *protovestiaros* Mouzalon. They had no children, but ‘she, however, had a good-looking *therapaina* called Kathara with whom the Despot secretly produced a son, who was called Michael Katharos’.⁵¹³ We also have evidence of *therapainai* working in the *gynaikonitis* in the household of the wealthy Theodore Metochites. Gregoras says that one night, Theodore Metochites dreamt that a thief appeared at his bedside, took the key to the storage room of his house from his pillow and planned to steal all his housegood, valuable stones and money. When waking up in panic, he called for his servants, who assured him that it was just a dream and that the doors were still locked. Theodore saw a prediction in this dream and he decided to move his belongings out of his house, bring them to his closest friends for safekeeping. ‘Then he let his wife and her *therapainai* return home, while he himself would stay in the palace for the remaining time, without leaving it, fearing that a revolt of the people would break loose against him’.⁵¹⁴

Presumably, also empresses had female servants like these attending on them. An *ekphrasis* of the early fifteenth century, for example, describes a newly wed imperial couple enjoying the garden-courtyard in front of the palace, being watched by people from above. After their romantic rendezvous amidst flowerbeds and fruit trees, they are approached by ‘three maidens, the *therapainai* of the empress’.⁵¹⁵ This may point at the presence of female servants at such an occasion. There may have been young male

⁵¹³ εἶχε δ’ ἐκείνη θεραπαινίδα τινὰ εὐειδῆ, Καθαρὰν κεκλημένην. ταύτῃ λάθρα μιγείς ὁ δεσπότης ἔτεκεν υἱόν, ὃν καὶ ὠνόμασε Μιχαὴλ Καθαρόν. (Gregoras I, 293.5-7).

⁵¹⁴ ὁ δὲ τὴν γυναικα καὶ τὰς θεραπαινίδας περὶ τὸν οἶκον ἀφείς αὐτὸς περὶ τὰ βασιλεία ἀπρόιτον τοῦ λοιποῦ τὴν διατριβὴν καὶ καταμονὴν ἐποιεῖτο, δεδιὼς τὴν τοῦ δήμου στάσιν φλεγμαίνουσιν κατ’ αὐτοῦ. (Gregoras I, 412.24-413.2).

⁵¹⁵ αἱ τῆς βασιλίδος θεραπαινίδες, τρεῖς κόραι (Eugenikos, *Ekphrasis*, 346).

servants too: one indication that Irene of Montferrat's court in Thessaloniki must have had its own servants is a document mentioning the '*paidopoula* (pages) of the empress'.⁵¹⁶

Another Byzantine imperial woman is presented by Ibn Battuta as having her own servants. The traveller claims that *khatun* Bayalun, the third wife of Uzbek, Khan of the Golden Horde, who 'is the daughter of the Emperor of Constantinople the Great', received him with great honours, while she was sitting on a throne 'with about a hundred maidens, Greek, Turkish and Nubian, standing or sitting around her. Behind her were eunuchs and in front of her Greek chamberlains.'⁵¹⁷ Evidently, this description refers to the situation at the court of the Khan and not to the *gynaikonitis* of an empress, but it is striking that he specifically mentions eunuchs and Greek chamberlains (he does not mention these in relation to the other wives of the Khan), which is reminiscent of the retinue the Byzantine princess Anna was given upon her marriage to the Serbian king in the 1260s. The *khatun* accompanied Ibn Battuta to Constantinople in order to give birth in her home city. When they were near the Byzantine capital, the *khatun* was sent 'a hospitality-gift, accompanied by the princesses and nurses from the palace of her father, the king of Constantinople'.⁵¹⁸ This remark of Ibn Battuta points at the strong bond between the imperial women of the palace and their servants.

More evidence for the existence of a social sphere around the empress is indicated by the fact that the wives of the court officials were actively involved in ceremonial related to the court of women. Unlike the early Byzantine period, there were no particular, separate female court dignities anymore, like the *zoste patrikia*, but there were still *sebastokratorissai*, *kaisarissai* and many other women who were given their husband's

⁵¹⁶ Lisa Bénou (ed.), *Le codex B du Monastère Saint-Jean-Prodrôme (Serrès). A (XIIIe-XVe siècles)* 2 vols. (Paris, 1998), 212.

⁵¹⁷ Ibn Battuta, *Travels*, 149. The Byzantine woman may have been an illegitimate daughter of Andronikos III, or possibly Andronikos II, see footnote 330.

⁵¹⁸ Ibn Battuta, *Travels*, 153-154.

title. They were active in court ceremonial in connection with the empress. For example, they were supposed to be present at the reception of an imperial fiancée when she arrived from abroad and were to dress her in red, befitting an empress, explains Pseudo-Kodinos.⁵¹⁹ This ceremony is expressed in some of the miniatures of the *Epithalamion* in Vaticanus Graecus 1851, written for the arrival of an imperial bride.⁵²⁰ There is also evidence that the wives of officials were received in audience by the empress, just as her husband received the officials. In a passage I mentioned earlier, Pachymeres says that during the feast of the Apostles (29 June 1292), emperor Andronikos II received ‘grand men’ (*megistanoi*) while his wife empress Irene received their wives (*matronoi*) in audience:

For, when this feast was celebrated and reception meetings of the grand men with the emperor and the ladies with the empress had to take place, while a great number of grand ladies presented themselves, the old lady of good descent Strategopoulina arrived, a niece of emperor John Doukas and married to Constantine Strategopoulos, who was later blinded by the son of that emperor [Theodore II Laskaris]. Because it was not yet time for her to appear before the empress, she was seated somewhere outside, waiting for an invitation. But then the wife of the *porphyrogennetos* was brought in, with befitting splendour and luxury, and with a grand escort and following. She approached her aunt or rather her grandmother (for her grandmother on her father’s side was the cousin of that woman [Strategopoulina] while she herself was in fact a daughter of the brother of the emperor, who had been given the title of *sebastokrator*, and her grandmother descended from a second brother and was married to the *protovestiarites* Alexios Rhaoul).⁵²¹ Although the old lady was supposed to give at least her seat away to the one who approached, who had the second rank after the empress, she looked down upon her granddaughter, because of her old age and because she considered her just a child, and she did not even rise up, appealing to her by pointing at her age and her weakness of age. Irene then, felt immediately offended and could not withhold her

⁵¹⁹ Pseudo-Kodinos, 287, 10-15.

⁵²⁰ If we accept Cecil Hennessy’s mid-fourteenth century date of the manuscript, the depiction of the arrival of the imperial bride may actually reflect Pseudo-Kodinos’ ceremony. However, the proposed date has not been accepted by most scholars, who consider a Komnenian date more plausible. See: Cecily Hennessy, ‘A Child Bride and her Representation in the Vatican *Epithalamion*, Cod. Gr. 1851’, *BMGS* 30/2 (2006), 115-150 and Cecily Hilsdale, ‘Constructing a Byzantine Augusta: A Greek Book for a French Bride’, *The Art Bulletin*, 87/3 (2005), 458-483.

⁵²¹ I am not sure if I translated the family relations correctly, the Greek is unclear. For an explanation see the footnote in Failler’s translation: Pachymeres III, 172n29. The point is to show the high status of Irene Rhaoulina, who surpassed Strategopoulina in rank.

anger: she, a daughter-in-law of the emperor and wife of a man placed above the Despots, while the other [Strategopoulina], who did not receive any of the honours reserved for someone related to the emperor, was considered an ordinary person by a woman whose husband, while still alive, had never received any title. She then turned her anger into sorrow and dedicated herself with tears and lamentations to an exaggerated complaint.

What had happened did not escape her husband [Constantine *porphyrogennetos*]. He then, being also proud himself, his reasoning disturbed by the lamentations of his wife, held it right to vex the old lady in return for the insolence brought upon his wife by her.⁵²²

The reason why Pachymeres tells us this episode is that he wants to show the direct cause of the emperor's conflict with his brother and the subsequent downfall of the latter. But in passing, the passage is also relevant for a study of the women's court, because it shows that the empress received female dignitaries in audience and that these women were somehow supposed to keep to a ranking system, just as their husbands. The grand ladies who were received by the empress had to wait before they were called forward. There seem to have been seats available for them, 'outside', but it is unclear if these were situated before the room where the empress received the dignitaries' wives or that 'outside' points at a space outdoors. As far as the separation between men and women is concerned, this passage does not specify if the reception ceremony of the grand ladies happened in the

⁵²² ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἡ ἑορτὴ ἦν καὶ ἔδει συνάξεις μὲν τῶν μεγιστάνων πρὸς βασιλέα προσόδους δὲ καὶ τῶν ματρωνῶν παρὰ τὴν αὐγοῦσταν γίνεσθαι, ἀπὴντων μὲν καὶ ἄλλαι πλεῖσται καὶ μέγισται, ἀπὴντα δὲ καὶ ἡ εὐγενὴς γραῦς Στρατηγοπούλινα, ἡ τοῦ Ἰωάννου μὲν τοῦ Δούκα καὶ βασιλέως ἀδελφιδῆ, Κωνσταντίνῳ δὲ τῷ Στρατηγοπούλῳ τῷ καὶ ὕστερον τυφλωθέντι παρὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ βασιλέως συνοικήσασα. ἐπεὶ δὲ οὐπω καιρὸς ἐκάλει εἰσελθεῖν πρὸς τὴν αὐγοῦσταν, ἐκείνη ἔξω που καθήστο τὴν πρόσκλησιν ἀναμένουσα. ἀλλ' ἐφίσταται καὶ ἡ τοῦ πορφυρογεννήτου σύζυγος ἄβροσύνη καὶ χλιδῇ πρεπούση ὑπὸ προπομποῖς τε πλείστοις καὶ ὁπαδοῖς. ἐπεὶ δὲ τῇ θείᾳ ἡ μᾶλλον καὶ μάμμη προσήγγιζεν – ἡ γὰρ πρὸς πατρός ἐκείνης μάμμη αὐτανειψία ταύτης ἦν, εἴπερ αὕτη μὲν ἐκ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ τὴν ἀξίαν σεβαστοκράτορος ἐγγέγεννητο, ἡ δ' ἐκείνης μάμμη ἐκ θατέρου τῶν ἀδελφῶν, ἡ δὲ καὶ τῷ πρωτοβεστιάριῳ συνώκει τῷ Ραοῦλ Ἀλεξίῳ –, ἐπεὶ γοῦν προσεγγιζούση ἔδει τὴν γραῦν καθέδρας ὑπεξα- νίστασθαι κατὰ τὸ προσήκον τὰ δευτερεῖα πρὸς τὴν Αὐγοῦσταν φερούση, ἐκείνη τοῦτο μὲν γῆρα τοῦτο δὲ καὶ ὥς δῆθεν παιδί, καὶ ἐκγόνης καταφρονήσασα, οὐδ' ἵκταρ ὑπεξανίστατο, παραιτησαμένη πρὸς ἐκείνην μόνον καὶ γῆρας προβαλλομένη καὶ τὴν τοῦ γήρως ἀσθένειαν. ὕβριοπαθεῖ τε παρευθὺς ἐκείνη καὶ ἀκάθεκτος ἦν τὴν ὀργήν, εἰ βασιλέως οὔσα νύμφη καὶ ἀνδρὸς ὑπὲρ δεσπότας σύζυγος οὐδὲν τῶν ἀξίων ἐπιτυγχάνει παρὰ προσγενοῦς μὲν βασιλέως, ἀλλὰ γε καὶ ιδιώτιδος νομιζομένης ἐκ τοῦ τὸν ἐκείνης σύζυγον ζῶντα μηδενὸς ἐπιβῆναι ἀξιώματος. Τρέπει τε τὴν ὀργὴν εἰς λύπην, καὶ κλαυθμοῖς τε καὶ ὀδυρμοῖς ἀφωσιούτο τὴν δεινοπάθειαν. τοῦτο γεγονὸς τὸν ἐκείνης οὐκ ἔλαθε σύζυγον. ὁ δὲ φιλότιμος ὢν καὶ αὐτός, ἔτι δὲ καὶ τοὺς λογισμοὺς ἐπικλασθεὶς ἐκ τῶν θρήνων τῆς γυναικός, ἀντιλυπεῖν μὲν τὴν γραῦν παραμυθήσασθαι δὲ τὴν ἰδίαν ἐκ τῆς πρὸς ἐκείνην ὕβρεως ἐδικαίου. (Pachymeres III, 173.2-175.4).

same space, for example in one *triklinos* (ie. of the palace at Nymphaion, because the court was staying there at that time) as the reception of the male title holders. But it appears that the male and female court were at least to a certain extent spatially separate.

CONCLUSION

Emperor Michael VIII does not seem to have been particularly attached to his relatives – men or women. We could see the detachment between the emperor and his relatives in the light of his policy in favour of the union of churches and his ruthless treatment of anyone disagreeing with him (or Michael VIII's 'reign of terror', as Donald Nicol put it⁵²³), but there is good reason to believe that the emperor's family politics was intentional and that he, from the beginning, favoured his heir and his closest family over the rest – despite having promoted some to high offices at the beginning of his reign. Consequently, during the twenty years he held the throne, the core of the imperial family was relatively stable and supportive. Theodora remained loyal to her husband despite disagreements, the succession had been arranged by making Andronikos II co-emperor and finding him a bride, while Michael VII's two other sons were active in the army and did not show signs of rebellion (in fact, they and not other members of the family, are mentioned accompanying the emperor on his last campaign). We may therefore conclude that the residential core of Michael VIII's court society was stable.

Also Andronikos II sidelined adult members of his family, while he treated his children well. This is best exemplified by the fate of Theodore and Constantine, which shows that Andronikos II did not treat his brothers with the regard and honours formerly bestowed upon imperial male relatives. In this he followed his father. It is striking that neither of the brothers was officially rewarded with high functions. They also married late in life and produced few offspring, thereby limiting the threat to the throne. Theodore seems to have led a relatively modest life and did not play a role in court politics – which must have saved him from his brother's fate. For it was not so much Constantine's wealth

⁵²³ Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady*, 37.

or pride, but his interference with court politics, which brought him trouble. Andronikos II's treatment of Constantine clearly points at an attempt to sideline his brother. Andronikos did not go so far as to kill him, but punished him by publicly stripping him off his wealth and belongings. He then got rid of him by imprisoning him for the rest of his life.

Andronikos II, even more than Michael VIII, dominated to a great extent his sons' future careers, political roles and social lives. They received their title of Despot, were married to high status women carefully chosen by the emperor, usually the daughters of imperial favourites, were given a house or were given the opportunity to make name abroad – but all after decisions of the emperor. This made his sons dependent on him. The people who would influence the decision-making process were imperial favourites like Mouzalon or Metochites, whom the emperor consulted on his own account, and sometimes the empress. On the other hand, we saw that the emperor's eagerness to control his family not only caused disputes between him and his wife, but was also one of the factors which caused his own isolation and later the first civil war. With his family abandoning him, Andronikos II relied more and more on his servants and favourites.

Andronikos III was an emperor who was not so much interested in formalities and ceremonial, if we may believe Gregoras and Kantakouzenos. He did not, however, let go of the tradition of hereditary succession. Several times he had to find a way to safeguard his wife and his heir John (and thus the continuation of the dynasty) – either through arranging the protection by his supporter John Kantakouzenos or by patriarch Kalekas. Without doubt he was concerned about his nuclear family, even though he did not feel the need to make John co-emperor while he was still alive, thereby breaking with the tradition

set by Michael VIII. In the meanwhile, he showed no particular interest in the few adult members of his family that he had left.

In the chaotic years after Andronikos III's reign we see how the empress aimed to act in the interest of the heir, John V (even selling the crown jewels to support the war), while Kantakouzenos appeared more and more two-faced. After having ascended the throne, Kantakouzenos sought to reward his own family members (sons and relatives), while on paper appeasing his 'son' John V and 'sister' Anna. John V had to fight through Kantakouzenian domination to obtain sole rulership. When this was done, the Byzantine court and state were impoverished to such an extent that the system of granting privileges and favouritism cannot have functioned in a similar way as it did before.

With regards to the patterns arising from our study of the main inhabitants of the palace we can state that before the early years of the fourteenth century – or at the latest before the civil wars broke out – the imperial family and thus the palace population seems to have been fairly stable. For several decades, there were one or two members from the older generation, an imperial couple and several children living in the Blachernai palace. Marriage partners were sought for the heir when he was a teenager and sometimes also the other imperial sons were linked to favourite courtiers through marriage – after which they left the palace. Another tendency was that princesses left the palace at a very young age (several times under ten years old), because they were given away in marriage to foreign rulers for diplomatic reasons. Also illegitimate daughters were betrothed to foreign rulers. Overall, and unsurprisingly, the fate of imperial children seems to have been determined to a high degree by politics.

The fate of sons who were not immediate heirs was highly uncertain, depending on their own ambitions, luck and especially goodwill of the emperor. Once they were close

adult male relatives, who were not living in the palace (anymore), they depended for their future greatly on the favour of the emperor. Life in Byzantium could be full of benefits (enjoying *pronoia*, servants and a good house granted by the emperor), but the danger lay in being caught up in politics. Opposing the emperor could lead to mistrust, severe punishment and disgrace. Sometimes close male relatives could become the ruler of a Despotate, which would be a safe option (away from the emperor and the troubles in the capital) but they were expected to defend the interest of Byzantium and if not, they would be pressured to do so or war could be raged against them. Also female members of the family married off diplomatically were supposed to be supportive of Byzantine politics.

In the early fourteenth century, however, marital strife, some premature deaths and the revolt of the young emperor Andronikos III put an end to this pattern. There was only emperor Andronikos II residing in the Blachernai, while his wife and other members of his family were in Thessaloniki. During the civil war this situation was aggravated and the old emperor became more or less isolated in the palace while a counter court of his grandson Andronikos III was itinerant. In the mid 1330s Andronikos III's court resided in Constantinople again and from then on the same demographic pattern started, with a short period of complication during the emperorship of Kantakouzenos, when two imperial families lived together in the Blachernai palace.

More trends during the early Palaiologan period can be seen in the choice of imperial family members of a monastic life after the death of a husband or wife. Moreover, in the case of two emperors (Andronikos II and John VI Kantakuzenos) and also in the case of male family members who could be a threat to the throne (Andronikos III's uncle Constantine for example), members of the imperial family would be forcefully made monks. The (forced) choice for monastic life did not prevent the imperial family members

from being active in politics, but it did stop their claim to the throne and their possibility to produce offspring.

Another feature of family life lies in the role of women in the palace. In the imperial family there was an important place reserved for the empress-mothers (or mothers-in-law), if they were still alive, who took up the role of advisors, mediators and caretakers. I have also shown that there was a female court that was quasi-separate from the male court. In early Palaiologan Byzantium there was still a female ceremonial sphere, a social sphere around the empress (consisting of her attendants and daughters), and a (perhaps limited) spatial separation between men and women in court during everyday life. Despite these elements of segregation, empresses seem to have been able to occasionally influence their husbands or even to yield power on their own account.

Although the evidence is scarce, there seems to have been a division in the imperial family based on gender. Imperial women were mainly concerned with the household and raising children. They sometimes resided in other locations than Constantinople, especially the wives of Andronikos III led an itinerant life. There is evidence of the empress travelling with her husband and moving her household from the one place to the other. There is no evidence, however, that the empresses joined their husbands on the imperial battlefield. The reasoning of Michael VIII to send the sultan's *gynaikonitis* to a city with an imperial residence, where they would be protected, is still valid during the 1320s when Kantakouzenos advises against the accompaniment of the empress during the dangerous flight of Andronikos III and his conspirators. Early Palaiologan imperial women may have lived in several different locations, and therefore may seem less segregated in comparison with their Komnenian predecessors, but there is no evidence that they shared in typical male activities. The main objective of their existence was still to bear children, take care of

them in the imperial household (with the help of a *gynaikonitis*) and play their (segregated) part in ceremonies.

3 HOUSEHOLD STAFF

Besides members of the imperial family, household personnel permanently living in the palace and serving the imperial family were also part of the core of the court society. However, if we look at the domestic staff of the early Palaiologan court as a social group, it is striking how little we know about these people and their organization. The introduction to this thesis showed that late Byzantine sources concerning the imperial court are to a great extent focused on hierarchy and order, with the result that (lower status) personal attendants are overlooked. Moreover, none of the late Byzantine sources indicate clearly which people belonged to the imperial household staff, whereas sources of the earlier period, like the *Book of Ceremonies*, do pay attention to institutionalized groups in the palace, including domestics. The *diaitarioi* (stewards of the imperial palace), for example, figure in the *Book of Ceremonies*, but do not appear in late Byzantine sources.⁵²⁴ Pseudo-Kodinos and Palaiologan precedence lists, unlike their ninth and tenth century counterparts, do not give the structure of the imperial household, nor are (lower) servants categorized.⁵²⁵ However, the fact that servants rarely appear in the sources and that there is no apparent categorisation of the imperial household staff, does not mean that there were no groups of domestic servants. The absence of categories in the late Byzantine sources merely points at a late Byzantine simplification of the imperial household, which was less institutional in nature than the household described in the tenth century sources.

⁵²⁴ The word *diaitarioi* is used for last time in the eleventh century chronicle of John Skylitzes: J. Thurn, *Ioannis Scylitzae synopsis historiarum* (Berlin 1973), Michael III, 19.14. It would be interesting to see if the term *diaitarioi* and other household categories were much used outside the *Book of Ceremonies* in the early and middle Byzantine sources.

⁵²⁵ The *diaitarioi* of the Great Palace were headed by a *domestikos* who was a subordinate of the *papias*. There were also other categories of lower servants.

Changes in palace architecture and in family relations – as described in the previous chapters – must have had their repercussions on the social constellation of the imperial household. Although nothing is known about separate servants quarters (there may not have been any) or utility buildings in late Byzantine palace architecture, the overall impression we get from palaces of the Palaiologan period is that they were more compact and more secure than before. It seems unlikely that the group of people staying in these palaces on a permanent basis was of the same size as the household of the tenth century *Book of Ceremonies*, which was housed in the sprawling complex of the Great Palace. Similarly, the changes in family relations and government, like the separate courts of the empresses outside the capital, the diminished court of Andronikos II from the 1300s and the informal counter-court of Andronikos III required a different kind of service than, for example, the grand household permanently based in the Great Palace during the early Byzantine period. Altogether we may be looking at a smaller, rather flexible body of servants and not so much at a strictly categorized group of people.

The aim of this chapter is therefore not to establish which and how certain domestic categories disappeared, nor to give a complete picture of the people serving in the imperial household (this would be impossible to do), but rather to determine to what extent the emperor recruited, favoured and relied on the groups of servants of whom we know with certainty that they inhabited the palace. Their actual proximity could give these servants an advantage over the people who were not able to interact with the emperor on a regular basis and gave them the opportunity to contribute to the process of decision-making. Potentially, these people could yield influence, despite their lower rank or status.

Now that the household had shrunk and most offices had become honorific, which servants formed the essence of court society and lived in the palace? I have found three

ways to learn more about the permanent imperial attendants in the imperial palace. The first is to investigate imperial servants through an examination of late Byzantine generic terms for a body of personnel.⁵²⁶ For example, the term *hyperesia* (service) can in a certain context be interpreted as body of servants, although not all Palaiologan sources employ the word in equal amounts.⁵²⁷ While Kantakouzenos and Pseudo-Kodinos prefer the word *hyperesia* for service or personal attendants, Pachymeres and Gregoras seem to have favoured another word for service personnel: *therapeia*. The meaning of this word could vary from help or service to a body of servants or a retinue in the broadest sense of the word.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁶ Late Byzantine authors use certain generic terms to point at attendants, servants or domestics, but their choice of wording is not always self-evident. One would expect to find the word for ‘servant’ (*doulos*) to point to people in domestic service. However, throughout the Byzantine empire this broad term could mean both ‘slave’ or ‘servant’ as well as the more generic ‘subject’ or ‘subordinate’, and was applicable to practically anyone in service of the emperor, including aristocratic high ranked officials with only honorary functions. As Paul Magdalino states, the wide usage of the word *doulos* implies that there was no clear distinction between service and servitude in Byzantine writing (Magdalino, ‘Court Society and Aristocracy’, 222). Thus, imperial *douloi* did not necessarily render service by working in the imperial household. Similarly, idiom connected with the imperial dwelling is also ambiguous and does not help to distinguish real servants from metaphorical ones. As I have shown earlier, derivatives from the word palace (*aule* or *palation*) for courtiers or palace staff, like *aulikos*, are not commonly used in Byzantine texts. In contrast, derivatives from *oikos* (house, household), like the concept *oikeios* or the closely related words *oikiakos* or *oikeiakos*, are widespread (or the concept of the aristocratic *oikos* see: Magdalino, ‘The Byzantine Aristocratic *Oikos*’. The *oikeios* is treated by Jean Verpeaux: Jean Verpeaux, ‘Les *oikeioi*. Notes d’histoire institutionnelle et sociale’, *REB*, 23 (1965), 89-99). Their meaning, however, is too misleading to be applicable to household-staff. Even though it has been suggested that *oikeioi* were the ordinary members of the household, as opposed to the household officials (Michael Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile: Government and Society under the Laskarids of Nicaea, 1204-1261* (Oxford, 1975), 154 (hereafter Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*), Paul Magdalino has shown that to be called *oikeios* of the emperor did not mean that one served in the imperial household, it was rather an indication of aristocratic status. An imperial *oikeios* was expected to maintain a personal relationship with the emperor and/or his household, but was less likely to serve in it. The same can be said of *doulos*, see Magdalino, ‘The Byzantine Aristocratic *Oikos*’, 94.

⁵²⁷ Pseudo-Kodinos uses the word frequently in his third chapter on the service (*hyperesia*) of the offices (Pseudo-Kodinos, 167-188). Pachymeres exercises the word rarely, and when he does he is either referring to ‘service’ in general or more specifically to service in the sense of the function of an office, as in Pseudo-Kodinos (Pachymeres IV, 719.5). In Gregoras’ History *hyperesia* occurs only once, in a passage concerning emperor Theodore Laskaris who did not only recruit soldiers ‘but even the hunting personnel’ (ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅσοι περὶ τὴν τῶν κυνηγεσιῶν ὑπηρεσίαν) for a battle against the Bulgarians (Gregoras I, 56.11-12).

Kantakouzenos is a more frequent user of the word *hyperesia*. He mostly uses it like Pseudo-Kodinos does: *hyperesia* in the sense of function. For example, because of his illness, Nikephoros Choumnos was released from his service (*hyperesia*) as *mesazon* by emperor Andronikos II (Kantakouzenos I, 67.21). But *hyperesia* in Kantakouzenos’s History can also refer to household ‘personnel’ (Kantakouzenos I, 63.20-21).

⁵²⁸ *Therapeia* as retinue is exemplified by the description of the retinue of Anna of Savoy, here in fact by Kantakouzenos, which accompanied her when she became wife of Andronikos III in 1326. In her *therapeia*, following, there were many prominent knights and shield-bearers, says Kantakouzenos, most of whom

Secondly, through the mention of several night-time incidents in the Blachernai palace, the early Palaiologan narratives point at specific groups of servants who were living in the palace and were permanently serving the emperor. A passage in Pachymeres points to guards (in particular the axe-bearers) and eunuch servants as people who were immediately available for assistance at night.⁵²⁹ Night-time incidents described by Gregoras confirm that eunuchs and guards were resident in the palace, but also point to a third group: pages.

The presence of eunuchs in the historical sources is interesting, since unlike in the ninth and tenth century sources, the *Kletorologion* of Philotheos and the *Book of Ceremonies*, no specific offices were formally reserved for eunuchs in Pseudo-Kodinos and the offices previously reserved for eunuchs were in late Byzantium mostly held by aristocrats or members of the imperial family. Yet, as we will see, eunuchs were present at the Palaiologan court and qualities previously ascribed to court eunuchs were still attributed to the eunuchs in this period. Their major assets were personal attendance, mediating and protecting imperial women. A study of the Palaiologan eunuchs gives us therefore the opportunity to answer questions of influence related to proximity, and to look into the power of people who were by definition of a different gender and were not a threat to the throne.

A focus on young servants at court, another specific group of which we know that they resided in the palace, gives us the opportunity to investigate whether serving in the palace enhanced career opportunities and whether the emperor attempted to control the

returned home after the wedding in Constantinople. The majority of this retinue did, therefore, not consist of personal attendants. An exception was perhaps one lady-in-waiting, Zampea, who stayed behind and had set her mind on spending time in the imperial palace (Kantakouzenos I, 204.4-205.8). Also Sultan Izz al-Din Kaykaus II travelled with his wife, children and his entire *therapeia* to his friend emperor Michael VIII, after he had been expelled from his own land around 1260 (Gregoras I, 82.14-16).

⁵²⁹ Pachymeres III, 87.32-89.10.

aristocracy by taking up aristocratic sons in the palace. As has been noted by Michael Angold, pages played an important role in late Byzantine ceremonial.⁵³⁰ These *paidopoula* and *archontopoula* are mentioned by Pseudo-Kodinos and perform minor ceremonial tasks, like carrying objects. Of these two groups of pages the *paidopoula* served the emperor on a daily basis in the palace, while the *archontopoula* were in the palace only occasionally, for ceremonial reasons. Young servants who lived in the palace and served the emperor on a permanent basis are also mentioned by the authors of historical narratives, who call them *meirakiskoi* and *paidaria*.

Lastly, of all the offices mentioned in Pseudo-Kodinos, none is described as domestic or residential, except for the office *parakoimomenos tou koitonos* (chamberlain of the bedchamber).⁵³¹ A case study of this official and his subordinates, the *prokathemenos* of the bedchamber and the *koitonarioi* and pages of the bedchamber will reveal whether the emperors relied on these personal attendants and whether any changes in the nature of this office can be related to changes in social relations at court in general.

⁵³⁰ Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*, 176-177.

⁵³¹ Pseudo-Kodinos, 176.11-14.

3.1 *HYPERESIA*, *THERAPEIA* AND OTHER GENERIC TERMS FOR SERVANTS

Focusing on the *hyperesia* and *therapeia* of the imperial palace, it becomes clear that the main attributes of good imperial servants were loyalty and proximity. Imperial personnel was always there, where the emperor was, also during more private meetings. For example, in the early 1320s, servants were present when the *megas logothetes* Theodore Metochites was recalled to the Blachernai palace in the evening, after having spent the day there already, in order to have a private meeting with emperor Andronikos II. He was needed to discuss the dispute between the emperor and his grandson, future emperor Andronikos III, and the main point of discussion was whether a meeting between the two rivals should take place or not. The result of the conversation was overheard by imperial servants: ‘as one later was to hear in detail from the imperial service personnel who were present there’.⁵³² The emperor was thus seldom alone; even during private meetings with a close trustee there were servants present. By allowing this, the emperor showed that he counted on the loyalty of his service personnel, and subsequently risked a breach of trust. In this case, the servants had made good use of their eavesdropping, through which the discussion reached the ears of Andronikos’ rebellious grandson and his supporters. Apparently, the emperor could not always rely on his servants to be discreet.

Loyalty was expected of imperial servants not only in the palace, but also on the battlefield. When emperor Andronikos III got wounded during battle in the summer of 1329, it were not his soldiers or generals but his personal attendants (ἡ θεραπεία ἡ περὶ αὐτὸν) who saw that he was not able to ride his horse and, while his army fled, they put him on a rug and carried him to a boat nearby.⁵³³ A body of servants, therefore, was close

⁵³² ὥς ὕστερον ἐκ τῶν ἐκεῖ παρόντων πρὸς ὑπηρεσίαν τῷ βασιλεῖ μαθεῖν ἀκριβῶς ἐξεγένετο (Kantakouzenos I, 63.20-21).

⁵³³ Kantakouzenos I, 360.15-20.

to the emperor in both the palace and elsewhere. On certain occasions their presence and loyalty was essential to the emperor's wellbeing.

Consequently, the service personnel working in the imperial palace could act as a buffer between the emperor or empress and the outer world. When emperor Andronikos II's house arrest was announced in 1328 by his grandson, the entire personnel (τὴν θεραπείαν πᾶσαν) was to remain on stand-by, stay close to him and to do whatever he (either Andronikos II or Andronikos III) wanted.⁵³⁴ The servants' special status of protectors is also shown in a passage by Gregoras about the *therapeia* that the official Alexios Apokaukos visited in 1342. These servants were clearly based in the palace and are mentioned as a group with significant power: instead of visiting the empress first, Apokaukos decided 'to go round the women's quarters with a vast amount of money, [the women's quarters,] which certainly possessed power at that time, in order to bribe all the servants, as many as the imperial household [contained]'.⁵³⁵ In this example, the imperial *therapeia* based in the palace (in this case the personal attendants of empress Anne) was a protective group of people with political influence and therefore worth bribing.

Loyalty and good behaviour of the imperial service personnel was rewarded, as a description by Kantakouzenos reveals. According to Kantakouzenos, it was the custom for the imperial couple and the senators to join in celebration in the imperial palace after a coronation ceremony had taken place. There they would indulge themselves in lavish banquets. During one of the first days of the feast, which lasted roughly ten days, so-called *epikombia* (small bags with money) would be distributed among the common people by a chosen senator. After that had been done, it was the turn of the imperial service personnel to be treated well:

⁵³⁴ Kantakouzenos I, 311.12-14.

⁵³⁵ τὴν θεραπείαν ἅπασαν, ὅση τὴν αὐτοκρατορικὴν οἰκίαν ἐπλήρου (Gregoras II, 711.6-9).

On the following day none of the commoners are present. But everyone appointed in the army and the entire imperial service personnel are there when the emperor comes out into the court of the palace, with the imperial treasurer standing next to him, whose dress is filled up to its border with money and gold *nomismata* from the imperial treasury, which the emperor grabs and sprinkles around.⁵³⁶

This is repeated a couple of times with the aim to let everyone join in the celebrations at the emperor's expense. Although it is not stated clearly if the people in imperial service mentioned here (περὶ τὴν βασιλικὴν ὑπηρεσίαν) included the senators themselves, I would like to argue that Kantakouzenos is pointing at household staff or personal attendants of the emperor, because the higher members of the court were already catered for inside the palace. This passage also shows one of the benefits of working in/for the imperial *oikos*: the imperial service personnel could see their loyalty rewarded by receiving extra money from the imperial treasury.

Ideally, the palace personnel was paid in the form of a *roga*, coming from the imperial treasury. In reality, however, by the fourteenth century the payment seems to have been irregular and at times even non-existent. Pachymeres says that at the beginning of the fourteenth century the recently employed Byzantine army commander Roger de Flor received money from the imperial treasury for himself and his men, 'while for a long time the payment of revenues and the *roga* for those serving in the palace had been suspended, [the payment] which the emperor in former times used to put aside by way of indispensable salary for those in service'.⁵³⁷ The author later confirms that, while emperor Andronikos II reduced the *pronoia* to one third of their former value, 'the salaries of those serving in the

⁵³⁶ εἰς τὴν ὑστεραίαν δὲ τῶν δημοτικῶν μὲν ἀρείσιν οὐδένας· τοῦ στρατιωτικοῦ δὲ καὶ τοῦ περὶ τὴν βασιλικὴν ὑπηρεσίαν τεταγμένου παρόντος παντός, ἐν ταῖς τῶν βασιλείων αὐλαῖς ἐξερχόμενος ὁ βασιλεὺς, τοῦ τῶν βασιλικῶν ταμίου παρεστῶτος, χρημάτων καὶ τὴν ἄκραν τῆς ἐσθῆτος πλήρη φέροντος νομισμάτων χρυσῶν ἐκ τῶν βασιλικῶν, δραττόμενος ὁ βασιλεὺς κύκλῳ διασκεδάζει. (Kantakouzenos I, 203.14-21).

⁵³⁷ ἐπισχεθέντων πάσαι καὶ αὐτῶν ρογῶν καὶ προσοδίων τοῖς ἐν ἀνακτόρων δουλεύουσιν, ἃ δὴ καὶ βασιλεῖς ἐξ ἀρχαίου εἰς μισθοὺς ἐτίθουν ἀναγκαίους τοῖς ὑπηρετουμένοις, ἐκείνοις ἐξεκενοῦντο. (Pachymeres IV, 435.29-437.1).

palace had been refuted since many years'.⁵³⁸ Although Pachymeres does not specify which people were 'those serving in the palace' (τῶν κατὰ τὰ ἀνάκτορα ἐκδουλευόντων), it seems plausible that this included domestic personnel. We may wonder what the implications of this decision were and how long the lack of payment continued. Is it possible that due to financial difficulties, a grand imperial household was not sustainable and that during the first decades of the fourteenth century the amount of palace personnel shrank to merely a group of 'young lads' – all the servants we come across in Gregoras' history when he addresses life in the palace in the 1320s.⁵³⁹

Other passages about *therapeia* and *hyperesia* reveal that we should distinguish between the imperial body of servants and office holders. In the year 1272, upon the marriage of Andronikos II, emperor Michael VIII crowned his heir, after which he gave his son in his new capacity of emperor 'a magnificent *therapeia*' and also instituted three indispensable officials for Andronikos: a *pinkernes* (a certain Libadarios), an *epi tes trapezes* (Bryennios) and a *tatas tes aules* (Tzamlakon).⁵⁴⁰ The fact that the emperor gave his son a *therapeia* is significant in itself. It implies that Andronikos, at least from that time on, had his own body of servants and that his *therapeia* was worthy of an emperor.⁵⁴¹ Secondly, it is interesting to that the emperor also gave his son three officials who were – so it seems – not part of the *therapeia* (Τάττει δὲ τούτῳ καὶ...), but rather an additional gift. This means that the word *therapeia* employed by Pachymeres here stands for servants,

⁵³⁸ τὰ γὰρ τῶν μισθῶν τῶν κατὰ τὰ ἀνάκτορα ἐκδουλευόντων καὶ πρὸ χρόνων διεκόπη πάλαι. (Pachymeres IV, 541.3-4).

⁵³⁹ Gregoras I, 294.23 ; Gregoras I, 421.22 ; Gregoras I, 422.9-12.

⁵⁴⁰ Pachymeres II, 413.15-21 It is noteworthy that a *prostagma* issued in 1272 for this same occasion does not mention these three functions. It only states that in absence of an emperor the imperial *epi tes trapezes* and a *skouterios* (shield-bearer) should be at the service of the co-emperor. Heisenberg, 'Aus der Geschichte', 38.19-39.29.

⁵⁴¹ Indeed, a *hyperesia* or *therapeia* was not reserved for emperors only: for his meeting with the Serbian Kral, emperor Andronikos III prepared a semi-military force which was made up of 300 of his own and also of 'some of the illustrious without the ones in their service' (ἐκ τῶν ἐπιφανῶν τινὰς ὀλίγους χωρὶς τῶν πρὸς ὑπηρεσίας), i.e. without their servants (Kantakouzenos I, 475.9-10). It appears that aristocrats had their own personal attendants, who may have accompanied them outside their houses.

but not for these court officials, even though the historian labels these three officials as indispensable (ὥς ἀναγκαῖα). Why? They were not the highest ranked offices – respectively rank 14, rank 21 and rank 36 in Pseudo-Kodinos' precedence list. Their titles suggest that they were household functions (*pinkernes* means cupbearer, *epi tes trapezes* is epi of the table, *tatas tes aules* is *tatas* of the palace), although with only an honorific service attached to them.⁵⁴² It is also known that at least two of these offices were originally held by eunuchs.⁵⁴³ Niels Gaul speculates that these officials were considered a must-have because they were, at least by origin, aulic offices, whose service required close proximity.⁵⁴⁴ In practice, however, these were honorific functions and their holders did not necessarily have to remain closer than other office holders. The offices may have been considered more in name indispensable for the household of an *autokrator*, than in practice.

Through Pachymeres we learn that it was also the custom to give Despots, who were always close relatives of the emperor, a *pronoia* which included a *therapeia*. The historian makes clear that he thinks that in the 1270s, the *pronoia* of a Despot was a rather meager one, because 'in the beginning the Despot was permitted not only to have Vardariots and *kortinarioi*, chamberlains and ushers, but also other elements of the imperial *therapeia*'.⁵⁴⁵ Later the Despot would see his power weaken and his *pronoia* shrink. Pachymeres is specifically referring to the diminishing power of Despot John Palaiologos, brother of emperor Michael VIII, and a man whom Pachymeres admired. He also indicates that particular groups of servants were the bare necessities of a grand

⁵⁴² The named late Byzantine men who took up the office of *pinkernes* and *epi tes trapezes* were of high rank and do not seem to have been eunuchs nor domestic servants. For *pinkerenes* see Guiland, *Recherches* I, 242-250 ; for *epi tes trapezes* see: Guiland, *Recherches* I, 237-241.

⁵⁴³ Guiland, *Recherches* I, 237-250.

⁵⁴⁴ Niels, Gaul, 'Eunuchs in the Late Byzantine Empire ca. 1250-1400', in Shaun Tougher (ed.), *Eunuchs in Antiquity and Beyond* (Swansea 2002), 199-219, 213n24 (hereafter Gaul, 'Eunuchs').

⁵⁴⁵ τὴν γὰρ ἀρχὴν ἐνεχωρεῖτο τοῦτο μὴ ὅτι βαρδαραίωτας καὶ κορτιναρίους μόνον καὶ τοὺς ἐπὶ τοῦ κοιτῶνος ἔχειν καὶ γε τοὺς ἐπὶ τῆς εἰσαγωγῆς, οὗς δὴ καὶ ἐταιρειάρχους λέγουσιν, ἀλλὰ τι καὶ πλέον τῶν τῆς βασιλικῆς θεραπειᾶς συνεπιφέρεσθαι. (Pachymeres II, 417.2-6).

household. These were imperial guards, that is Vardariots and *kortinarioi* (βαρδαρειώτας καὶ κορτιναρίους), ‘the ones for the bedchamber’ (τοὺς ἐπὶ τοῦ κοιτῶνος) and ‘the ones for the ushering’ (τοὺς ἐπὶ τῆς εἰσαγωγῆς) ‘who were called hetereiarches’ (ἑταιρειάρχους λέγουσιν).

Granting subordinates to close male relatives seems to have been common practice in the early Palaiologan period. Pachymeres mentions that Constantine Porphyrogennetos, the favourite son of Michael VIII, enjoyed

many people serving him and also a lot of begotten wealth and luxury. For sixty thousand [*nomismata*] of gold had been granted to him by his father [Michael VIII] by way of *oikonomia*, and it was his aim to increase them to a hundred [thousand] by the time he would die. He [Michael VIII] had also placed many great men and *archontes* from the palace under his service. Because of this he had many riches but spent little, and, if not for the abundance of these benefits, which was even more suspicious in itself, he also enjoyed many [things? benefits?] and behaved arrogantly towards his emperor-worthy subordinates.⁵⁴⁶

It appears that the emperor’s second son, who was never made a Despot, was given not only a large sum of money, but also subordinates to serve him (ὕφ’ αὐτὸν θεραπεύουσι). Like the grant of his brother, Andronikos II, some of these men were high officials who were also serving or used to serve the emperor (ἐκ τοῦ παλατίου). One could argue that the granting of officials or servants from the imperial household gave the emperor the opportunity to – to a certain extent – control the household of his direct male relatives, who were also his rivals to the throne.

However, not only male relatives seem to have received a provision in the form of subordinates or service personnel. Through Pachymeres we learn about a retinue for a

⁵⁴⁶ πολλοῖς μὲν τοῖς ὑφ’ αὐτὸν θεραπεύουσι, πολλῶ δὲ τῷ συναγομένῳ πλούτῳ καὶ τῇ χλιδῇ ἐντρύφων. ὑπὲρ γὰρ ἑξήκοντα χρυσίου χιλιάδας αἱ οἰκονομαὶ τούτῳ ἀπεκληροῦντο παρὰ πατρός, καὶ γε σκοπὸς ἦν, εἰ περιῆν, καὶ ἐς ἑκατὸν ἐπαύξειν. καὶ μεγάλοις ἀνδράσιν ἄρχουσι τοῖς ἐκ τοῦ παλατίου εἰς θεραπείαν ἐκεῖνος ὑπέταττε οἱ, καὶ διὰ τούτ’ ἐκεῖνος πολλὰ μὲν προσόδων ἔχων ὀλίγα δ’ ἐξαντλῶν, εἰ μή που εἰς τὰς κατ’ εὐεργεσίαν φιλοτιμίας, ὃ καὶ αὐτὸ εἰς ὑποψίαν ἔκειτο μείζω, πολλοῖς ἐνετρύφα καὶ ὑπερηφανεύετο εἰς ὑποταγὴν τὴν ἐς βασιλέα πρέπουσαν. (Pachymeres III,175.25-33).

Byzantine princess. In 1269 Michael VIII sent an embassy to the Serbian king Stephen Uroš I in order to negotiate a marriage allegiance between his daughter Anna and the second son of the king. Apart from the patriarch and some lower ranked mediators, the *chartophylax* John Bekkos and the metropolitan of Trajanopolis, Kondoumnes, the embassy consisted of the princess herself accompanied by a grand imperial retinue put together by her mother. Still in Constantinople, the empress had instructed Bekkos to first inform himself of the habits and customs of the Serbians, ie. their way of life and the structure of their government, before the patriarch would reach the Serbs to start the real negotiations. She had then ‘prepared her daughter a grand retinue full of imperial luxury’ (μεγίστην τὴν θεραπείαν τῇ θυγατρὶ προητοίμαζεν ἐπὶ χλιδῇ παντοῖα βασιλικῇ). Having arrived on Serbian territory, the mediators and the princess with her following met king Stephen Uroš, but did not notice anything like proper service personnel (*therapeia*) or a governmental body. King Stephen, on the other hand, marveled at the Byzantine servants (τὸ θεραπευτικὸν) and domestics (οἰκίδιον), especially at the eunuchs (ἡμιανδρίων), and inquired who these people were. When he heard ‘that this was an imperial body’ (ὅτι τάξις ἐστὶν αὕτη βασίλειος) and that it accompanied the princess in order to be at her service (εἰς θεραπείαν), he cried out that the Serbs were not used to such a life style. To make himself clear he grabbed the hand of a shabby looking young woman who was spinning there, showed them the palm of her hand and said: ‘this is how we treat our women’.⁵⁴⁷ This

⁵⁴⁷ Τὴν δέ γε δευτέραν Ἄνναν ἡρεῖτο πέμπειν τῷ κραλεῖ Σερβίας Στεφάνῳ τῷ Οὔρεσι, ἐφ’ ᾧ τῷ δευτέρῳ υἱῷ Μηλωτίνῳ—ὁ γὰρ ὁμωνυμῶν τῷ πατρὶ καὶ πρῶτος τῷ ῥηγὶ Παιονίας εἰς θυγατέρα γεγάμβρευτο—εἰς γάμον συνάπτειν. Καὶ δὴ τῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλους συνθεσιῶν τελεσθεισῶν, στέλλει μὲν εἰς πρεσβείαν τὸν ἱεράρχην, συνεκπέμπει δὲ καὶ τὴν κόρην ὑπὸ θεραπείᾳ μεγίστῃ βασιλικῇ. Καὶ γε καταλαβοῦσι τὴν Βέρροϊαν σφίσι τὰ τῆς βουλῆς ἔστη πεμφθῆναι πρὸς τὸν Οὔρεσιν Στέφανον τὸν χαρτοφύλακα Βέκκον, ἅμα δὲ σὺν ἐκείνῳ καὶ τὸν Τραϊανουπόλεως Κονδουμνῆν. Ἦν δὲ καὶ πρὸς τῆς δεσποίνης ἐντεταλμένον τῷ χαρτοφύλακι αὐτὸν προαπελθεῖν καὶ γνωρίσαι τὰ κατὰ τοὺς Σέρβους τρανότερον, ὅπως μὲν σφίσι ἐστὶν ἡ διαίτα, ὅπως δ’ ἡ τάξις τῆς ἐκείνων ἀρχῆς διθύνεται· ἐκείνη γὰρ καὶ μεγίστην τὴν θεραπείαν τῇ θυγατρὶ προητοίμαζεν ἐπὶ χλιδῇ παντοῖα βασιλικῇ. Ἐκείνῳ τοίνυν προαπελθόντι γνωρίσειν καὶ σημανεῖν προσετάσ-σετο, πρὶν ἂν ἐπιβῇ Σερβίας ὁ πατριάρχης. Οἱ δ’ ἐπιστάντες οὐ μόνον οὐδὲν τῶν εἰς θεραπείαν εἶδον ἐκεῖσε καὶ ἀρχῆς τῆς τυχύουσης ἄξιον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ θεραπευτικὸν τὸ ἐν ἐκείνοις βλέπων ὁ Οὔρεσις καὶ οἰκίδιον, καὶ μᾶλλον τὸ τῶν

incident would become the start of unsuccessful matrimonial negotiations between the patriarch and the Stephen Uroš.

A couple of interesting points can be deduced from the passage. Firstly, it is implied that not only male members of the court were given imperial servants upon their marriage or departure from the imperial household; the empress prepared a retinue for her daughter who was leaving Constantinople. Secondly, Pachymeres uses several terms for the people in the princess's retinue (*therapeia*): a body of service personnel (*therapeutikon*) and a body of domestics (*oikidion*). We also come across these terms in a passage about emperor Michael VIII's retinue, which is explained as 'all the ones around the emperor; the entire service personnel (*therapeutikon*) and the domestics (*oikidion*)'.⁵⁴⁸ The difference in service between these two groups remains unclear.⁵⁴⁹ Thirdly, the princess's *therapeia* included ἡμιάνδρια, a very rare term for eunuchs, which implies that in the late 1260s there were enough eunuchs working in the imperial household to extract a small amount of them as escort for a Byzantine princess.

ἡμιανδρίων, τί ἂν καὶ εἶσαν οὗτοι διεπυνθάνετο. Ὡς δ' ἤκουε παρ' ἐκείνων ὅτι τάξις ἐστὶν αὕτη βασιλείος καὶ ὡς τῇ βασιλίδι εἰς θεραπείαν ἀκολουθήσαιεν, ἐκεῖνος ἐπαλαστήσας εὐθύς· “Αἱ αἱ, φησί, τί ταῦτα; Καὶ ἡμῖν οὐ συνήθης αὕτη ἡ διαίτα.” Καὶ τὸν φάναι τε καὶ ἅμα τὴν νύμφην δεικνύειν πενιχρὰ φοροῦσαν καὶ ταλασίᾳ προσέχουσαν, καί· “Οὕτω, λέγειν χειρὶ δεικνύντα, ταῖς νύμφαις ἡμεῖς προσφερόμεθα.” Ἦσαν δὲ καὶ τὰ κατ' αὐτοὺς τὸ παράπαν λιτά τε καὶ εὐτελεῖ, ὡς ἀποζῆν θήραις καὶ κλέπτοντας. (Pachymeres II, 453.1-26).

⁵⁴⁸ Pachymeres I, 305.27-28. Albert Failler – in my opinion incorrectly – translates this as if Pachymeres wrote *oikeioi*, see Pachymeres I, 304.

⁵⁴⁹ The word *therapeutikon* with the meaning of service personnel (its first meaning being a medical treatment) occurs only once in Palaiologan narratives, in Gregoras (Gregoras II, 788.2). The use of the single term *oikidion* with the meaning of domestics is even less common, although a *TLG* search on 12 September 2012 showed that *therapeutikon* and *oikidion* mentioned together in the sense of servants and domestics occurs sometimes in Byzantine sources, especially in eleventh to twelfth century texts (the *TLG* gave five occurrences of this combination: in an oration of Gregory of Nazianze, in the History of Leo the Deacon, in Michael Psellos' *Chronographia*, in the Vita of Eugenios by John VIII Xiphilinos and in Nikephoros Bryennios' History).

3.2 EUNUCHS

The presence and power of eunuchs in Late Byzantium has generally been considered insignificant – as opposed to their influential role in the courts of earlier periods. Rodolphe Guiland suggested that their diminished role derives from the Westernization of Byzantine society and the lack of challengers of the Palaiologan dynasty.⁵⁵⁰ However, recent research has acknowledged that eunuchs were still an integral part of the imperial household, albeit a small one. According to Niels Gaul, the decline of eunuchism should not be sought in Western influence, but should rather be attributed to the growing influence of members of the imperial family and imperial women.⁵⁵¹ Here I will take these findings a step further and will argue that, even though their number may have diminished compared to previous courts (especially those of the Komnenoi and before), their number is still significant in an overall smaller household. And because of their permanent proximity to the emperor or empress, the role of eunuchs remained an influential one.

In the first place it should be noted that we find eunuchs especially associated with attendance on female members of the imperial household. As we have seen, imperial eunuchs were part of the *therapeia* of princess Anna Palaiologina, composed for her marriage to the second son of the Serbian king in 1269. That princesses were accompanied by imperial servants upon their marriage is confirmed by a passage about Theodora, the daughter of John Kantakouzenos, who had by 1346 crowned himself emperor but had not yet entered the imperial palace.⁵⁵² In that year Theodora was given in marriage to Orhan, in Selymbria, and during a *prokypsis* ceremony (a glorification ceremony in which curtains

⁵⁵⁰ Guiland, *Recherches* I, 188.

⁵⁵¹ Gaul, 'Eunuchs'. For recent literature on Byzantine eunuchs in general see: Kathryn M. Ringrose, 'Living in the Shadows: Eunuchs and Gender in Byzantium', in Gilbert Herdt (ed.), *Third Sex, Third Gender. Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History* (New York, 1996), 85-109 ; Shaun Tougher, *The Eunuch in Byzantine History and Society* (London/New York, 2008).

⁵⁵² As Niels Gaul points out, this raises some questions about where eunuchs were employed. Were eunuchs still serving in aristocratic households or only in the imperial court? How had Kantakouzenos acquired these eunuchs? See Gaul, 'Eunuchs', 205.

would be drawn in order to show the emperor – or in this case the princess – standing on a platform) kneeling eunuchs held torches around her:

The following day, while the empress remained in the tent with her two other daughters, Theodora, the bride, ascended onto the *prokypsis*; the emperor alone was on horseback and all the others were on foot. When the curtains were drawn (for the *prokypsis* is covered from every direction by fabric made of silk interwoven with gold), the bride appeared. And red-hot torches were around her from both sides, which were held by eunuchs who were not visible because they kneeled. Many trumpets were blown, and flutes and pipes, and whichever other [instrument] has been invented for the pleasure of human beings. When they stopped, singers sang an *encomion* about the bride. When everything befitting an imperial daughter-bride had been accomplished, the emperor treated the army and all the ones remaining from the Romans and the barbarians to a feast, which lasted many days.⁵⁵³

It is interesting to note that a similar ceremonial connection between imperial females and eunuchs is also suggested by Pseudo-Kodinos' chapter on the coronation of an emperor, which states that at a certain moment during the ceremony,

the new empress stands up and, supported from both sides by either two relatives of the closest kind or, if she does not have relatives, by two eunuchs, descends the steps and takes her place before the *solea*.⁵⁵⁴

This is the only passage in Pseudo-Kodinos to mention eunuchs. The text may refer to the coronation of Anne of Savoy by her husband Andronikos III, in 1327.⁵⁵⁵ As an empress of foreign origin, Anne had certainly no 'relatives of the closest kind' to accompany her.

⁵⁵³ εἰς τὴν ὑστεραίαν δὲ βασιλεὺς μὲν ἔμεινεν ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς μετὰ τῶν ἐπιλοίπων δύο θυγατέρων, Θεοδώρα δὲ ἢ νυμφευομένη ἐπὶ τὴν πρόκυψιν ἀνῆλθε, βασιλεὺς δὲ εἰστήκει ἔφιππος μόνος· οἱ δὲ ἄλλοι ἅπαντες πεζοί. οὕτω δὲ τῶν παραπετασμάτων περιαιρεθέντων, (περικεκάλυπτο γὰρ ἡ πρόκυψις πανταχόθεν ὑφάσμασι σηρικοῖς καὶ διαχρύσοις), ἀνεφαίνετο ἡ νύμφη. καὶ λαμπάδες ἦσαν περὶ αὐτὴν ἡμέραι ἐκατέρωθεν, αἷς εὐνοῦχοι κατέχοντες ἐπὶ γόνυ κεκλιμένοι οὐκ ἐφαίνοντο. σάλπιγγες δὲ ἤχησαν ἐπιπλεῖστον καὶ αὐλοὶ καὶ σύριγγες καὶ ὅσα πρὸς τέρψιν ἐξεύρηται ἀνθρώποις. παυσανέων δὲ ἐκείνων, ἐγκώμια ἤδον οἱ μελωδοὶ ὑπὸ τινῶν λογίων πρὸς τὴν νύμφην πεποιημένα. ἐπεὶ δὲ πάντα ἐτελεῖτο τὰ βασιλέως προσήκοντα θυγατράσιν νυμφευομέναις, τὴν τε στρατιὰν καὶ τοὺς ἐν τέλει πάντας καὶ Ῥωμαίων καὶ βαρβάρων ὁ βασιλεὺς εἰστία ἐφ' ἡμέρας οὐκ ὀλίγας. (Kantakouzenos II, 588.1-16).

⁵⁵⁴ Ἡ δὲ νέα βασιλεὺς ἰσταμένη καὶ αὐτὴ, καὶ κατεχομένη ἐξ ἐκατέρων τῶν μερῶν ὑπὸ δύο συγγενῶν τῶν γνησιωτάτων, ἢ εἰ μὴ ἔχει γνησίους, ὑπ' εὐνούχων δύο, κατέρχεται ἀπὸ τῆς ἀναβάθρας, καὶ ἐρχομένη ἴσεται πρὸ τοῦ σωλέου. (Pseudo-Kodinos, 261.3-10).

Other evidence of eunuch servants in the empress' household comes from the life of St. John of Herakleia, which was written by the saint's nephew Nikephoros Gregoras. John is one of the very few eunuchs of a higher social background. Although we know little about the origin of Palaiologan eunuchs, Niels Gaul suggests that the existing evidence does not point to many eunuchs originating from well-attested families.⁵⁵⁶ The fact that Gregoras says that right after John's birth a terrible illness befell the boy, which caused his parents to castrate the baby, may be seen as an attempt to find an excuse for the castration of a boy from an aristocratic family. For noble families it was perhaps by the thirteenth century no longer acceptable to have a eunuch among one's members.⁵⁵⁷ However, it was certainly acceptable to decide

on the less arduous way for the child, so that, since he would, after all, be henceforth no good passing his life at home, he might be of use for the women's quarters of the imperial palace.⁵⁵⁸

Becoming a eunuch is here associated with a future of service in the empresses' household. Indeed, John of Herakleia entered the court of the Nicaean emperor where he served in the empress' household and became a novice of the empress' spiritual father.⁵⁵⁹

Also in the thirteenth or fourteenth century romance *Kallimachos and Chrysorroï* eunuchs are associated with the female ruler. They are supposed to behave as protectors and guards but are portrayed as deceitful, secretly plotting against their mistress. They are

⁵⁵⁵ Gaul, 'Eunuchs', 204.

⁵⁵⁶ Gaul, 'Eunuchs', 200.

⁵⁵⁷ Gaul, 'Eunuchs', 202.

⁵⁵⁸ ὥς εἶναί γε τοῦ λοιποῦ παρὰ τοσοῦντον ἤδη τῆς οἴκοι διατριβῆς ἄχρηστον, παρ' ὅσον τῇ βασιλικῇ γυναικωνίτιδι χρήσιμον (Gregoras, *Vita Joannis* in Laurent, V. 'La Vie de Saint Jean, Métropolitte d'Héraclée du pont' *Archeion Pontou* 6 (1934), 29-63, 34.9-11. The translation is by Niels Gaul in Gaul, 'Eunuchs', 202. For John of Heraclea see also F. Halkin (ed.), *BHG* III (Brussels 1957), no. 2188, p. 34.

⁵⁵⁹ Gaul, 'Eunuchs', 204.

called ‘evil’⁵⁶⁰, ‘treacherous’⁵⁶¹ as well as ‘trusty’⁵⁶² and ‘faithful guards’⁵⁶³ and are described as behaving ceremonially when they enter a room: ‘they entered, did obeisance and immediately left according to their custom and rank.’⁵⁶⁴ They secretly tell the king of the queen’s behaviour, but to her ‘those sons of vipers, treacherously showed boundless humility and much submission.’⁵⁶⁵ These citations reveal that the early Palaiologan audience of the romance considered it normal that eunuchs were the guards and protectors of (imperial) women rulers, and acted as mediators and messengers, but at the same time it was acceptable to despise them for their characteristics.

The eunuch in the romance *Livistros and Rodamni* is also attending on the queen and clearly acts for her as a go-between. For the hero of the story, Livistros, it is easier to reach his beloved queen through ‘her extremely handsome eunuch who was the lady’s confidant in her talk, her secrets and her hidden counsels’.⁵⁶⁶ Indeed, the eunuch, whose name is Vetanos, plays a mediating role between the lovers, either dispatching messages or persuading his lady to answer. Also here we find stereotypes: ‘the whole race of eunuchs loves flattery, especially when they are involved in an affair of love.’⁵⁶⁷ The intermediating eunuch is receiving many gifts: ‘how I dispatched him and with what presents would make

⁵⁶⁰ τῶν πονηρῶν εὐνούχων (M. Pichard (ed.), *Le Roman de Callimaque et de Chrysorrohé* (Paris 1956), 2199) (hereafter *Kallimachos and Chrysorroi*).

⁵⁶¹ τῶν δολερῶν εὐνούχων (*Kallimachos and Chrysorroi*, 2235).

⁵⁶² τῶν πιστῶν εὐνούχων (*Kallimachos and Chrysorroi*, 2230).

⁵⁶³ πιστοὶ καὶ φύλακες (*Kallimachos and Chrysorroi*, 2241).

⁵⁶⁴ Εἰσῆλθον, ἐπροσκύνησαν, ἐξέβηκαν αὐτίκα, κατὰ τὸ σῶνηθες αὐτῶν, κατὰ τὴν τάξιν τούτων. (*Kallimachos and Chrysorroi*, 2226-2227). Translation by Gavin Betts, *Three Medieval Greek Romances. Velthandros and Chrysandza, Kallimachos and Chrysorroi, Livistros and Rodamni* (New York / London, 1995), 80 (hereafter Betts, *Three Medieval Greek Romances*).

⁵⁶⁵ Πρὸς δὲ τὴν κόρην τὴν καλὴν, τὴν δέσποιναν ἐκείνην ἄπειρον τὴν ταπείνωσιν, πολλὴν τὴν δουλοσύνην ἀπατηλῶς ἐδείχνασιν οἱ τῆς ἐχίδνης παῖδες. (*Kallimachos and Chrysorroi*, 2333-2335). Translation by Gavin Betts, *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, 82.

⁵⁶⁶ μετὰ ἓναν εὐνουχόπουλον πανεύμορφον εἰς εἶδος, καὶ ἐκείνον τὸ εὐνουχόπουλον ἦτον οἰκεῖον τῆς κόρης εἰς λόγους, εἰς μυστήρια καὶ εἰς κρυφιοσυμβουλὰς τῆς. (Panagiotis A. Agapitos, *Αφήγησις Λιβίστρου καὶ Ροδάμνης* (Βυζαντινὴ καὶ Νεοελληνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη 9, Athens, 2006), 1262-1264) (hereafter *Livistros and Rodamni*). Translation by Gavin Betts, *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, 119-120.

⁵⁶⁷ γένος γὰρ πᾶν εὐνουχικὸν φιλεῖ τὴν κολακείαν καὶ μᾶλλον ἂν εἰς ἔρωτος ὑπόθεσιν ἐμπλέξῃ. (*Livistros and Rodamni*, 2233-2234). Translation by Gavin Betts, *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, 139.

a long tale and I cannot tell it. In any task every intermediary willingly receives a gift and then does what is required.’⁵⁶⁸ It is clear that access to the princess is to be arranged through her eunuch servant, who received gifts for his services.

That Byzantine royal women in late Byzantine romances were accessible via eunuchs may have its origins in late Byzantine reality. According to Kantakouzenos, eunuchs were associated in particular with empress Anna of Savoy, whose supporters ‘and many other eunuchs, who had great influence on the government’ shared in the wealth of Kantakouzenos’ mother, after having caused the old lady’s death.⁵⁶⁹ This discrediting passage points not only at the existence of eunuchs but also at the influential role of domestic staff (in this case eunuchs) in empress Anne’s government. As we have noticed earlier in the passage about Alexios Apokaukos’ attempt at bribing, the importance of domestic servants in Anna’s government is also mentioned by the historian Gregoras.⁵⁷⁰ Similar to the eunuch in the romance *Livistros and Rodamni*, Anna of Savoy’s domestics were given gifts in order to appease the empress. With Niels Gaul, one could argue that both historians willingly portray Anne’s government as weak in saying that it was relying on domestics and eunuchs ‘whose influence went far beyond the empress’ privy chambers’.⁵⁷¹ Even though Kantakouzenos had good reason to write negatively about Anna – she was his adversary in the second civil war – he and Gregoras are eager to use gender stereotypes to discredit the empress: she let herself be influenced by powerful, greedy eunuchs. That Kantakouzenos and Gregoras perceive empress Anna’s government rather negatively as relying on eunuchs, corresponds with Kathryn Ringrose’s findings on

⁵⁶⁸ Καὶ πῶς τὸν ἐπεξέβαλα καὶ μετὰ πόσων δώρων, πολλὰ ἐνι πολυαφήγητα καὶ οὐκ ἤμπορῶ τοῦ λέγειν· πᾶς γὰρ μεσάζων ἄνθρωπος εἰς ἅπασαν δουλείαν δῶρον λαμβάνει πρόθυμα καὶ θέλημαν πληρώνει. (*Livistros and Rodamni*, 2252-2255). Translation by Gavin Betts, *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, 140.

⁵⁶⁹ καὶ πολλῶν ἐτέρων εὐνούχων, οἱ παρεδυνάστευον (Kantakouzenos II, 223.22-23). See for a translation of the entire passage Gaul, ‘Eunuchs’, 204-205.

⁵⁷⁰ Gregoras II, 711.6-9.

⁵⁷¹ Gaul, ‘Eunuchs’, 205.

the negative portrayal of the empress' reliance on eunuchs by ninth and tenth century historians.⁵⁷² One might therefore question whether Anna's domestics were indeed more authoritative and prominent than the domestic staff of male rulers and whether her government was therefore weaker than that of the emperors who reigned before and after her. For we know that not only imperial women had eunuchs to look after them.

Eunuchs were also personal attendants of the emperor and took up influential positions in the male court. Their traditional role of mediator or 'extended arm of the emperor' seems to have survived into the early Palaiologan period.⁵⁷³ For example, emperor Michael VIII sent one of his eunuchs (τις τῶν εὐνούχων) to make an arrest, which implies that he had more than one eunuch under his service and that they were considered trustful servants.⁵⁷⁴ The same emperor gave another eunuch, Andronikos Eonopolites, who at that time (1280/81) held the title of *tatas tes aules* (*tatas* of the court), the command over the army, sending him on campaign together with Despot Michael, *megas domestikos* Tarchaneiotes and *megas stratopedarches* Synadynos.⁵⁷⁵ As opposed to his fellow commanders, the eunuch held a low ranked, former aulic office (39 on the precedence list), which makes one wonder what qualified him for this military task. It is possible that Michael VIII had seen his loyalty and capabilities earlier on in his reign and that he, in his more paranoid last years, preferred to entrust a loyal eunuch with military tasks rather than an experienced military man. Later, the same eunuch, who stayed in the service of the imperial household after the death of Michael VIII, was promoted to *megas droungarios*

⁵⁷² Ringrose, 'Women and Power at the Byzantine Court', 77.

⁵⁷³ Gaul, 'Eunuchs', 204. On the mediating role of eunuchs see: Kathryn M. Ringrose, 'Eunuchs as Cultural Mediators', *ByzF* 23 (1996), 75-93.

⁵⁷⁴ Pachymeres IV, 681.19-24.

⁵⁷⁵ Pachymeres II, 645.2-16.

(rank 26). By the 1290s he was influential enough to recommend a certain monk, Athanasios, to emperor Andronikos II for the position of patriarch.⁵⁷⁶

In a later stage of his reign, Emperor Andronikos II made use of his eunuchs to mediate during the civil war or to negotiate marriage agreements. One of these eunuchs was the last known holder of the household office *prokathemenos tou koitonos*, Michael Kallikrenites. In the 1320s, during the civil war, he mediated several times between Andronikos II and his grandson.⁵⁷⁷ As we will see later in this chapter, his gender provoked emperor-historian John Kantakouzenos to portray him in a stereotypical way – as a weak and emotional man.⁵⁷⁸ Besides characterizing him as such, Kantakouzenos reveals the use of this eunuch servant as a trustworthy messenger. He herewith shows that Kallikrenites was perfectly acceptable as a mediator between the emperor and those who did not have regular access to him. Similarly, in the fourteenth century romance *Velthandros and Chrysantza* we find a eunuch servant acting as a messenger, bringing the hero the news that his older brother, and heir to the throne, has died.⁵⁷⁹

Diplomatic missions were also specializations of imperial eunuchs. The same Michael Kallikrenites was sent to Armenian Cilicia around 1330, as becomes clear from two letters written by patriarch Jesaiah to both the king and the patriarch of Cilician Armenia. Here the eunuch messenger is travelling together with bishop Gabriel.⁵⁸⁰ Another eunuch on a mission was the monk Neophytos. He may not have worked in the imperial household, but in the summer of 1291 was sent to Cilicia by emperor Andronikos II, accompanying patriarch Athanasios II of Alexandria, to negotiate a marriage for Michael

⁵⁷⁶ Pachymeres III, 123.2-5 ; Pachymeres III, 157.11-13.

⁵⁷⁷ Kantakouzenos I, 64.12-65.14 ; Kantakouzenos I, 94.13-95.10 ; Kantakouzenos I, 118.16-199.7.

⁵⁷⁸ Kantakouzenos I, 94.23-95.2.

⁵⁷⁹ Emmanuel Kriaras, *Βυζαντινὰ Ἱστορικὰ Μυθιστορήματα* (Athens 1955), 85-130, here at 125.1246-126.1294. In the translation by Gavin Betts, *Three Medieval Greek Romances*, 28-29.

⁵⁸⁰ *MM* I, 161, 163 ; Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 2758 and 2759.

IX.⁵⁸¹ This does not only confirm the use of eunuchs as ambassadors, but again links them to marriage and (future) female members of the court.

One story confirms that it were eunuchs (among others) who were residents of the palace and protectors of the emperor, a role they may have shared with guards. On a cold December night in the year 1306, prisoner Michael Komnenos asked for some wood to heat the space where he was kept, which was ‘close to the palace where the emperor lived’.⁵⁸² What happened next shows how a eunuch servant lost his life in the middle of the night:

Having barred the prison door from the inside he [Michael] made a fire. Within one hour the fire had spread and could be seen from the outside. The incident reached the emperor [Andronikos II], who was still awake, and he sent defenders to make the fire, not the man, extinct. Among them was a certain eunuch, named Karvas, who arrived first and started banging against the door to open it. When it seemed impossible to open the reinforced door, they crushed it, including its bolt and hanger, with their axes. The eunuch had hardly got in, still crossing the threshold, when a sword met him from within, striking him not once but three times in the stomach: the injured man was instantly dead. Immediately the crowd went inside and the imperial corps of the axe-bearers, surprised at what had happened, slew him [Michael] mercilessly with their axes.⁵⁸³

This incident does not only give us an idea of who stayed in the Blachernai palace complex overnight, it also points at a eunuch servant as someone who was immediately available for assistance and protection.⁵⁸⁴ The passage confirms that among the permanent staff of the

⁵⁸¹ Pachymeres III, 229.26.

⁵⁸² I assume that Pachymeres refers to the Blachernai palace. Pachymeres III, 87.28-29. For Michael Komnenos see PLP 221.

⁵⁸³ τὰς θύρας τῆς εἰρκτῆς ἀσφαλίσάμενος ἐνδοθεν πῦρ ἐνίσιν, ὃ δὴ καὶ τῆς ὥρας καταταχῆσαν ἐξῆπτε καὶ τοῖς ἐκτὸς δῆλον ἦν. φθάνει δὲ καὶ τὸν βασιλέα ἀγρυπνοῦντα ἔτι τὸ γεγονός. καὶ ὃς τοὺς ἀμυνουμένους οὐκ ἐκεῖνον ἀλλὰ τὸ πῦρ εἰς κατάσβεσιν ἀπέπεμπε. καὶ τις τῶν ἄλλων ἐκτομίας Κάρβας λεγόμενος προφθάσας ταῖς θύραις προσήραττεν ὡς ἀνοίξων· ὡς δ’ οὐκ ἦν ἀνοίγειν ἡσφαλισμένας, ἀξίναις τὰς θύρας αὐτοῖς μοχλοῖς καὶ βαλανάγραις ἐξετίνασσον. οὐπω δὲ καλῶς ὁ ἐκτομίας ἔφθη οὐδοῦ ἐπιβεβαῶς, κάκεῖνος ἐνδοθεν τῇ μαχαίρᾳ προσυπαντᾷ, καὶ τοῖς σπλάγχνοις ταύτην ἐμβάλλει καὶ αὐτὴς ἄλλην καὶ τρίτην ἐπὶ ταύταις, καὶ νεκρὸς ὁ πληγείς αὐτίκα. καὶ εὐθὺς πολλοὶ μὲν ἐσερύησαν, τὸ δὲ πελεκυφόρον τάγμα βασιλείον, ἀγαιόμενοι τῷ συμβάντι, πελέκεσιν ἐκεῖνον ἀνηλεῶς κατακτείνουσι, καὶ τὸν οὕτως ὑπὸ τρυφῇ τραφέντα (Pachymeres III, 87.32-89.10).

⁵⁸⁴ Pachymeres does not mention Karvas carrying a weapon, which implies that the eunuch did not form part of the axe-bearers, although this cannot be ruled out completely.

imperial palace were guards and eunuchs. If there were must-have servants for the early Palaiologan emperors, eunuchs were among them.

3.3 PAGES

It can be safely stated that pages, young servants, formed an important part of the early Palaiologan court. Apart from the term *meirakiskoi*, youths, used by Gregoras, we find that Pseudo-Kodinos regularly mentions imperial *paidopoula* (literally ‘young boys’) when referring to young servants or valets and also points at another group of young people, the aristocratic *archontopoula*. Moreover, there is evidence that there were *paidaria*, youngsters, at the court of Andronikos II in the 1320s – the word cannot refer to his male grandchildren, who were not living with him at that time.⁵⁸⁵

The existence of young men at court is significant. For example, the presence of aristocratic young men could potentially give an emperor the opportunity – however limited – to control some aristocratic families, while the *archontes* in turn could influence the emperor by putting their sons forward as future office holders. According to Michael Angold, this perhaps helps to ‘explain the predominance of members of the great families in the chief offices of state’.⁵⁸⁶ Likewise, the permanent presence of young, non-aristocratic servants gave an emperor the chance to draw from his own household resources for the promotion of loyal youngsters from a lower social background to higher positions in court, thereby challenging the established aristocratic families.⁵⁸⁷ This corresponds with Mark Bartusis’ thoughts about the *paidopoula* and *archontopoula*. He sees them as courtly groups ‘from which soldiers and other imperial servants were

⁵⁸⁵ Gregoras I, 294.23.

⁵⁸⁶ Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*, 181.

⁵⁸⁷ These two mechanisms, control of the aristocracy by keeping aristocratic boys in the palace and the social climbing of pages, are also known to have occurred in the Hellenistic courts, see: Rolf Strootman, *The Hellenistic Royal Court. Court Culture, Ceremonial and Ideology in Greece, Egypt and the Near East, 336-30 BCE* (Utrecht 2007), 181-182.

recruited.’⁵⁸⁸ Here, I will argue that both these mechanisms worked in the early Palaiologan court as well – though restricted by the circumstances of that time.

Firstly, it is important to note that especially emperor Andronikos II, during the later stages of his reign, relied on young men in his direct surroundings for support. Given the change in family relations from the early 1300s, as I explained in the previous chapter, it is not surprising to find this homely emperor reaching out to personal favourites and servants rather than to direct members of his family. The increasing isolation of Andronikos II resulted in the growing influence of people attending on him. Information about pages serving in the imperial household derives therefore mostly from sources concerning the court of Andronikos II.

One night-time incident in the palace during the reign of Andronikos II hints at the existence of pages or young servants as residents. In the middle of the night of 7/8 March 1321, Theodore Metochites, the wealthy *megas logothetes* and trustee of emperor, was attending a vigil in the Chora monastery, when ‘someone from the emperor’ (τις ἐκ βασιλέως) came to see him in order to interpret an incident, which had just taken place at the palace. This person said that right when ‘the imperial axe-bearers, soldiers and sword-bearers’ (τῶν περὶ τὸν βασιλέα πελεκυφόρων καὶ στρατιωτῶν καὶ ξιφηφόρων) were about to take a rest, the neighing of a horse could be heard. Since there were no horses nearby, ‘everyone in the palace’ (πάντας τοὺς ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις) wondered by whom or what this noise was made. The neighing sounded for the second time and it reached the emperor’s ears, who summoned someone to find out where it came from. It was concluded that the sound was made by the horse depicted on the icon of St. George, which was attached to the wall of a chapel facing the palace courtyard. When Theodore Metochites heard this, he

⁵⁸⁸ Mark Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army: Arms and Society, 1204-1453* (Philadelphia 1992), 207 (hereafter Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*).

said that this miraculous neighing was a fortunate sign, predicting that the emperor would be successful in battle. The emperor, however, was not happy with this interpretation and sent immediately ‘another young lad’ (μειρακίσκον ἕτερον) to the Chora monastery, who explained that it was more likely to be a bad omen. Theodore answered the boy that he would come over the next day to discuss the matter.⁵⁸⁹ This passage suggests that the emperor had *meirakiskoi* nearby. The word *meirakiskos* is used to designate young servants and a translation as page (in its generic meaning of ‘young or lower daily servant at court’) is justified here.⁵⁹⁰ The passage also shows that a function of these young servants appears to have been acting as a messenger.

The presence of these *meirakiskoi* in the Blachernai palace was a great consolation to the old emperor Andronikos II during the insecure last years of his emperorship (1328-1330). Exactly how important the domestic service of pages was to him becomes clear

⁵⁸⁹ περὶ δὲ μέσας νύκτας ἅμα αὐτῷ συνισταμένων ἡμῶν καὶ τῆς δοξολογίας ἀκουόντων ἤκει τις ἐκ βασιλέως, καινότεραν τινὰ κομίζων αὐτῷ ἀγγελίαν καὶ ζητῶν τὴν τῆς αὐτοῦ γνώμης κρίσιν. “ἄρτι γάρ”, φησὶ, “τῶν περὶ τὸν βασιλέα πελεκυφόρων καὶ στρατιωτῶν καὶ ξιφηφόρων καταδαρθάνειν μελλόντων ἐξηγέσθαι χρεμετισμὸς πάντα περιηχῶν τὰ βασιλεία, ὡς ἐκπλαγῆναι πάντας τοὺς ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις. ἀωρίας γὰρ οὐσης πολλῆς καὶ μὴ παρόντος τῶν ἵππων τινός, οὔτε τῶν βασιλικῶν, οὔτε τῶν συγκλητικῶν, οὔτε ἐντὸς βασιλείων, οὔτε πρὸ τῶν πυλῶν, θόρυβον τὸ τοῦ πράγματος παράδοξον ἐνεποίησε ταῖς τῶν ἀκουσάντων ψυχαῖς καὶ ἀλλήλων ἅπαντες ἐπυνθάνοντο. οὐπω δὲ τοῦ θορύβου πεπαυμένου καὶ δεύτερος ἐξηγέσθαι χρεμετισμὸς μείζων τοῦ πρώτου, ὡς καὶ αὐτὸν αὐτήκοον τῆς ἡχοῦς γενέσθαι τὸν βασιλέα καὶ πέμψαντα ἔρεσθαι, εἴ τις εἰδείη, ὅθεν ὁ χρεμετισμὸς οὗτος ἐν ἀωρίᾳ τοσαύτῃ. ἀλλ’ ἀκήκοε πλέον οὐδέν, ἢ ὅτι παρὰ τοῦ ἵππου τοῦ γεγραμμένου περὶ ἓνα τῶν βασιλείων τοίχων πρὸ τοῦ εὐκτηρίου τῆς Νικοποιοῦ θεοτόκου· ἵππον δὴ λέγω τοῦτον, ὃ ἐποχεῖσθαι κάλλιστα Γεώργιον τὸν τοῦ Χριστοῦ μάρτυρα εἵργασται πάλαι Παῦλος ἐκεῖνος ὁ τῶν ζωγράφων ἄριστος.” πρὸς ταῦτα ὁ λογοθέτης χαριεντισάμενος, ὡς εἰώθει πρὸς τὰς τοῦ βασιλέως ἐρωτήσεις, “συγχαίρω σοι”, ἔφησεν, “ὦ βασιλεῦ, τῶν μελλόντων ἕνεκα τροπαίων. οὐδὲν γὰρ ἕτερον οἶμαι σημαίνειν”, φησὶ, “τὸν παράδοξον τοῦτον τοῦ ἵππου χρεμετισμόν, ἢ σὴν βασιλικὴν ἐκστρατείαν κατὰ τῶν τὴν ἡμετέραν Ἀσίαν λεηλατούντων Ἀγαρηνῶν.” Ταῦτα ὁ βασιλεὺς ἀκηκοὺς μειρακίσκον ἕτερον αὐθις πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐπεπόμφει. “σὺ μὲν”, λέγων, “εἴτ’ ἐμοὶ τὰ τῆς θυμηδίας ὡς ἔθος λέγων, εἴτ’ οὐκ οἶδ’ ὅπως ταῦτ’ ἀποκρίνη, ἔοικας ἀγνοοῦντι. ἐγὼ δὲ σοι τάληθ’ μοι δοκοῦντα καταλέξω. ὡς γὰρ ἡμῖν οἱ ἡμέτεροι πατέρες παρέδωκαν καὶ ἄλλοτε ποθ’ ὁ ἵππος οὗτος τὸν ὅμοιον ἐχρεμέτισε τρόπον, ὅποτε Βαλδουῖνος ὁ τῶν Λατίνων ἄρχων ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐμοῦ πατρὸς καὶ βασιλέως ἐμελλεν ἀφαιρεῖσθαι τὴν μεγαλόπολιν ταύτην. πρὸς γὰρ τὸ παράδοξον τῆς ἀκοῆς συχνόν τινα χρόνον κάκεινος ἐθορυβεῖτο, κακὸν οἶωνόν ἐαυτῷ λογιζόμενος τοῦτο. ἔπειτ’ ἐν οὐ μακρῷ τῷ χρόνῳ τὸ πέρας εἶδε τὸν οἶωνόν κατὰ τῆς αὐτοῦ κεφαλῆς ἐκτοξεύσαντα, ὅτε πορθουμένην τὴν μεγαλόπολιν ἑώρακε ταύτην ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων”. ὁ δὲ λογοθέτης οὐδὲν ἔχων πρὸς ταῦτα ἀποκρίνασθαι, “ἄπιθι”, ἔφη πρὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον, “ἐν γε τῷ παρόντι. ἐγὼ δ’ ἐς τὴν ὑστεραίαν τὰς ἐμαυτοῦ κομίσω τῷ βασιλεῖ ἀποκρίσεις”. ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ περὶ τὴν ἐφ’ ἀκρόπολιν ἱστάμενος κίων, ἐν ᾧ λόγος τὸν τοῦ Βύζαντος πάλαι σταθῆναι τοῦ κτίσαντος τὸ Βυζάντιον ἀνδριάντα, πρὸ πολλῶν καὶ αὐτὸς ἤρξατο σείεσθαι ἡμερῶν καὶ ἐπὶ πολλαῖς δ’ ἐμφανῶς ἐσεῖετο ταῖς ἡμέραις, πάντων συντρεχόντων καὶ θεωμένων. (Gregoras I, 303.18-305.13).

⁵⁹⁰ Van Dieten translates the word into German as ‘Page’ or ‘Zimmerpage’, see Gregoras/Van Dieten II, 1, 97 and Gregoras/Van Dieten II, 2, 221 ; and once as ‘junge Mann’: Gregoras/Van Dieten II, 1, 33.

through a passage in Gregoras. In 1328, Andronikos III had proclaimed himself sole emperor of Byzantium, while Andronikos II was still residing in the Blachernai palace. During one night, the old emperor anxiously awaited the storming of the palace by his grandson, trembling with emotion. He was alone and ‘had no-one except his pages with whom he could share his anxiety’.⁵⁹¹ In the middle of the night the clash of arms could be heard, which made the emperor get up from his bed and ‘because there was no-one at his service, neither soldier, nor general – for the palace was completely deserted except for young attendants’, the emperor went to the icon of the Mother of God Hodegetria for consolation.⁵⁹² After Andronikos III had overtaken power, a settlement was made regarding the residence of the old emperor. Andronikos II was allowed to keep his insignia, but was stripped of his political responsibilities and had to stay in the palace. For his maintenance and the one of his pages (again: *μειρακίσκοι*) the old emperor was permitted to keep the yearly fishing profit, worth around 10.000 *hyperperia*.⁵⁹³ Even though we should take into account that Gregoras may have exaggerated the dramatic situation because of his friendship with the emperor, it becomes clear that Andronikos II, at least in his old age, relied for a great deal on pages for his daily support. They appear to have been the only servants left in the palace and although they could not provide military assistance when the emperor thought that the palace was under siege, they could give him the necessary mental support. Pages in the court of Andronikos II were also occasionally used as messengers, but first and foremost, their role seems to have been a domestic one.

There is evidence that, slightly earlier on in the reign of Andronikos II, around 1320, there was a group of teenage servants, who were permanently living in the palace.

⁵⁹¹ οὐκ ἔχων πλὴν τῶν οἰκειακῶν μειρακίσκων ἕτερον, ὃ κοινωνήσει τοῦ πάθους (Gregoras I, 421.22).

⁵⁹² καὶ μὴ ἔχων οὐδένα τὸν βοηθήσοντα, μήτε στρατιώτην, μήτε στρατηγόν· πλὴν γὰρ τῶν θαλαμηπόλων μειρακίσκων ἐρημία πολλή τὰ βασίλεια εἶχε (Gregoras I, 422.9-12).

⁵⁹³ Gregoras I, 428.15-20.

When a certain Michael Katharos, Andronikos' illegitimate teenage grandson, was taken up 'amidst the service boys in his household',⁵⁹⁴ tension was created between the emperor, his nuclear family and some aristocratic adversaries.⁵⁹⁵ The fifteen years old Michael, namely, soon became a favourite of the emperor and was given responsibilities far beyond the ordinary tasks of a page. According to Gregoras, the reason why the emperor had taken Michael as one of his pages was

in the first place to prevent him from starving, because no one was taking care of him, in the second place to marry him to one of the princesses of the surrounding enemies. For he was of royal blood and was perhaps able to negotiate a treaty and make himself useful for the Romans and the Roman state. Soon after he had been transferred to the palace and had started living there, he enthralled the emperor with his character to such an extent that the sons of the emperor regarded him with jealousy.⁵⁹⁶

Gregoras further reveals that the emperor even considered his beloved new page as one of the possible heirs to the throne, to the discontent of his sons but more importantly to the dissatisfaction of his grandson, the future Andronikos III. It is therefore not surprising the historian Kantakouzenos, Andronikos III's greatest supporter, provides us with a more negative description of this youth and the emperor's intentions than does Gregoras:

This Michael came from an insignificant mother of low descent and had no special abilities. For he was neither clever by nature, nor had he enjoyed any basic

⁵⁹⁴ τοῖς κατ' οἶκον ὑπηρετικοῖς παιδαρίοις (Gregoras I, 294.23).

⁵⁹⁵ Michael was the son of Kathara, the goodlooking maid of the wife of despot Constantine Palaiologos, who was the second son of emperor Andronikos II. Kathara is one of the few women household menials who are known to us by name. The historian Gregoras tells that Constantine secretly made Kathara his mistress and that after a while she gave birth to a son. The boy was named Michael Katharos after his mother, but he was ignored and abandoned by his father, whose love for the maid Kathara had cooled down after he had met the even more stunning Eudokia Palaiologina. The rest of the fate of Kathara is unknown. See: Gregoras/Van Dieten II.1, 26-27.

⁵⁹⁶ Τοῦτον δὲ οὖν τὸν Καθαρὸν Μιχαὴλ πεντεκαίδεκατον ἤδη χρόνον τῆς ἡλικίας ἀμείβοντα πέμψας ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἀνδρόνικος ὁ γηραιὸς προσηγάγετό τε καὶ τοῖς κατ' οἶκον ὑπηρετικοῖς παιδαρίοις συγκατέλεξε. πρῶτον μὲν, ἵνα μὴ διαφθαρεῖ λυμῶ, μηδενὸς προμηθουμένου· δεῦτερον δ' ἴσως, ἵνα καὶ τινι τῶν περὶ ἔθνων εἰς κῆδος δοθεῖη, ὥς ἐξ αἵματος ὧν βασιλείου καὶ γένηται σπονδῶν τινων πρόξενος καὶ τινος ὠφελείας Ῥωμαίοις καὶ τοῖς Ῥωμαίων πράγμασιν αἰτιος. ὁ δὲ κομισθεὶς καὶ διατρίβων ἐν βασιλείῳ τοσοῦτον εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ σχέσιν ἐν βραχεὶ τὸν βασιλεῖα ἀνηρτήσατο, ὥς καὶ αὐτοὺς δὴ τοὺς τοῦ βασιλέως υἱεὺς ζηλοτύπως ὑποβλέπειν αὐτόν. (Gregoras I, 294.20-295.6).

education. He was not skilled in military operations and did not possess any of the brio that normally characterizes youth. Despite his lack of virtues, the emperor was overcome by an irresistible urge to make him master of the empire of the Romans – which can only be ruled by a brilliant and profound thinker. Aiming at this he began to put words into deeds: he sent someone to fetch Michael out of the house of his mother and made him his family friend and trustee. The boy was always sitting next to him, became his inseparable companion and enjoyed all the honours of a legitimate offspring of the emperor. When foreign ambassadors were received or high church officials and other wise men were received in audience or when meetings were held – occasions which seemed apt to make any auditor brighter – the emperor made sure that Michael was present and listened. And when Michael happened to be absent at one of the contentious speeches of the emperor, he ordered many servants to fetch him – as if he herewith handled an important affair...⁵⁹⁷

Kantakouzenos' description of Michael Katharos makes clear that he thought it to be inappropriate for young people who were not family members to become a protégé of the emperor. Such youngsters had to be given a position in court in accordance with their function and status. According to Kantakouzenos, the emperor allowed this boy, who was not even a legitimate imperial son or grandson, to be present at all sorts of occasions which normal pages would either not have attended, or in a rather different role. In the eyes of the historian, imperial pages were not equal to the emperor's own young sons, nor to adult members of the imperial court. Michael was treated as an exception, a favourite, and was therefore disliked by the other young members of the imperial court. The story of Michael Katharos implies that emperor Andronikos II was personally involved in taking up young people into this group. It also shows what pages were not supposed to do: become close

⁵⁹⁷ οὗτος δὲ ὁ Μιχαὴλ εἶλκε μὲν καὶ τὰς τοῦ γένους πηγὰς ἐκ φαύλης καὶ ἀσήμου μητρὸς, ἣν δὲ καὶ τὰλλα ἄξιος οὐδενός. οὔτε γὰρ φύσεως ἔτυχεν εὐρώστου πρὸς τὸ φρονεῖν, οὔτ' ἐγκυκλίου πείραν ἔσχε παιδείας, οὔτε πρὸς στρατείας ἥσκητο τὸ παράπαν, οὔτε πρὸς τι τῶν ὅσα νέους κοσμεῖ εὐφυῶς εἶχε κἂν ἐπ' ὀλίγον, ἀλλ' οὕτω παντάπασιν ὄντα παντὸς ἐστερημένον καλοῦ, δεινὸς ἔρως εἰσῆλθε τὸν βασιλέα, τῇ λαμπρᾷ ταύτῃ καὶ βαθείᾳ δεομένη φρενὸς ἐπιστῆσαι βασιλείᾳ Ῥωμαίων. οὕτω δὲ διανοηθεὶς καὶ ἔργου ἥπτετο ἥδη, καὶ τὸν Μιχαὴλ ἐκ τῆς παρὰ μητρὶ διατριβῆς ἀφελὼν, σύνοικον ἀπέδειξεν ἑαυτῷ καὶ συνδιατρίβοντα, αὐτῷ τε ἀεὶ παρακαθήμενον καὶ παριστάμενον, καὶ τὰ πρῶτα τῶν γνησίων ἀποφερόμενον, ὅσα γε εἰς τιμὴν· ἔτι τε διὰ σπουδῆς ἐποιεῖτο πάσης, ἐν τε τοῖς πρὸς τοὺς ὀθενδήποθεν πρέσβεις χρηματισμοῖς, κἂν ταῖς πρὸς ἀρχιερέας ἢ τινὰς τῶν σοφῶν ὁμιλίαις, ἢ καὶ ἄλλοις τισὶ λόγοις τὸν ἀκροατὴν δοκοῦσι συνετώτερον ποιεῖν ἑαυτοῦ, παρεῖναι καὶ ἀκροᾶσθαι τὸν Μιχαὴλ· εἰ δέ ποτε συμβεβήκει τὸν Μιχαὴλ μὴ παρεῖναι ταῖς ἀγωνιστικαῖς ὁμιλίαις τοῦ βασιλέως, μετεκαλεῖτο τοῦτον διὰ πολλῶν ὥς δὴ τι προὔργου ποιῶν. (Kantakouzenos I, 14.23-15.16).

friends with the emperor, sit next to him, be present at meetings or ceremonies (unless, perhaps, as servants) and display any sense of importance. Rather, if we may believe Kantakouzenos, pages should perform their tasks in the background.

The *paidaria* and *meirakiskoi* can be identified with the *paidopoula*, the more common term for young household servants. Also *paidopoulon* can be translated as page, meaning young servant at court.⁵⁹⁸ Apart from Pseudo-Kodinos, the word also occurs in the histories and Medieval Greek romances like the Alexander Romance, Callimachus and Chrysorrhoe, Phlorius and Platzia Phlora and the Chronicle of Morea. The meaning of the word, especially in the latter source, includes the different responsibilities of a personal attendant: messenger, agent, assistant in the palace and on the battlefield.⁵⁹⁹ However, it should be noted that the term *paidopoulon* is not common in Greek texts in general and that it occurs practically only in sources of the late Byzantine period.⁶⁰⁰ Subsequently, one could wonder if also the concept ‘page’, meaning young servant, was a relatively new phenomenon in the Byzantine court.⁶⁰¹

The everyday function of the imperial *paidopoula* is not well attested, but through Pseudo-Kodinos we are informed of their tasks during ceremonies. The imperial pages

⁵⁹⁸ I herein follow Michael Angold and Mark Bartusis: Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*, 176 ; Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 207.

⁵⁹⁹ *Paidopoulon* occurs three times in the Chronicle of Morea, verse 3798, 4348 and 4818, see: Willem Jan Aerts and Hero Hokwerda, *Lexicon on The Chronicle of Morea* (Groningen 2002) 47. In the translation of Harold E. Lurier, *Crusaders as Conquerors. The Chronicle of Morea* (New York and London 1964), 183: ‘He called two of his **pages** and spoke to them aside: go to the prince and tell him for me to come here immediately’, 198: ‘[they] directed the lord of Karytaina, himself, to go into Morea in person to surrender the castles which I have written here to the **agents** of the basileus, whom he would bring with him’, 212: ‘He [the *megas domestikos*] sent forth a shrill little cry, as loud as he was capable of, to those **pages** who attended him: “you there, bring my horse, dolt, the Turkoman; look at the banners of the Franks, who have overwhelmed us.”’

⁶⁰⁰ According to the *TLG* the exceptions of earlier texts referring to pages are *Digenis Akritas*, two mentions in *Anonymi Historia Imperatorum* (eleventh century) and one occurrence in a letter of John Tzetzes (twelfth century). I am not sure if the *paidopoula* in these sources are meant to be pages or that they just occur in the sense of ‘boy’. The rest of the 87 mentions are from the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

⁶⁰¹ I was not able to find the early Byzantine equivalent of the late Byzantine imperial pages. However, in the tenth century there were young aristocrats, called *basilikoi agouroi*, attending on the emperor. John Haldon identifies these young aristocrats with other young aristocrats at the imperial court, who were part of the palace guards (*archontogennemata*). See John Haldon, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus. Three treatises on imperial expeditions* (Vienna 1990), 226 (hereafter Haldon, *Three treatises*).

performed special duties on some ceremonial occasions, for example during the Christmas banquet. Then the emperor receives the officials in the *triklinos*, the main hall, and has dinner with them. At a certain point, after the reception of the *archontes* but just before the dinner commences, the food is distributed by the *domestikos* of the table, who

calls upon each of the *archontes*, according to ones place, that is from the *protovestiarios* and lower, and gives him a plate from the [imperial] table. Having received it the *archon* then returns to the table, i.e. to the place where he should be seated according to his rank, where an imperial page takes the plate out of his hands; and so it fares them all. This is how it takes place until the *logothetos* of the troupes, whose place is on the border, since he neither wears a golden *skaranikon* nor a red one.⁶⁰²

Similarly, the pages carry the plates of the even higher officials – mostly the emperor’s next of kin – during the Christmas reception. In this case, it is the *megas domestikos* who calls them by their title, after which they come forward to receive their plate. At that moment the pages take over the plate immediately, which perhaps suggests that the higher one’s rank was, the less one was supposed to walk and carry during this ceremony.⁶⁰³

Also on other occasions pages are carrying things around for the emperor and his officials. Several pages must have been present on the Saturday before Easter. According to protocol, during Saturday liturgy, to be precise during the reading of the apostolic words ‘stand up God, judge of the earth’, three readers (*anagnostai*) bring some laurels out of the church and spread them before the emperor. Immediately, the pages who are present collect the laurels and take them from there in order to decorate the main hall with them.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰² κράζων οὗτος ἕκαστον τῶν ἀρχόντων κατὰ τὸν τόπον αὐτοῦ, ἥτοι ἀπὸ τοῦ πρωτοβεστιαρίτου καὶ κάτω, δίδωσι μίνσον ἀπὸ τῆς τραπέζης· ὃν λαμβάνων ὁ ἄρχων ὑποχωρεῖ μὲν τῆς τραπέζης μέχρι καὶ τοῦ τόπου ἐν ᾧ ἵσταται κατὰ τὴν τάξιν αὐτοῦ, ἱστάμενα δ’ ἐκεῖσε βασιλικά παιδόπουλα ἐπαίρουσι τοὺς μίνσους ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτῶν, καὶ οὕτως ἀπέρχονται πάντες. Τοῦτο δὲ γίνεται οὕτω μέχρι καὶ τοῦ λογοθέτου τῶν ἀγγελῶν· μεθόριον γὰρ ὥσπερ ἵσταται οὗτος, ἐπεὶ οὔτε χρυσοῦν σκαράνικον οὔτε κόκκινον φορεῖ. (Pseudo-Kodinos, 210.21-211.12).

⁶⁰³ Pseudo-Kodinos, 215.11-216.4.

⁶⁰⁴ Pseudo-Kodinos, 231.22-232.9.

For a similar reason, ie. to carry a liturgical object, at least one page had to attend the Mass on Maundy Thursday, which consisted of a foot washing ceremony in an imperial chamber and a Vigil attended by the officials in the main hall of the palace. The emperor, in the meanwhile, remained in a chamber of his choice. During this Vigil, the emperor received a large candle from the hands of the *protopapas*, which he had to hold during each reading of the Gospel. The highest official present took it from him when the Gospel reading was finished and gave it to one of the pages ‘without headdress’ (ὄσκεπεῖ), who would then take it out to the vestibule of the chamber.⁶⁰⁵ On both occasions during Holy Week, one could say that the imperial pages practised a semi-liturgical function.

There seem to have been specialised pages too: pages of the bedchamber, who were assisting the *prokathemenos* of the bedchamber together with the *koitonarioi*, and the pages of the wardrobe.⁶⁰⁶ The pages of the wardrobe are the only ones whose special function receives attention in Pseudo-Kodinos’ ceremony book. It was their job to carry the emperor’s clothes or insignia during special occasions; for example, should the emperor mount a horse, one of the *paidopouloi tou bestiariou* has to put away his boots inside the *allaximarion*.⁶⁰⁷ Also, during the reception ceremony (*parastasis*) of the officials and other dignity holders a page of the wardrobe had to bring the imperial sceptre two thirds into the main hall, where he handed it over to the *megas primmikerios* who in turn

⁶⁰⁵ For a description of the Vigil see: Pseudo-Kodinos, 229.29-130.22. The word *askepes* is an epithet normally ascribed to the *archontopoula* or young members of the imperial nuclear family and denotes youth. On other places in the ceremony book this word is clarified when the appearance of young princes or aristocrats is treated: ‘as a young boy the *despot* wears nothing on his head in the palace, he therefore remains without headdress inside’ (Pseudo-Kodinos, 145.15-18), ‘an *archontopoulon* without headdress, chosen out of the ones with lineage to the emperor, carries his staff’ (Pseudo-Kodinos, 202.19-21), ‘after them the *archontopoula* with lineage to the emperor, the ones without headdress, wish him many years in a similar way’ (Pseudo-Kodinos, 212.10-14) and ‘if he is not there, one of the emperor’s relatives, without headdress, whom the emperor has ordered, [serves them]’ (Pseudo-Kodinos, 272.12-14).

⁶⁰⁶ Pages of the bedchamber: Pseudo-Kodinos, 176.8. Pages of the wardrobe: Pseudo-Kodinos, 172.5 ; 174.16,25 ; 191.18-19,15-26 ; 192.3.

⁶⁰⁷ Pseudo-Kodinos, 172.2-7.

gave it to the emperor.⁶⁰⁸ This ritual would usually be set in motion by the command “my sceptre” of the emperor, who would be seated on his throne inside the *triklinos*, and the successive order “page” as spoken by the *megas primmikerios*.⁶⁰⁹

There is more known about the service of pages. Some of them seem to have accompanied the emperor to the battlefield. In 1305, during the battle between the Byzantines (commanded by co-emperor Michael IX) and the Catalans, Michael IX’s life was saved by the *pinkernes* and by ‘a certain youth from the imperial pages’.⁶¹⁰ Thus, as Mark Bartusis suggested, pages may have been a group to recruit loyal soldiers from.⁶¹¹ Moreover, this incident shows that not only the emperor in the imperial palace, but also the co-emperor had pages attending on him. The same can be said of the Despot: at the beginning of the 1320s, Despot Constantine was held captive together with ‘a young boy from those serving him’.⁶¹² We should therefore not think that Andronikos II was the only one with pages in his household, although it seems that he in particular placed trust in these servants.

An example of a page serving in the 1340s (most likely attending on the young emperor John V) reveals that a young man of high birth could be a *paidopoulon*. A *prostagma* issued in 1351 by emperor John V namely mentions a former *paidopoulon* John Kalopheros, who is to be identified with John Laskaris Kalopheros, a man in his early twenties from a wealthy Constantinopolitan family. The Laskaris Kalopheros family was on the one hand connected to the court in Constantinople, but belonged on the other hand

⁶⁰⁸ Pseudo-Kodinos, 174.14-20.

⁶⁰⁹ The word “sceptre” was also the cue for the lower officials to enter the main hall during regular receptions, but at special occasions they would have entered the *triklinos* together with the higher officials and in that case the emperor would leave the spoken request to bring in his sceptre to the *megas primmikerios*. See: Pseudo-Kodinos, 191.22-192.19.

⁶¹⁰ νέος τις καὶ τῶν βασιλικῶν παιδαρίσκων (Pachymeres IV, 603.2).

⁶¹¹ Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 207. See also K. Amantos 'Σύμμεικτα (Τουρκόπωλοι)', *ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΑ* 6 (1933), 325-326, 326.

⁶¹² παιδάριον ἐν τῶν ὑπηρετούντων (Gregoras I, 357.14).

to the pro-Western and unionist party.⁶¹³ Later in life, John Laskaris Kalopheros had an extraordinary career, which included amongst others assisting Pierre I of Lusignan from Cyprus in his expedition against Alexandria (1360s) and travelling to the French king Charles V as a papal envoy (1370s).⁶¹⁴ The *prostagma*, which tells us that John Laskaris Kalopheros, former *paidopoulon*, was given the order, together with the former *grammatikos* Manuel Kydones, to put a plot of land into the possession of a *metochion* (a certain type of property, granted to a monastery) of the monastery of Lavra on mount Athos,⁶¹⁵ suggests that a page of high birth had served in John V's court and that this man was climbing the career ladder in his function of 'former page'. The same can be said of the aforementioned Michael Katharos, who may only have been an illegitimate imperial grandson, but was taken up amongst the pages and as such caught the attention of the emperor.

Despite the abovementioned Michael Katharos and John Laskaris Kalopheros, I believe that pages were generally not of high birth. This corresponds with Michael Angold's remark that none of the known pages of the Nicaean court came from aristocratic families.⁶¹⁶ It is also confirmed by the case of two other Palaiologan *paidopoula* who are known by name.⁶¹⁷ John Pothos and Constantine Palates were both *paidopoulon* in the household of emperor Andronikos II, before some misfortune brought them into contact

⁶¹³ Ambrosius K. Eszer, *Das abenteuerliche Leben des Johannes Laskaris Kalopheros. Forschungen zur Geschichte der ostwestlichen Beziehungen im 14. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden 1969), 7-8 (hereafter Eszer, *Das abenteuerliche Leben*)

⁶¹⁴ PLP 10732. For the *prostagma*: Paul Lemerle et. al. (eds.), *Actes de Lavra* 4 vols. (Archives de l'Athos 5, 8, 10-11, Paris, 1970-1982), III, no. 132 (1351) (hereafter *Lavra*). For the amazing life of John Laskaris Kalopheros see: Eszer, *Das abenteuerliche Leben* and David Jakobý, 'Jean Lascaris Calophéros, Chypre et la Morée' in *REB* 26 (1968) 189-228.

⁶¹⁵ *Lavra* III, no. 132 (1351). For a translation into German and commentary, see Eszer, *Das abenteuerliche Leben*, 162-166.

⁶¹⁶ Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*, 177.

⁶¹⁷ John Pothos: PLP 23445, Constantine Palates: PLP 21561. The PLP also identifies Demetrios Doukopoulos (PLP 5706) as page, thereby referring to a document in the *Actes de Xénophon*. However, neither the reference to this person in old edition of Louis Pétit (Louis Pétit ed. 'Actes de Xénophon' in *VV* 10 (1903) 33) nor in the new edition of Denise Papachryssanthou (Denise Papachryssanthou (ed.), *Actes de Xénophon* (Archives de l'Athos 15, Paris 1986), 86, 92) implies that he was a page in the imperial household.

with the court of justice. In the late 1320s, John Pothos had to restore a mill, which he had demolished.⁶¹⁸ Constantine Palates, originating from nearby the city of Melenikon, was page of the emperor around the year 1311, but later fled abroad due to a marital problem.⁶¹⁹ Unfortunately, we do not know anything about the palatine life and work of these men, but there is no indication that John Pothos and Constantine Palates were from an aristocratic background. It seems also unlikely that all the anonymous *meirakiskoi*, *paidaria* and *paidopoula* attending on Andronikos II in his old age were of high birth.

Whether of low or high birth, the additional question is whether serving as a *paidopoulon* at court could lead to a higher position on the social ladder. We know that this was the case in the mid-thirteenth century. Pachymeres relates how becoming a page in the court of the Nicaean empire could be the start of a career as an influential court official, also for men who were not part of the aristocratic establishment: in the 1250s emperor Theodore Laskaris, who is known to have favoured middle class men over high aristocrats, made the brothers Mouzalon *protovestiarios*, *megas domestikos* and *protohierakarios* and married them to high born women, even though ‘these men were absolutely not of high birth, but they were appointed to him as pages, when he was still to become ruler’.⁶²⁰ Also another lower background page of Theodore, named Balanidiotes, was married off to a girl of high birth.⁶²¹ Of the early Palaiologan period we only have one example of a *paidopoulon*, John Laskaris Kalopheros, making a career at court – as discussed above, and his cannot necessarily be seen as an example of social climbing, because he already came from a good background. However, it has been suggested that his service as a page at

⁶¹⁸ Louis Pétit, 'Actes de Chilandar (Archives de l'Athos 5)', VV, 17 (1910), Supplement 1, no. 115 (1327).

⁶¹⁹ A divorce certificate dating 1315 tells us that Constantine Palates, after agreeing to marry a girl with a handicap (unknown to him upon signing the marriage contract), went abroad for four years in order to avoid having to consume the marriage. Upon his return a divorce was requested (and granted). See: Herbert Hunger and Otto Kresten ed. *Das Register des Patriarchats von Konstantinople I* (Wien 1981) 176, 178, 180.

⁶²⁰ ἄνδρας οὐκ εὐγενείας μὲν μετέχοντας τὸ παράπαν, εἰς παιδοπούλους δὲ αὐθεντοπουλενομένῳ τεταγμένους αὐτῷ (Pachymeres I, 41.14-15).

⁶²¹ Pachymeres I, 55.17-21.

the imperial court did help him to obtain positions as a mediator and diplomat.⁶²² We do not have examples of successful careers of Palaiologan *paidopoula* of lower background. We may therefore carefully conclude that, while low social status was not an obstacle for ambitious *paidopoula* in the Nicaean empire of Theodore Laskaris, the absence of spectacular social climbing in Palaiologan times suggests that the *paidopoula* of the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries remained largely within their initial (lower) social group.

The reason for the moderate social climbing of domestic pages, may lie in the fact that there was another group of young men at court, out of which the emperor could also recruit: the *archontopoula*. Regarding social status, the position of *archontopoula* is better defined than that of *paidopoula*: other than *paidopoulon*, the word *archontoupoulon* does not refer to a particular function at court, but rather to the social status of a (young) man, its literal meaning being a young *archon*. *Archontopoula* are mentioned as young military men and *pronoia* holders, perform the occasional ceremonial and security task at court and act as messengers. Like the word *paidopoulon*, *archontopoulon* mainly occurs in late Byzantine sources: with some earlier exceptions, it is mentioned in Pseudo-Kodinos, imperial documents, chronicles and literary sources from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries.⁶²³ The meaning of the term is somewhat problematic. Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos mentions an *archontopoulon* twice in his *De Administrando Imperio* when referring to young Serbian princes.⁶²⁴ His interpretation of the word seems to have

⁶²² Eszer, *Das abenteuerliche Leben*, 10.

⁶²³ This does not necessarily mean that there were no young aristocrats at court in the early and middle Byzantine period. John Haldon noticed two different terms used for aristocratic young men in the tenth century court of Constantine Porphyrogenetos: *basilikoi agouroi* and *archontogennemata*. See Haldon, *Three treatises*, 226.

⁶²⁴ Gy. Moravcsik (ed.), *Constantine Porphyrogenetos. De Administrando Imperio*, trans. R. J. H. Jenkins (Washington D. C. 1967), 156.94, 158.101.

been nothing more than ‘young sons of the *archontes*’. In Anna Komnene’s *Alexiad*, however, we come across

young soldiers, called *archontopouloi*, all with their beards scarcely grown, but irresistible in attack. [...] This band of *archontopouloi* was first formed by Alexius. As the Roman empire possessed no army owing to the carelessness of the preceding emperors, he collected from all sides the sons of soldiers who had fallen in the field, and trained them in the use of arms and for war and called them *archontopouloi*, as though they were the sons of *archontes*; in order that by their name they should be reminded of their parents’ nobility and bravery, and therefore aim at impetuous valour and prove themselves very brave when circumstances demanded daring and strength. Such then was the band of *archontopouloi*, and roughly speaking they numbered about two thousand.⁶²⁵

What Anna Komnene explains here, is that the late eleventh century military *archontopoula* were an invention of her father Alexios I Komnenos, and that actually the word stood for son of an *archon*, but that these military young men were not necessarily of high birth themselves (‘as though they were the sons of *archontes*’ ὥσανεὶ ἐξ ἀρχόντων υἱοὺς γεγονότας). The military company of *archontopoula* were in reality not *archontopoula* in the literal meaning of the word.

There is no connection between the Nicaean or Palaiologan *archontopoula* and the ones of Alexios I, because it is unlikely that after Alexios’ reign the company of young elite soldiers still existed.⁶²⁶ Mark Bartusis argues that the Nicaean and Palaiologan term *archontopoulon* can be applied to two groups, one a group of men who can be seen as a lower grade of aristocracy, the other ‘an informal group of young men who spent their

⁶²⁵ τοὺς Ἀρχοντοπώλους καλουμένους νέους, ἀρτιφυεῖς πάντας τὸ γένειον, τὴν ὀρμὴν ἀνυποστάτους (...). τὸ δὲ τῶν Ἀρχοντοπώλων τάγμα παρὰ Ἀλεξίου πρῶτως ἐφεύρητο. ἀστρατίαν γὰρ ἐχούσης τῆς τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῆς διὰ ῥαθυμίαν τῶν ἀνέκαθεν αὐτοκρατόρων συλλεξάμενος ἀπανταχόθεν τοὺς τῶν ἀποπεπτωκότων στρατιωτῶν υἱεῖς ἐγύμνασέ τε πρὸς ὅπλα καὶ πόλεμον καὶ Ἀρχοντοπώλους ὠνόμασεν ὥσανεὶ ἐξ ἀρχόντων υἱοὺς γεγονότας, ἵνα διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος εἰς τὴν τῶν γονέων εὐγένειάν τε καὶ ἀνδρείαν ἀναφερόμενοι καὶ οὗτοι θούριδος ἄλκῃς μνήσαιντό τε καὶ ἀνδρειότεροι γένοιντο τοῦ καιροῦ τούτοις τόλμαν καὶ ῥώμην ὑπαγορεύοντος. τοιοῦτον δὲ τὸ τῶν Ἀρχοντοπώλων τάγμα, ὡς ἐν ὀλίγῳ εἰπεῖν, εἰς δύο χιλιάδας συμποσούμενον (Komnene, *Alexiad*, 7.7.1.4-15). I used the translation from Elizabeth Dawes: *Anna Comnena (Komnene), The Alexiad*, edited and translated by Elizabeth A. Dawes (London 1928), 181-182.

⁶²⁶ Armin Hohlweg, *Beiträge zur Verwaltungsgeschichte des Oströmischen Reiches unter den Komnenen* (Munich 1965), 52 and Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 206.

daily careers at the imperial court as aristocrats in training’.⁶²⁷ As for the first group: indeed, we know that in the thirteenth century, in the provinces and areas under Latin rule the meaning ‘lesser *archon*’ seems to have developed. David Jacoby notes that local aristocracies in Crete and Morea adopted the hereditary and feudal traditions of their Western rulers and used the term *archontopoulos* not in the sense of ‘young *archon*’ but as an indication of nobility, below or besides the more noble *archontes*.⁶²⁸ The meaning ‘sons of the *archontes*’ seems to have become secondary in these areas and *archontoupoulon* came to mean nobleman. This is also reflected in the Chronicle of Morea: rather than ‘sons of *archontes*’ the term stands here for lower rank *archontes*.⁶²⁹

The term *archontoupoulon* is also well attested in sources from Thrace, especially from the area around Serres, where the Serbs ruled in the mid fourteenth century, and also there it indicated ‘lesser’ *archon*.⁶³⁰ The existence of local *archontopoula* as opposed to Constantinopolitan *archontopoula* is confirmed by an act from the Chalkidiki area (1355), in which a certain Michael Pitzikopoulos is specified as a ‘western’ *archontoupoulon*.⁶³¹ Also in a different document, four brothers with the surname Sgouros Orestes are labelled

⁶²⁷ Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 206.

⁶²⁸ David Jacoby, ‘Les États Latin en Roumanie’ in ; *Recherches sur la Méditerranée Orientale du XII au XVe siècle. Peuples, Sociétés, Économies* (London 1979), 23ff.

⁶²⁹ There are six mentions of the word *archontopoulos* in the chronicle (verses 554, 1644, 4205, 3786, 5464 and 8751). The most significant for the meaning of the word *archontopoulos* is verse 1644 (here in the translation of Harold Lurier): ‘[...] that all the **lesser archontes** who had fiefs would retain, each one of them, the homage and military service consonant with his rank.’ See: Harold E. Lurier, *Crusaders as conquerors. The Chronicle of Morea* (New York / London 1964), 116.

⁶³⁰ This is noted by Nicolas Oikonomides in: Nicolas Oikonomides ed. *Actes de Docheiariou* (Archives de l’Athos; Paris 1984), 194 (hereafter *Actes de Docheiariou*), who gives examples of *archontopouloi* around Serres: *Grčke povelje Srpskih vladara (Diplomata graecae regum et imperatorum Serviae)*, no. 9 (1346); *Actes de Kutlumis*, no.21 (1348); *Les Archives de Saint-Jean-Prodrome sur le mont Ménécée*, no. 44 (1352). The *PLP* gives a long list of *archontopoula*, all of whom lived in or around Zichnai and were named in a document concerning landownership dating 1344 (W. Regel, E. Kurtz and B. Korablev, ‘Actes de Philothée’, *VV* 20 (1913), Supplement, 301).

⁶³¹ τὸν ἀπὸ τῶν δυσικῶν ἀρχοντοπούλων κῦ(ρ) Μιχαὴλ τὸν Πιτζικόπουλον ἐκεῖνον (*Actes de Docheiariou*, no. 29 (1355), 6-7). For Michael Pitzikopoulos see *PLP* 23275.

archontopoula from the West.⁶³² Consequently, it seems that a geographical component should be taken into account when sources mentioning *archontopoula* are examined. Locally, the term may have meant something else than in the centre of the empire, at court.

The variety of meanings of the word *archontopoulon* indicates that sources concerning the *archontopoula* at the imperial court in Constantinople should be approached with caution. Were they in fact young people, sons of *archontes*, or should we see them as second-class aristocrats? Were there two kind of *archontopoula* or was the term so flexible that it could be applied to men who were either young aristocrats, aristocrats-to-be or secondary aristocrats, elitist pages or even soldiers in training?⁶³³

The *archontopoula* described by Pseudo-Kodinos seem to have been young aristocrats, even relatives of the emperor, some of whom performed minor tasks during court ceremonies: ‘an *archontopoulon* without headdress, chosen out of the ones with lineage to the emperor, carries his staff’ during major religious feast days, while the *megas domestikos* and the other *archontes* retreat in the palace.⁶³⁴ In this example it is made clear that the *archontopoulon* was someone of high birth, even with lineage to the emperor, but not wearing a headdress, which indicated that he was young. His job, to hold the emperor’s staff, resembles the tasks of pages during ceremonies. Also through another passage it becomes clear that Pseudo-Kodinos sees *archontopoula* as young relatives of the emperor who did not have a title (yet):

While the emperor withdraws into his chamber after dinner, the Despots, the Caesars and the *sebastokratores* wish him many years; the emperor parts from them with a personal “many years” and they leave. After them the *archontopoula*

⁶³² οἱ ἀπὸ τῶν δυσικῶν ἀρχοντοπούλων τέσσαρ(ες) ἀντάδελφοι (Jacques Bompaire et al. (eds.), *Actes de Vatopédi* 2 vols. (Archives de l’Athos 21, Paris 2001) vol. 1, no.52 (1319/1320)).

⁶³³ Mark Bartusis, who grouped the two different kind of *archontopoula* was also the first to throw doubt upon this division. See: Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 206.

⁶³⁴ Τὴν δὲ σπάθην αὐτοῦ φέρει ἀρχοντόπουλον ἀσκεπές, τῶν ἐγγύς κατὰ γένος προσηκόντων τῷ βασιλεῖ. (Pseudo-Kodinos, 202.19-21).

with lineage to the emperor, the ones without headdress, wish him many years in a similar way.⁶³⁵

The high status of these *archontopoula* becomes obvious because they give their wishes to the emperor right after their close relatives, who were the highest ranked men at court (the three highest ranks were reserved for close relatives of the emperor), while their immaturity is indicated by the fact that they were not wearing hats. Another mention of *archontopoula* in the ceremony book is less revealing, although it indicates that the *archontopoula* were, like others in imperial service, the recipients of financial rewards on certain ceremonial occasions.⁶³⁶ The protocol for a coronation ceremony required that the emperor distributes money to his subordinates. He did this in the court of the palace complex, in front of the icon of St. George (which was attached to the outer wall of the palace chapel), while an *archon* of the imperial wardrobe was standing next to him, holding up a great number of gold coins in his dress. The emperor then distributed the coins ‘to the *archontes* who are standing around him and to the *archontopoula*, in whichever numbers he prefers.’⁶³⁷

Overall, Pseudo-Kodinos seems to characterize the *archontopoula* in court as young aristocrats, who occasionally had ceremonial tasks similar to the ones of the pages. Kantakouzenos adds a different aspect to this picture. In the late summer of 1327, *archontopoula* are mentioned as being part of the entourage of Andronikos III, but also as

⁶³⁵ Μετὰ μέντοι τὸ δεῖπνον τὸν βασιλέα ἐν τῷ κελλίῳ αὐτοῦ ἀπελθόντα πολυχρονίζουσιν οἱ τε δεσπόται, οἱ σεβαστοκράτορες καὶ οἱ καίσαρες· πρὸς οὓς καὶ ὀρίζει ὁ βασιλεὺς δι’ ἑαυτοῦ “εἰς πολλὰ ἔτη”, καὶ ἀπέρχονται. Μετ’ αὐτοὺς πολυχρονίζουσιν ὡσαύτως καὶ ὅσα τῶν κατὰ γένος προσηκόντων τῷ βασιλεῖ ἀρχοντόπουλά εἰσιν ἀσκεπῇ. (Pseudo-Kodinos, 212.4-14).

⁶³⁶ Not only the *archontes* and *archontopoula* seem to have received coins. I already discussed the distribution of money to the staff of the imperial household during the coronation festivities. This is mentioned by Kantakouzenos, but his order of events differs slightly from Pseudo-Kodinos. See: Kantakouzenos I, 203.14-21.

⁶³⁷ σκορπίζει εἰς τοὺς περιεστῶτας ἄρχοντάς τε καὶ ἀρχοντόπουλα, ἐφ’ ὅσον ἂν δοκεῖ τοῦτο. (Pseudo-Kodinos, 271.15-17). Other than Mark Bartusis, I do not see this as a description ‘denoting a gradation within the aristocracy’, see Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 206n31.

receivers of *pronoia*: ‘for all the *archontes* and *archontopoula* who are to be found with the grandson of the emperor, were appointed by the emperor and received benefits from him through *oikonomia* and *chrysobulls*’.⁶³⁸ In this passage they are mentioned in one breath with the *archontes* and it is evident that they were also receiving financial benefits through *oikonomia* and *chrysobulls*. There is more proof of *archontopoula* as *pronoia* holders. In May 1261, before the recapture of Constantinople, emperor Michael VIII gave one man and two unnamed *archontopoula* a *pronoia* consisting of the ownership of the village community Palatia, including many *parokoi* (tenant farmers).⁶³⁹ Under Andronikos II, in an imperial document dating 1317, *archontopoula* are mentioned right after *archontes* as people who, like the emperor, the empress, the *archontes* related to the imperial family and the other *archontes*, had issued *horismoi* (short legal documents) for tax exemptions benefitting merchants in Monemvasia.⁶⁴⁰ This confirms the high status and wealth of the Constantinopolitan *archontopoula*. A late example of a wealthy *archontopoulos* was a certain Michael Palaiologos, *archontopoulos* around 1400 and landowner, but impoverished and not yet of age when he had to sell his land in 1401.⁶⁴¹

Furthermore, if we accept that ‘young men of good descent’ (νέοι τῶν εὐπατριδῶν) are to be identified with *archontopoula*, we can add military activities to their tasks.⁶⁴²

Kantakouzenos points at the semi-military function of Andronikos III’s *archontopoula*

⁶³⁸ πάντες γὰρ οἱ μετὰ τοῦ ἐγγόνου τοῦ βασιλέως εὐρισκόμενοι ἄρχοντες καὶ τὰ ἀρχοντόπουλα, κατεστάθησαν ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως, καὶ τὰς αὐτοῦ εὐεργεσίας ἔχουσι διὰ τε οἰκονομιῶν διὰ τε χρυσοβούλλων· (Kantakouzenos I, 236.7-11). Kantakouzenos’ German translators, Fatouros and Kirscher, translate *archontopoula* as ‘Gehilfe’ (assistants, helpers), which does not seem accurate to me, see Kantakouzenos/Fatouros I, 162.

⁶³⁹ Maria Nystazopoulou-Pelikou and Era L. Vranouse (eds.), *Vyzantina Engrapha tes mones patmou* 2 vols. (Athens 1980), vol. 2, no.66 (1261), which is the same as *MM* VI, no. IV (1261), 207-208 and Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 1891 (1261). See also: Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*, 177. However, Angold mistook the number of the *archontopouloi* and hence concluded that the amount of *archontopouloi* at court was surprisingly numerous.

⁶⁴⁰ *MM* V, no. IV (1317), 168.

⁶⁴¹ PLP 21523. *MM* II, no. 596 (1400), 382-384.

⁶⁴² The connection was first made by Nicolas Oikonomides: Oikonomides, ‘A propos des armées des premiers Paléologues et des compagnies de soldats’ in: *TM* 8 (1981), 353-371, 355. See also: Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 206.

when he mentions how a hundred armed and unarmed ‘young men of good descent’ were taking care of the security during the procession in Andronikos III’s coronation ceremony, together with the imperial guards known as Varangians.⁶⁴³ Also at another occasion these young aristocrats are described having a military function. In the mid 1340’s, emperor Kantakouzenos and a small part of his army defeated a Turkish force in Mesene (Thrace) and killed one of their commanders while another held out on a hill top together with some soldiers until he was called down by the emperor:

While he [emperor Kantakouzenos] discussed with the Turks and reprimanded their arrogance, that they [the Turks], being friends, had dared to advance with an army upon that of his, Despot Nikephoros, a close relative of the emperor, together with certain young men of good descent, who were subject to indiscipline and thoughtlessness, brought the emperor in danger.⁶⁴⁴

The Despot and his undisciplined soldiers attacked and killed some of the Turks, who by that time had already surrendered and were unarmed. The disorderly behaviour of the young aristocratic soldiers, one of whom was his close relative, made the emperor very cross and he punished them before sending away the remaining Turks with some gifts.

Thus, some of the *archontopoula* at the late Byzantine court were young aristocrats, who were likely to become military office holders. This is not surprising, because the Byzantine aristocracy was for a great deal a military aristocracy. It is plausible that the *archontopoula* would get military training at court, through exercise, hunt and contests. We know that hunting was a favourite pastime among members of the imperial family and that Western-style tournaments were popular, especially in the entourage of

⁶⁴³ Kantakouzenos I, 200.12-13.

⁶⁴⁴ Διαλεγόμενου δὲ ἐκείνου τοῖς Πέρσαις καὶ τὴν ἀγνωμοσύνην ὀνειδίζοντος, ὅτι τῶν φίλων ὄντες στρατεύσειαν ἐπὶ τὴν ἐκείνου, Νικηφόρος δεσπότης, ὁ βασιλέως γαμβρὸς, μετὰ τινων ἐτέρων νέων ἐξ εὐπατριδῶν, ἀταξία χρησάμενοι καὶ ἀβουλία, ἐν χρῶ κινδύνου κατέστησαν τὸν βασιλέα. (Kantakouzenos III, 65.19-24).

Andronikos III.⁶⁴⁵ There must have been several opportunities for young aristocrats to practice their military skills in courtly circles.

Apart from a military function, *archontopoula* were also occasionally active as messengers. In a *prostagma* of 1319, Andronikos II, an unnamed imperial *archontopoulos* is sent to Lemnos, to inquire about certain problems concerning a certain *metochion* there and to report this back to the emperor.⁶⁴⁶ Thus, acting as the extended arm of the emperor is something that both pages and *archontopoula* had in common. However, there is no evidence of *archontopoula* attending on the emperor in the palace on a daily basis. This means that we cannot be sure that *archontopoula* were living in the imperial palace and received training there, nor that they were ‘an informal group of young men who spent their daily careers at the imperial court as aristocrats in training’, as Mark Bartusis proposed.⁶⁴⁷ And even though Gregoras says that the imperial palace was a centre of learning, we have little to no evidence that youths of high social background were educated at court.⁶⁴⁸ There is also no evidence of the presence of hostage children of aristocrats or foreign rulers in the palace.⁶⁴⁹ Consequently, the extent to which the emperor could control these young aristocrats – and through them their fathers – remained limited.

⁶⁴⁵ Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 208.

⁶⁴⁶ *Lavra* II, no 106 (1319).

⁶⁴⁷ Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 206.

⁶⁴⁸ Gregoras I, 327.12-17 ; 334-335 ; 471.11-12 ; see also Donald Nicol, 'The Byzantine Church and Hellenic Learning in the Fourteenth Century', in G. J. Cuming (ed.), *The Church and Academic Learning* (Leiden 1969), 23-57, 34. It remains unclear whether there was a school at the palace. We do know that teachers, for example the early fourteenth century Theodore Hyrtakenos, were employed by the emperor, but whether he taught in the palace remains unclear. See Georgios Constantinides, *Higher education in Byzantium* (Nicosia, 1982), 94-95 (hereafter Constantinides, *Higher Education*). There were not always professional teachers: many intellectual state officials combined their service for the emperor with scholarly work and some teaching (Constantinides, *Higher Education*, 99-100).

⁶⁴⁹ Jonathan Shepard mentions that from ca. 1308 until at the latest 1321, Andronikos II accommodated the blinded Serbian king Stefan Uros III Dečanski in one of the imperial palaces of Constantinople, doing everything that was useful for him, which may have included an education of his two sons: Jonathan Shepard, 'Manners Maketh Romans? Young Barbarians at the Emperor's Court', in Elizabeth Jeffreys (ed.), *Byzantine Style, Religion and Civilization: In Honour of Sir Steven Runciman* (Cambridge, 2006), 135-158, 145. There is no evidence, however, that they were living in and were educated in the Blachernai palace, let alone served as pages.

3.4 CASE STUDY: THE CHAMBERLAINS OF THE BEDCHAMBER

A case study of the officials of the bedchamber may reveal more about the function and status of domestic servants in the early Palaiologan court. As we have seen earlier, chamberlains were considered to be an essential part of the service personnel. Together with guards and ushers they formed the core of every *therapeia*. Furthermore, through Pseudo-Kodinos we learn that the highest ranked chamberlain, the *parakoimomenos tou koitonos* (chamberlain of the bedchamber) was supposed to reside in the palace (μένει δὲ καὶ ἐντὸς τοῦ παλατίου).⁶⁵⁰ It is worthwhile to study this official and his subordinates in order to find out whether high officials like him were really living in the palace, whether he and/or his subordinates performed domestic tasks and whether there is any evidence that their proximity to the emperor led to a special elevated social status. Moreover, it is important to see whether the sources suggest that the chamberlains' tasks and positions at court were fixed or that these household servants were susceptible to early Palaiologan political, social and economic changes.

Pseudo-Kodinos informs us of a *parakoimomenos tou koitonos* (chamberlain of the bedchamber), an office of the higher ranks – rank sixteen in the first chapter, rank sixteen or seventeen in other precedence lists of the Palaiologan period.⁶⁵¹ According to Pseudo-Kodinos' third chapter on the function of the offices, the *parakoimomenos tou koitonos* was head of the servants and pages of the bedchamber and had also the lower ranking *prokathemenos tou koitonos* under his orders. As mentioned above, Pseudo-Kodinos says

⁶⁵⁰ Pseudo-Kodinos, 176.11-14.

⁶⁵¹ These lists are all designed for the imperial court in Constantinople. A precedence list for the court in Trebizond has also survived, which is not taken into account here. One list, ms. Xeropotamou 191 (14th century), does not mention two *parakoimomenoi*, but lists a single *parakoimomenos* instead, which takes up the 15th rank. The ceremony book and the precedence lists have been edited and translated by Jean Verpeaux, who also attempted to date them, see: Pseudo-Kodinos, 291-349.

that he remained in the palace.⁶⁵² Based on this description, it has been argued that the duties of the early and middle Byzantine office of *parakoimomenos*, who used to be the emperor's personal eunuch guardian, were preserved in the service of the *parakoimomenos tou koitonos*.⁶⁵³ I should clarify here that in the thirteenth century the office of *parakoimomenos* had been divided into two: a *parakoimomenos tes sphendones* (chamberlain of the seal) and the aforementioned *parakoimomenos tou koitonos*.⁶⁵⁴ Indeed, Pseudo-Kodinos' text presents a picture of a chamberlain of the bedchamber who performed his duties inside the palace. On the other hand, his rather formulaic description gives us little insight in the *parakoimomenos tou koitonos*' actual day-to-day activities, whether he really stayed in the palace and practiced a domestic function.

The only named *parakoimomenos tou koitonos* of the early Palaiologan period, Basil Basilikos, seems to reflect the palatine characteristic of the office, even though his place of residence remains unknown. George Pachymeres recalls that while the Sultanate of Rûm, at that time partially ruled from Konya by Izz al-Din Kaykaus II (r. 1246–1260), suffered from Mongol attacks, two courtiers went over from the Sultanate to Byzantium. These men, the brothers Basilikos, came from Rhodes and were theatre performers or musicians (ἐκ θυμελικῆς δ' ἐπιτηδεύσεως) before they took up high functions at the Sultan's court. There they met one of the members of the Byzantine court in exile, Michael Palaiologos, who was planning to seize the imperial throne. In 1256 Michael had fled to Izz al-Din Kaykaus II's court,⁶⁵⁵ where the Basilikos brothers had treated him well.

⁶⁵² Pseudo-Kodinos, 176.11-14.

⁶⁵³ For the history of the office of *parakoimomenos* see: Guiland, *Recherches* I, 201-215

⁶⁵⁴ For examples of 13th century *parakoimomenoi*, see: Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*, 399.

⁶⁵⁵ In Akropolites' history we read that Michael Palaiologos presented this flight to the troops as seeking refuge from suspicions of the Lascarid emperor Theodore II, because he feared that 'something terrible might happen to me'. Akropolites adds that Michael probably 'expected mutilation of his vital body parts.' See: Macrides, *Akropolites*, 312-313. George Pachymeres confirms this and says that Michael feared to be blinded: Pachymeres I, 43.4-45.12. For more sources on Michael's motive in fleeing to the Sultan see: Pachymeres I, 42n1.

Pachymeres explains that the Basilikoi believed that, if Michael succeeded in his aims, he would have fond memories of their treatment and friendship and would gladly grant them a position at the Byzantine court. And indeed, after Michael's usurpation the Basilikoi assured their move to Constantinople and were appointed respectively as *parakoimomenos tou koitonos* and *megas hetaireiarches*.⁶⁵⁶ Pachymeres does not reveal when this happened, but it occurred most probably around 1260, which makes Basil Basilikos the first – and only – known Palaiologan *parakoimomenos tou koitonos*. So far, there is no indication that the office *parakoimomenos* of the bedchamber had a particularly palatine character, although it is mentioned that the brothers served the emperor personally and therefore must have been close to him: 'the emperor was looked after by them, who appeared to be skilled in (court) matters to the highest degree, and they became the emperor's friends'.⁶⁵⁷

Also another passage in Pachymeres' history reveals that Basil was a trustworthy servant. In 1279 a sweet mixture of cooked wheat, dried fruit and nuts (*kollyva*)⁶⁵⁸ served on a copper plate with an inscription in Arabic was about to be presented to the emperor. The Arabic letters on the plate – allegedly an invocation of Mohammed – caused suspicion amidst the courtiers who considered it improper to present *kollyva* on such an 'impure' plate. They also accused the patriarch of having deliberately chosen this one, knowing that it could never have been consecrated properly due to its Islamic inscription. When the emperor heard this insinuation, he wished to verify the message and called for his chamberlain of the bedchamber, Basil Basilikos, who was familiar with Arabic script and

⁶⁵⁶ For the office of *megas hetaireiarches* see: P. Karlin-Hayter, "l'Hétériarque," *JÖB* 23 (1974): 101-143, especially 133.

⁶⁵⁷ καὶ ἐχρᾶτο τούτοις, δεξιόις ἐς ὅτι μάλιστα εἰς τὰ πράγματα φαινομένοις, καὶ ἡ πρὸς αὐτοὺς φιλία τοῦ βασιλέως προσῆν. (Pachymeres I, 183.14-15). The entire introduction of the Basilikoi brothers can be found in Pachymeres I, 181.22-183.19.

⁶⁵⁸ This was presented yearly on the feast of the Presentation of the Lord (2nd of February), ever since the emperor had been granted absolution by patriarch Joseph on that liturgical day in the year 1267. This traditional dish exists up to our day in the Orthodox world. When a deceased is commemorated and also on St. Theodore's day (the first Saturday of Great Lent) a family makes *kollyva* and brings it to church, where it is blessed and shared with the congregation. For the Byzantine tradition, see: Pachymeres II, 574n1.

calligraphy. Basil read the inscription and confirmed the suspicions of the courtiers. Consequently, Pachymeres says, *kollyva* was not offered to the emperor and the whole affair caused great offence.⁶⁵⁹

It appears that the chamberlain served in the imperial household until close to the emperor's death. A last glimpse of Basil Basilikos shows that the emperor Michael VIII trusted his loyal servant to organize the humiliation and blinding of an army commander in the summer of 1280. This commander, John Angelos Doukas, was a man who had gained popularity amongst the troops through some successful campaigns against the Turks.⁶⁶⁰ The emperor felt threatened by his success as a commander and recalled him from Nicaea.⁶⁶¹ In Constantinople, John was accused of having spoken negatively about the *porphyrogennetos* Constantine, the emperor's second son, and 'was publicly dishonoured through the removal of his headgear, the sign of dignity of the great, with which he had been honoured before'.⁶⁶² The emperor put him then in the hands of the *parakoimomenos* Basilikos, to whom he gave the command to blind him and drive him out of the city to Damatrys⁶⁶³ – where the emperor was staying at that time.⁶⁶⁴ It confirms the position of trust held by Michael VIII's *parakoimomenos* of the bedchamber.

Based on Pachymeres' evidence about the loyal professional Basil Basilikos it might be argued that the *parakoimomenos tou koitonos* was a palatine office of considerable importance and influence. After all, Michael VIII's chamberlain of the

⁶⁵⁹ Pachymeres II, 573.20-575.17.

⁶⁶⁰ John Angelos Doukas (*PLP* 205) was the second son of Michael II Angelos Doukas, the ruler of Epirus, who had attempted to increase his territory at the expense of the Byzantine emperors several times but never succeeded. In the sources John Angelos Doukas is called both John Doukas and John Angelos.

⁶⁶¹ Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy*, 310-311.

⁶⁶² Ἰωάννην δὲ καὶ οὕτως ἡτίμου τὴν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἀφαιρῶν καλύπτραν, μεγιστᾶσιν οὖσαν ἀξίαν, καθ' ἣν ἐτίμα τὸ πρότερον. (Pachymeres II, 615.10-11)

⁶⁶³ This residential complex was an Anatolian base for the Byzantine emperors. Its remains are still to be seen in the Sancaktepe quarter in Samandıra, one of the districts of Istanbul. See also chapter 1 of this thesis.

⁶⁶⁴ This long and complicated chapter describes how emperor Michael questioned and blinded several men, John Angelos Doukas being one of them. For the description of his case: Pachymeres II, 613.9-615.21.

bedchamber was trustworthy throughout his entire reign and always close at hand. This combines well with Pseudo-Kodinos' explanation of the *parakoimomenos tou koitonos*' function. The difficulty is, however, that we cannot test the example of Basil Basilikos. Apart from Pseudo-Kodinos, the precedence lists and Pachymeres' history, there are no early Palaiologan sources which mention a *parakoimomenos* with the explanatory addition *tou koitonos*. For example, John Kantakouzenos refers to his adversary Alexios Apokaukos or his own nephew Andronikos as *parakoimomenoi*, without using the additional *tou koitonos* or *tes sphendones*. There are other *parakoimomenoi* who are mentioned either as *parakoimomenos tes sphendones* or just as *parakoimomenos* (see chart in Appendix III). An investigation of individual *parakoimomenoi tes sphendones* would not be relevant here, but evidence about the *parakoimomenoi* without addendum could change something to the picture presented by Pseudo-Kodinos and Pachymeres.

If we look closer at the list of individuals who held the office of *parakoimomenos* (unspecified), we see that many of them belonged to the ruling class or were linked to the imperial family. It also seems that they either held the office for a short while or – in Apokaukos' case, who was *parakoimomenos* for about twenty years – did not at all practice the palatine function as described by Pseudo-Kodinos.⁶⁶⁵ Pachymeres' Basil Basilikos may have been representative of Pseudo-Kodinos' description, evidence about other chamberlains shows that the office of chamberlain could also have been honorary or befitting the character of its holder. Consequently, the evidence *ex silentio* (the absence of *parakoimomenoi tou koitonos*) combined with the existence of several *parakoimomenoi*

⁶⁶⁵ Throughout John Kantakouzenos' history, written in the 1360s, Apokaukos is often simply referred to as 'the *parakoimomenos*', an office Apokaukos held for a long time, especially while the author – rather pedantically – refers to himself as *megas domestikos*, which was a higher ranked office (fourth when Kantakouzenos held it).

without addendum indicates that the chamberlain's function in the early Palaiologan period was not as clear-cut as is presented in the ceremony book.

Since the *parakoimomenos* was not always present to take care of the emperor in or near his private apartments, it is plausible that this task was taken up by the lower ranked *prokathemenos tou koitonos* (rank 60 in Pseudo-Kodinos), who was a subordinate of the *parakoimomenos*. According to Pseudo-Kodinos, this official was in charge of the imperial bedchamber (τοῦ βασιλικοῦ κοιτῶνος ἐπιμελούμενος), and was the head of the servants of the bedchamber, the *koitonarioi*.⁶⁶⁶ Two individual *prokathemenoi tou koitonos* are known to us, neither of them being members of the higher élite. There was George Chatzikes, *prokathemenos* between 1305 and 1310.⁶⁶⁷ He made himself infamous because of a strange incident, described by Pachymeres, concerning a slanderous text left on emperor Andronikos II's throne in the innermost area of the palace:

In the meanwhile a slanderous writ full of mockery was cast down. The person who had the nerve to cast the writ found no other way to put it in the hands of the emperor than to place it unnoticed upon the throne on which he usually sat, under the one of the double-head, in the innermost area of the palace – this daredevil took great care in order to put it there unseen indeed. When the *prokathemenos* of the bedchamber Chatzikes had entered the place to prepare the throne like he usually did – smartening it up as always – he stumbled upon the writ. Thinking that the emperor had left it there the day before and that it contained certain secret things, which were none of his business, he refrained from reading it and put it right away in the hands of the emperor. The very moment he handed over this unknown thing, it was at once clear to him that he had performed a strange and improper act: he presented the writ as if it had been put there by the emperor himself, who actually had no idea. In the meanwhile, the emperor had accepted it and when he went through the beginning he understood the rest of the writing, just like recognizing a piece of cloth by its border. Thus, while he was torn between wanting and not wanting to know, as is usually the case, he became frustrated and felt awkward.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁶ Pseudo-Kodinos, 186.8-12.

⁶⁶⁷ PLP 30724.

⁶⁶⁸ Ἐν τούτῳ καὶ φάμουσος τόμος πλήρης χλεύης ῥίπτειται. καὶ οὐ γὰρ ἄλλως τῷ τολμῶντι ῥίπτειν ὑπείληπτο εἰς χεῖρας δεδῶσθαι τὸν τόμον τῷ βασιλεῖ, ἢν μὴ ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῦ τῶν ἀνακτόρων ἄλλο τις λαθὼν ἐκτεθείη ἐπὶ τὸν αὐτὸν θρόνον οὗ εἰώθει καθέζεσθαι βασιλεὺς, τοῦ ἀμφικεφάλου ὑπεντεθειμένου οἱ, πολλὴν τοῦ λαθεῖν πρόνοιαν ποιησαμένου τοῦ θεῖναι τολμήσαντος. ὥς δὲ ὁ τοῦ κοιτῶνος προκαθήμενος ὁ Χατζίκης εἰωθὼς ἐκ τοῦ ἐπὶ πλεῖστον εἰσῆι ταῖς καθέδρας διευθετεῖν, φιλοκαλῶν συνήθως τὸν δίφρον προστετυχῆκει τῷ τόμῳ, δόξαν οἱ πρὸς βασιλέως αὐτὸν τεθῆναι ἅτ' ἀπόρρητά τινα περιέχοντα, μηδὲν πολυπραγμονήσας, μὴ

In this story Pachymeres reveals some tasks of the *prokathemenos* that are not mentioned in Pseudo-Kodinos. From Pseudo-Kodinos we know that the *prokathemenos* of the bedchamber took care of the matters concerning the private quarters and was the head of the other servants there, himself being under the orders of the *parakoimomenos*, but we do not get to know what this meant in practice. From Pachymeres, however, we learn that Chatzikes had entered the imperial chamber to *arrange the throne as tradition prescribed*, when he came across a text, and thought that the emperor had forgotten it there the day before. Here we get a glimpse of a palatine morning routine: according to Pachymeres, this preparing of the throne by the *prokathemenos* of the bedchamber before the emperor entered was a regular practice and had been performed by *prokathemenoi* as part of their responsibilities. As for the case of Chatzikes, Pachymeres tries to make us believe that this *prokathemenos* habitually ‘beautified’ the seat before he made the mistake of handing over a slanderous text to his master. Moreover, the passage shows that in the early fourteenth century it was the lower ranked *prokathemenos* who was the actual attendant of the imperial bedchamber and not the higher ranked *parakoimomenos*.

Other sources on George Chatzikes reveal that he was more than just a servant who took pride in making the throne look neat and tidy: Michael Gabras addressed several letters to him through which we discover more about this individual. In the first letter, which is written to the *prokathemenos tou koitonos* lord Chatzikes, Gabras is surprised to

ἀναγνούς, ὡς εἶχεν ἐξ αὐτῆς, οὕτως ἐγχειρίζει τῷ βασιλεῖ. καὶ δὴ ἔδοξε μὲν ἐκ τοῦ παραντίκα ἀγνῶτ' ἐγχειρίζων ξένον τι καὶ φροντίδος ἄξιον ἐργαζόμενος, εἰ δὲν βασιλεὺς οὐκ ἤδει τεθέντα, ὡς θέντι οἱ παρέχοι. τέως δὲ λαβὼν βασιλεὺς καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν διελθὼν, τὸ πᾶν τῆς γραφῆς ὡς ἐκ κρασπέδου τὸ ὕφασμα κατενόει, κἀντεῦθεν μεταξὺ τοῦ θέλειν γινῶναι καὶ μὴ ὡς τὸ εἰκὸς γιγνόμενος δεινὰ ἐποίει καὶ ἐν ἀμηχάνῳ ἦν. (Pachymeres IV, 629. 20-631.8).

find the addressee still pondering his visit abroad, i.e. outside Constantinople.⁶⁶⁹ Sent away as a messenger perhaps? In a second letter Gabras asks Chatzikes in a most elegant way to send him a book, through which we know that Chatzikes was one of Gabras's friends in court with whom he could exchange goods – Gabras's letters are full of these kinds of requests.⁶⁷⁰ That Chatzikes was interested in reading or studying himself is confirmed by the fact that he commissioned a treatise from the mathematician Nicholas Artabasdos Rhabdas from Smyrna.⁶⁷¹ In another letter Gabras makes an appeal to the emperor via Chatzikes to punish a certain priest. By then Chatzikes had been promoted to the rank of *epi ton deeseon* (rank 44 on Pseudo-Kodinos' presedence list).⁶⁷² According to Pseudo-Kodinos it was the duty of this official to hear the requests from civilians while the emperor was going about on horseback.⁶⁷³ This fits very well with the appeal made by Gabras. Moreover, in a last letter Gabras reminds Chatzikes of this appeal and asks him to make sure that it reaches the emperor who should also be informed of the fact that Gabras is still ill.⁶⁷⁴ Apparently, if we believe Gabras' letters, Chatzikes was not only a learned man but was also close enough to Andronikos II to serve as an intermediate between the writer and the emperor, both as *prokathemenos tou koitonos* and as *epi ton deeseon*.

This was also the case for the last known *prokathemenos tou koitonos* Michael Kallikrenites. He was a eunuch and served the same emperor slightly later, between 1321 and 1330/31. His gender seems to have provoked emperor-historian John Kantakouzenos

⁶⁶⁹ Georgios Fatouros ed., *Die Briefe des Michael Gabras (ca. 1290-nach 1350)*, vol. 2 (Vienna, 1973) 44(no.18).6-9 (hereafter Gabras 2).

⁶⁷⁰ Gabras 2, 82-83 (no.46). For the tendency in Palaiologan letters to approach state officials with various requests in a rather direct and informal way see: Apostolos Karpozilos, 'Realia in Byzantine Epistolography XIII-XVc', *BZ* 88.1 (1995) 68-85 (hereafter Karpozilos, 'Realia').

⁶⁷¹ Martin Treu, 'Athanasios Chatzikes', *BZ* 18 (1909) 481-489, 482. See also: P. Tannery, 'Manuel Moschopoulos et Nicolas Rhabdas' *Bulletin des sciences mathématiques et astronomiques* 2.8 (1884), 263-277, 269.

⁶⁷² Gabras 2, 428 (no.271) For the office of *epi ton deeseon* see Rosemary Morris, 'What did the *epi tôn deêseôn* actually do?' in *La petition à Byzance* ed. D. Feissel, J. Gascou (Paris 2004) 125-140.

⁶⁷³ Pseudo-Kodinos, 183.24-27.

⁶⁷⁴ Gabras 2, 497 (no.312).

to portray him in a stereotypical way – as a weak and emotional man. When in the spring of 1321 Kallikrenites was sent out by the emperor Andronikos II to the young co-emperor Andronikos III in order to mediate between grandfather and grandson, he was not able to restrain himself: ‘before he had uttered a word, he made clear through tears and sighs that he had come as a bringer of bad omen’.⁶⁷⁵ And a little later, during another encounter between Kallikrenites and Andronikos III: ‘Kallikrenites jumped off his horse, his heart trembling with fear, gripped the feet of the emperor with both hands and clung onto him thinking that he would be killed any moment’.⁶⁷⁶ Despite that, Kantakouzenos also reveals the use of this eunuch servant as a trustworthy messenger, something which had been common practice since the early days of the empire. Thus, apart from mocking a eunuch servant because of his emotional outbreaks, Kantakouzenos’ history also shows that Kallikrenites was perfectly acceptable as a mediator between the emperor and those who did not have regular access to him.

As I mentioned above, two letters written by patriarch Jesaiah to the patriarch and the king of Armenian Cilicia mention Michael Kallikrenites as messenger together with Gabriel, the bishop of the Armenians in Constantinople. They carry a *prostagma* or a *chrysobull* from the emperor, who wants to establish negotiations with the Armenians. The eunuch is formally mentioned as ‘the *pansebastos Sebastos oikeios* of our most powerful and holy emperor, *prokathemenos* of the divinely guarded bedchamber of his holy palace, lord Michael Kallikrenites’ and is described as ‘the *prokathemenos* of the imperial

⁶⁷⁵ καὶ πρὶν φθέγξασθαι τοῖς δάκρυσι καὶ τοῖς στεναγμοῖς κακῶν ἄγγελος ἦκειν σημαίνων (Kantakouzenos I, 64.13-15). See also Franz Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565-1453. Teil 4: Regesten von 1282-1341* (Munich 1960), no. 2453 (hereafter Dölger, *Regesten*).

⁶⁷⁶ ὁ μὲν οὖν Καλλικρηνίτης τῷ δέει κατασεισθεὶς τὴν ψυχὴν, τοῦ ἵππου τε ἀπεπήδησε, καὶ ἀμφοτέραις περισχὼν τὸν βασιλέως πόδα, ἵστατο περιδεὴς, ὅσον οὐπὼ νομίζων ἀποθανεῖσθαι· (Kantakouzenos I, 94.23-95.2). Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 2463.

bedchamber who will go to the Sultan first in order to perform his service'.⁶⁷⁷ It appears that Kallikrenites also had to pay a visit to a Sultan. Unfortunately, it is not specified which Sultan is meant.⁶⁷⁸

We should not be surprised to learn that Kallikrenites was also an addressee of the epistolographer Michael Gabras. He received two letters from him, one of which reveals that Gabras had send the *prokathemenos tou koitonos* a gift, which he felt slightly embarrassed about, for it was such an unworthy one in Gabras' eyes.⁶⁷⁹ The second letter tells us that Gabras was not able to come to the palace to meet Kallikrenites there, because he did not have a horse.⁶⁸⁰ From other letters of Gabras we know that he often found it difficult to acquire a good horse and was trying to convince his more wealthy friends to give or lend him one, or at least some spurs or a saddle.⁶⁸¹ It is interesting to learn that the relatively low ranked eunuch Michael Kallikrenites also belonged to the circle of friends who could get hold of the objects that Gabras was looking for. Maybe he was Gabras' addressee because he was part of a major source of wealth and riches, the emperor's household. The letter also implies that Kallikrenites was a resident of the palace, since Gabras says that he has to come to the palace to meet him.

Also Manuel Philes addressed Kallikrenites in a short poem, in which he asks for a book: 'Dearest *pansebastos*, meadow of friendship, / send me the book of plants, / for I

⁶⁷⁷ τὸν πανσέβαστον οἰκεῖον τῷ κρατιστῷ καὶ ἀγίῳ αὐτοκράτορι, προκαθήμενον τοῦ θεοφυλάκτου κοιτῶνος τῆς ἀγίας βασιλείας αὐτοῦ, κῦρ Μιχαὴλ τὸν Καλλικρηνίτην (...) ὅστις δὴ προκαθήμενος τοῦ βασιλικοῦ κοιτῶνος μέλλει ἀπελθεῖν πρότερον εἰς τὸν σουλτάνον διὰ τὴν δουλείαν (*MM I*, 161, 163). See also Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 2758 and 2759.

⁶⁷⁸ Dölger dates it to 1330/1331, Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 2758 and 2759.

⁶⁷⁹ Gabras 2, 84 (no.48).

⁶⁸⁰ 'While I have the intention to partake in the imperial lifestyle all the time, I am in need of horses and I am also at a loss for all sorts of ordinary things. And because of that, often meeting up with you cannot easily be arranged' Ἐμοὶ καὶ ἵππων ἔνδεια καὶ ἡ τοῦ σχεδὸν πρὸς πάντ' ἀπόρως ἔχειν ἔννοια ἐγκαθημένη τὴν ἐν βασιλείῳ διαίταν διὰ παντὸς κάκειθεν καὶ τὸ ἔχειν σοι πυκνὰ συγγίνεσθαι οὐκ εὐπορα ποιοῦσι. (Gabras 2, 356-357 (no.214)).

⁶⁸¹ Karpozilos, 'Realia', 70.

will harvest the fruits of moisture / before time might destroy the flow of nature.’⁶⁸² Then there is a letter to the *pansebastos prokathemenos tou koitonos* Michael Kallikrenites written by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos.⁶⁸³ It appears that Kallikrenites was an important source for intellectuals of that time. The lower ranked eunuch did not only mediate between different members of the elite, but was also a worthy addressee of Constantinopolitan writers.

The evidence of Kallikrenites and Chatzikes indicate that it was in fact the lower ranked *prokathemenoi* and not the *parakoimomenoi* who were serving the emperor in his private apartments. Most likely, the *prokathemenos* was living in the palace. In addition to these officials, Pseudo-Kodinos’ ceremony book also informs us about *koitonarioi* (chamberlains) and the pages of the bedchamber. Other sources are silent about these household menials and especially information about the *koitonarioi* is hard to find. The *koitonarioi* are mentioned in the fourteenth century short stories *Porikologos* (Book of Fruit) and *Opsarologos* (Book of Fish), where they appear together with the imperial guards.⁶⁸⁴ These epics mock a meeting of the imperial (law?) court through their

⁶⁸² Ἡδίστε πανσέβαστε, λειμών τῶν φίλων, πέμπε πρὸς ἡμᾶς τῶν φυτῶν τὸ βιβλίον· τρυγήσομεν γὰρ τὰς γονὰς τῆς ἱκμάδος, ὧν τὴν φύσιν βρύουσιν οὐ φθείρει χρόνος (Philes, *Carmina inedita*, no. 38). That Michael Kallikrenites owned books is also mentioned in a manuscript, namely the 1330/1331 Codex Vaticanus Graecus 2205, fol. 381r (see A. Turyn, *Codices Graeci Vaticani saeculis XIII et XIV scripti annorumque notis instructi* (Vatican 1964), 135-136, here at 135 ; H. Follieri, *Codices Graeci Bibliothecae Vaticanae selecti* (Vatican 1969), 65-66, here at 66). According to Manuel Gedeon Kallikrenites is mentioned in yet another (unpublished) poem of Philes, which I have not been able to trace, see Manuel Gedeon, 'Μανυὲλ τοῦ Φύλη ἱστορικά ποιήματα', *Εκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀληθεία*, 3 (1882/1883), 215-220, 244-250, 652-659, here at 654.

⁶⁸³ By my knowledge unpublished, see MS Bibliotheca Nationalis Neapolitanae Graecae 25, f. 107b (G. Pierleoni, *Catalogus Codices Graecorum Bibliotheca Nationalis Neapolitanae I* (Rome 1962), 85-90, here at 90).

⁶⁸⁴ The summary of the *Porikologos* story, which came into existence in the early fourteenth century, is as follows: emperor Quince presides over the court when Grape accuses several courtiers of plotting against the emperor. This is denied by Onion who swears that Grape is lying. The emperor calls a meeting of his *archontes* in order to investigate the case and to decide who is right. At this point the oldest manuscript of the text (Constantinopolitanus Serail 35, which is dated 1461) gives: ‘When the emperor had commanded thus and the archontes were assembled, the *Varangoi* appeared with them’, whereas the mid-to-late fifteenth century Escorialensis manuscript replaces the second clause with: ‘When the emperor had commanded thus and the archontes were assembled, the *koitonarioi* and the bodyguards appeared’ (Προστάζοντος οὖν τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ εἰσελθόντων τῶν ἀρχόντων / παρίστανται οἱ κοιτωνάριοι καὶ παραμοναί) (Helma Winterwerb

representation of the actors as respectively fruit/vegetables or fish. They ‘ridicule Pseudo-Kodinos’ strict system of precedence’ and ‘clearly satirize late Byzantine legal procedures’, says Niels Gaul. He also notes a striking similarity with Pseudo-Kodinos’ ceremony book when the Fruit and Fish Books conclude with the ceremonial acclamation ‘many years’ in a way similar to one described by the protocol.⁶⁸⁵ I would like to strengthen his argument by adding that that these epics are, apart from Pseudo-Kodinos’ ceremony book, the only sources that mention the word *koitonarioi*, although admittedly only in one manuscript version.⁶⁸⁶ It is unfortunate that from the context in which this word is placed we can learn very little about the *koitonarioi*. They are mentioned in one breath with the guards and we can therefore assume that they were of equal status.

Similar to the case of the *koitonarioi*, Pseudo-Kodinos does not give any particular functions of the *paidopouloi en to koitoni*. Moreover, the ceremony book is the only source mentioning these pages of the bedchamber as if they differed from other pages in court. The *paidopouloi en to koitoni* do not appear in other sources. It is impossible to answer questions about their tasks and status unless we assume that at points where the ceremony book speaks of imperial pages in general the pages of the bedchamber are also included.

(ed.), *Porikologos. Einleitung, kritische Ausgabe aller Versionen, Übersetzung, Textvergleiche, Glossar, kurze Betrachtungen zu den fremdsprachlichen Versionen des Werks sowie zum Opsarologos* (Neograeca Medii Aevi VII, Cologne 1992), 142.92-93 with in the footnotes version Escorialensis (hereafter Winterwerb, *Porikologos*). When Grape is pointed out as a liar, he makes the fatal mistake of uttering another accusation, after which emperor Quince furiously curses Grape. The epic ends with the *archontes* present hailing the emperor.

The Fish Book, which is most probably written in the later fourteenth century and which is based on the Fruit Book as Helma Winterwerb has convincingly pointed out, is only preserved in the same Escorialensis codex that contains a version of the Fruit Book. It gives a slightly different story: four fish come before emperor Whale and accuse some other fish of treason. The emperor does not believe them, but then Mussel comes to the fore to support their case. Emperor Whale asks several fish to start an investigation and a meeting of all the *archontes* is called. Here the text says: ‘When the emperor had commanded thus and the *archontes* were assembled, the *koitonarioi* and the bodyguards appeared as well’ (I have to note here that the manuscript itself uses the corrupt word *rovápioi* which is corrected by Winterwerb into *κοιτωνάριοι*. She thereby argues against Karl Krumbacher who read *votápioi*. I follow Winterwerb’s correction. See: Winterwerb, *Porikologos*, 252.45-46 and 254). But soon after the meeting is called the four accusers are exposed as traitors, and emperor Whale cuts of the beard of one of them (Mackerel) and curses him. Again the short story ends with the acclamation of the emperor.

⁶⁸⁵ Gaul, ‘The Partridge’s Purple Stockings’, 94-95.

⁶⁸⁶ The Escorialensis manuscript, see Winterwerb, *Porikologos*, 142.92-93 and 252.45-46.

Only by looking at the tasks and social background of pages in general, we may get an idea of the lives and background of the *paidopouloi en to koitoni* as well.

CONCLUSION

The investigation above confirms that the official categories for servants had disappeared by the early Palaiologan period. Instead, authors used generic terms for service, like *hyperesia* or *therapeia* to point at an imperial body of servants. Pseudo-Kodinos and Kantakouzenos' history seem to have had a preference for *hyperesia*, which suggests a link between the two texts.⁶⁸⁷ Mostly, *hyperesia* stands for service in the sense of 'function', but sometimes we can read 'service personnel' in it. Pachymeres favours the word *therapeia* and also uses *therapeutikon* and the unusual *oikidion*, without clarifying what they exactly stand for. Gregoras is also using *therapeia* and only mentions *hyperesia* meaning 'body of servants' once. It should be stressed that none of these terms were exclusively reserved for service personnel of the imperial household. What was left as a body of imperial servants under the Palaiologan emperors does not seem to have been a coherent social group with discernible subgroups.

However, the examination of terminology for service personnel already reveals much about their tasks, position, status and relation to the emperor or the imperial family. In the first place, we learn that the emperor and the empress were always surrounded by servants. Whether the emperor and empress were in the palace during the day or in the middle of the night, travelling outside Constantinople, on the battlefield or holding private meetings, there were continuously personal attendants present. Also young close relatives, like a princess who went abroad, were accompanied by a body of imperial servants. The number of servants must have been more than adequate: the empress could draw from the imperial servants in the palace and give her daughter a magnificent retinue, while the emperor could give away servants to his close male relatives. Granting closer relatives

⁶⁸⁷ Niels Gaul makes a case for Kantakouzenian influence on Pseudo-Kodinos' ceremony book in: N. Gaul, 'The Partridge's Purple Stockings', 72.

imperial servants gave the imperial couple the possibility, on the one hand, to protect their children and relatives and on the other hand to keep them under control.

There is also evidence that the empress had her own servants in the women's quarters, many of whom were eunuchs. If we disregard the negative stereotype of both female rulers and eunuchs, we can conclude that eunuchs took up a significant part in the imperial court. Passages about both female and male members of the imperial family indicate that eunuchs were still holding important positions of trust, even though this may not have been reflected in the assignment of particular high-ranked offices. My investigation of the early Palaiologan eunuchs reveals a remarkable continuation in their tasks at court. We find eunuchs particularly associated with attendance on imperial women, both in early Palaiologan fiction and in the histories, where they mainly functioned as protectors of the women's quarters. As such they had a mediating role between the male and the female court. But they were also attending on male members of the court and there we see them appear as messengers and negotiators, in other words as 'extended arms' of the emperor.

Through the description of two night-time incidents we have an indication which servants were staying in the palace with the imperial family. Again we come across eunuchs, but we also see that young servants (pages) and guards were among the people close at hand. The pages, *paidopoula*, *paidaria* and *merakiskoi*, in the Palaiologan court can be defined as a group of (teenage?) men, domestic servants who were living in the palace and were attending on the emperor. There were specialized pages working under the bedchamberlains or the officials of the wardrobe. During ceremonies, both liturgical and secular, pages had to perform minor tasks, mainly consisting of carrying objects. Occasionally they were sent away as messengers or were present on the battlefield.

Especially emperor Andronikos II seems to have been fond of the pages in his household. We know that he personally took up an illegitimate grandson into the pages of his household and that he heavily relied on the assistance of his pages when he had become old and needy.

With a few exceptions, most pages were men of lower descent. For certain pages, working in the imperial palace could be seen as a step towards a career in the administration or the army and even to a high position at court. Being one of the imperial *paidopoula* could potentially lead to social climbing, especially when the emperor was susceptible to favouritism. Where Theodore Laskaris had the tendency to promote favourite pages instead of likelier high aristocratic candidates, we see fewer examples of this mechanism during the early Palaiologan period, although Andronikos II aimed to promote some young pages too. We have encountered this in the case of Michael Katharos, whose favourable treatment by Andronikos II clearly caused tension between the emperor on the one side and certain members of the higher aristocracy on the other.

The case of the officials of the bedchamber confirms that high offices had become flexible functions by the late Byzantine period; it also shows that a screen of trustworthy personnel still existed. In former times, the *parakoimomenos* was one of the powerful eunuchs who ran the imperial household as head of a group of personal attendants of the emperor. In the early Palaiologan period however, the *parakoimomenos tou koitonos* could have taken up this role (which corresponded with the protocol), as the case of Basil Basilikos shows, but his function could also have been more or less honorary and fitting the character of its holder – as the evidence about other *parakoimomenoi* reveals. Certainly not all *parakoimomenoi* in this period were partaking in daily life in the palace – or for that matter were part of the core of the imperial household.

The official most likely to be the personal attendant of the emperor was the *prokathemenos tou koitonos*. His position of trust seems to have been based on his function which required proximity to the emperor. According to Pachymeres, the *prokathemenos tou koitonos* was concerned with daily routine in the inner sanctum of the palace – he performed these tasks because they were traditionally linked to his office. As a result of this position of trust the *prokathemenos tou koitonos* was often sent out as a representative of the emperor, whether as mediator, messenger or spokesperson. This had in former times been the domain of the palace eunuchs and it is therefore not surprising to find a eunuch among the Palaiologan *prokathemenoi* of the bedchamber. Overall, it seems that not the chamberlain, but his subordinate the *prokathemenos tou koitonos* was one of the officials who had taken up the role formerly associated with eunuch guardians. He was most likely assisted by *koitonarioi*, or chamberlains without a rank, and by pages.

As for the status and importance of the service personnel, the passages showed that, at times, the emperor had to rely on the loyalty of his servants. They helped him out if he was wounded in battle or in agony during the night. Their reward came partially in the form of financial benefits, as Kantakouzenos's passage about the dispersing of money shows, but in some cases just as a roof, food and clothing. They also benefitted through obtaining positions with political influence, as mediators for example. In this way, servants could become important players in imperial politics. This is not only implied in the texts, but at times the historians clearly state that servants were a group with significant power. Apokaukos' attempt at bribery and Andronikos III's hearing of servants who were present at a private meeting of his grandfather emperor Andronikos II, are illustrations of this.

4 SECURITY STAFF

As we have seen in the previous chapters, guards were another group of people staying in the palace. In Byzantium, security tasks in the palace were taken up by several divisions of guards, some of whom were recruited from abroad, a tradition which originated in the late Roman empire.⁶⁸⁸ Unlike other court staff members, the Byzantine palace guards have received a significant degree of scholarly attention. For this chapter I will, therefore, be leaning heavily on earlier findings, especially on Mark Bartusis' study on the late Byzantine army.⁶⁸⁹ It appears that two main problems occur with regard to the study of palace guard divisions: the divisions' tendency to appear and disappear rapidly throughout the centuries and the lack of information about the different function and importance of each palace guard division or the palace guards as a whole. Four possible explanations have been suggested for the first problem: firstly, specific guard divisions may have had connections with specific emperors and may have had difficulties to adapt to a new ruler (and vice versa). Secondly, recruitment for specific (ethnic) guard divisions may have caused problems. Thirdly, new emperors could have felt the need to create their own guard division and lastly, there may not have been sufficient resources to maintain all guard divisions, especially in the late Byzantine period.⁶⁹⁰

The two problems mentioned by Bartusis provide a guideline for the focus point of this chapter. To what extent did the early Palaiologan emperors rely on already established palace guard divisions? Did they have personal connections with specific divisions or did they even institute their own security forces? What evidence do we have for the existence

⁶⁸⁸ Rowland Smith, 'The imperial court of the late Roman empire, c. AD 300-c. AD 450', in Antony Spawforth (ed.), *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies* (Cambridge, 2007), 157-233, 197.

⁶⁸⁹ Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army. Arms and society, 1204-1453* (Philadelphia 1992) (hereafter Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*).

⁶⁹⁰ Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 272.

of palace guards between 1261 and 1354, the divisions and their specific functions? Where were they housed? What do we know about the recruitment of the palace guards and the difficulties of maintaining them? Is there anything known about their number? What can we conclude with regard to their overall importance – within and outside court society?

Pseudo-Kodinos mentions six groups of palace guards: the Varangians, the Paramonai, the Mourtatoi, the Tzakones, the Vardariotai and the Kortinarioi.⁶⁹¹ There may have been other guards too. With the above-mentioned questions in mind, each one of these divisions will be investigated, while also the possible existence of additional imperial guards will be examined.

⁶⁹¹ As Savvas Kyriakides noticed, Mark Bartusis does not mention the Kortinarioi in his discussion of the palace guards. See: Savvas Kyriakides, *Late Byzantine Warfare* (PhD dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2007), 83 (hereafter Kyriakides, *Late Byzantine Warfare*).

4.1 VARANGIANS

The palace guard division known as Varangians (βάρανγγοι) takes up a prominent place in the sources of late Byzantium. Because of the ethnic origin of the division, initially Scandinavian but from the late eleventh century increasingly Anglo-Saxon, the literature about this group of palace guards is extensive.⁶⁹² However, the general paradigm of decline in late Byzantium also affected the study of the Varangians: relatively little attention has been paid to the Varangian guard in the period after 1204.⁶⁹³ The influential work of Blöndal claims that the Varangians had diminished significantly and had even disappeared by the mid-fourteenth century.⁶⁹⁴ However, some recent studies indicate a continuation of the Varangian guard division at least until the turn of the fifteenth century.⁶⁹⁵ We now know that Varangians were still active at the courts of the early Palaiologan emperors.

The Varangian guard in the early Palaiologan period consisted of Englishmen: during the reception ceremony (*parastasis*) they greeted the emperor in English (ἐγκλινιστί), while making a rattling noise by clattering their axes together, and in a *prostagma* of 1272 they are mentioned as Anglo-Varangians (ἐγκλινοβάρανγγοι).⁶⁹⁶ It is therefore not surprising that they sometimes also occur in the sources as Keltic guards, or

⁶⁹² To give an example of the popularity of the topic: a search for the keyword 'Varangians' in the IMB on 23/05/2011 gave 80 articles, most of which concern the Scandinavian connection. The classic work about the Varangians remains E. H. Blöndal (revised translation by B. S. Benediktz), *The Varangians of Byzantium* (Cambridge 1978) (hereafter Blöndal, *The Varangians*).

⁶⁹³ The main sources being Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 272-276 ; Blöndal, *The Varangians*, 167-177 ; R. Dawkins, 'The Later History of the Varangian Guard' in *JRS* 37 (1947) 39-46; Bartusis also mentions his own article 'The Palace Guard in Byzantium after 1204' which was supposed to appear in *Byzantion* (forthcoming, according to Bartusis' book from 1992), but I have not been able to trace it.

⁶⁹⁴ Blöndal, *The Varangians*, 175.

⁶⁹⁵ Franz Tinnefeld, *Demetrios Kydones. Briefe* (Stuttgart 1981), I,1, 273n8 (hereafter Tinnefeld, *Kydones*) ; Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 275.

⁶⁹⁶ Pseudo-Kodinos, 209.26-210.3. Heisenberg, 'Aus der Geschichte', 39.49. Jonathan Shepard argues that there must have been Anglo-Varangian settlements at the northern shore of the Black Sea in the late Byzantine period and suggests that the Varangians who served at the court of the Palaiologoi were recruited from there. See Jonathan Shepard, 'Another New England? - Anglo-Saxon Settlement on the Black Sea', *Byzantine Studies / Études Byzantines*, 1 (1974), 18-39, esp. 39.

keltōi, Kelts.⁶⁹⁷ Another term that refers to the Varangian guards is axe-bearers, *pelekyphoroi*, after their weapon.⁶⁹⁸ Many authors use these names instead of the official term *varangoi*. Pachymeres, for example, does not use the word *varangos* but rather chooses *keltos* or *pelekyphoros*. Gregoras prefers *pelekyphoros*, whereas Kantakouzenos sticks to *varangos*, as does Pseudo-Kodinos.

Pseudo-Kodinos spends more words on the Varangian guard than on any of the other divisions, and in doing so emphasizes the important position of the Varangian guard – or at least their ceremonial importance. Also the description of their ceremonial tasks implies their prominence. During the daily reception ceremony (*parastasis*), most guard divisions were to be found in the courtyard, but the Varangians protected the door to the imperial chamber (*kellion*) and main hall (*triklinos*).⁶⁹⁹ At the end of the *parastasis* they were also the first security staff to salute the emperor, after all the *archontes* and other dignitaries had wished him ‘many years’.⁷⁰⁰ Furthermore, the Varangians were the only guards who had a specific task during the *prokypsis* ceremony, when they would stand at the columns supporting the *prokypsis* platform and would raise their axes when the emperor appeared.⁷⁰¹ The prime position of the Varangians is further underscored at the Christmas banquet: they would receive a plate before all other guards.⁷⁰²

An important ceremonial role of the Varangians was to escort the emperor when he left the palace on horseback or to celebrate feast days at churches and monasteries in the city. From Pseudo-Kodinos we learn that every time the emperor had to leave the palace,

⁶⁹⁷ Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 273. For example τοῖς Κελτοῖς σωματοφύλαξι: Pachymeres II, 485.13. But ‘Kelts’ in a military context would not always refer to the Varangians or English soldiers. Gregoras’ thousand Keltic soldiers in the Byzantine/Bulgarian army, for example, who seemed so impressive in the battle against the Serbian Kral in the summer of 1330, were most likely Catalan or French. See: Gregoras I, 455.20 ; Gregoras/Van Dieten II,2, 327n315.

⁶⁹⁸ Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 273.

⁶⁹⁹ Pseudo-Kodinos, 179.25-180.3.

⁷⁰⁰ Pseudo-Kodinos, 209.26-210.3.

⁷⁰¹ Pseudo-Kodinos, 197.23-31.

⁷⁰² Pseudo-Kodinos, 216.15.

the Varangians accompanied him to *Ta Hypsela*, the entrance gate of the palace precinct. The emperor would be on horseback and the guards would walk next to him, carrying their axes on their shoulders. At *Ta Hypsela*, the Varangians were to wait for the emperor's return. Then they would escort the emperor back towards the palace, until he dismounted his horse. It seems that the main task of the Varangians was to protect the palace complex, besides the person of the emperor. In this way the escort took place during all ceremonial occasions which required the emperor going out, apart from certain liturgical feasts which were celebrated in the monastery of Saint John the Forerunner in the nearby Petra quarter of Constantinople and in the neighbouring Blachernai church. After they had accompanied him to those places, the Varangians would return to the palace.⁷⁰³ Also during coronation ceremonies, the emperor would be escorted by the Varangians, and by hundred young nobles in arms, into the Hagia Sophia.⁷⁰⁴ This accompaniment was observed by a late fourteenth century Russian pilgrim who describes how twelve armed guards, possibly Varangians, escorted emperor Manuel II before he entered the Hagia Sophia for his coronation ceremony.⁷⁰⁵

The accompaniment of Varangians during the *kavalikeuma* (going out on horseback) is sanctioned by Michael VIII's *prostagma* of 1272.⁷⁰⁶ Pseudo-Kodinos' protocol is for a great deal in agreement with Michael VIII's *prostagma* and the dissimilarities may be due to the fact that Pseudo-Kodinos does not specify the young

⁷⁰³ Pseudo-Kodinos, 243.17-244.8. Also Pseudo-Kodinos, 244.16-245.2 ; 245.19-20 and 246.5-6.

⁷⁰⁴ Pseudo-Kodinos, 264.13-17. This combination of Varangians and armed nobles accompanying the emperor is also mentioned by Kantakouzenos in his description of the coronation ceremony of Andronikos III (Kantakouzenos I, 200), which indicates that both authors used the same coronation protocol as source for their texts. Jean Verpeaux has argued that Pseudo-Kodinos and Kantakouzenos each used the text independently of the other.

⁷⁰⁵ George P. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Washington D.C.1984), 106-109 and Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 281.

⁷⁰⁶ Heisenberg, 'Aus der Geschichte', 39.49 and commentary on 61-62.

emperor's rights. According to the *prostagma*, the accompaniment of the co-emperor was a joint enterprise of three palace guard divisions:

For going out on horseback (καβαλίκευμα) you [emperor Andronikos II] may have Varangians and Paramonai accompanying you, while the Vardariots go in front.⁷⁰⁷ [...]

If you go out on horseback in the *kavalarikion* of the emperor, after the emperor has gone out on horseback, and also with the emperor while the emperor has gone out on horseback, you may follow the emperor when he has departed, so that the Anglo-Varangians (ἐγκλινοβάραγγοι) of both [emperors] accompany us as usual while the Vardariots go in front. When it will be necessary for us to depart one after another, those assigned for this [task] accompany us.⁷⁰⁸

This passage presents two additions to Pseudo-Kodinos's protocol. Firstly, it appears that the young emperor was allowed to make use of the service of the palace guards, that is the Varangians, Vardariots and the Paramonai, and even had guards who were appointed to him when both he and the emperor departed the palace at a different moment. Secondly, we see that two other guard divisions, the Paramonai and the Vardariots, were also involved in accompanying the co-emperor when he was going out on horseback. The *prostagma* tells us that the Vardariots would form the front of the escort, while the Varangians and the Paramonai would protect the person of the young emperor, presumably by walking next to and behind him.⁷⁰⁹ Also Pseudo-Kodinos mentions once that the Vardariots would precede the emperor in order to clear the way with their batons and says

⁷⁰⁷ Εἰς τὸ καβαλίκευμά σου ἵνα ἔχῃς βαράγγους καὶ παραμονὰς συνακολουθοῦντάς σοι καὶ βαρδαριώτας προοδεύοντάς σου (Heisenberg, 'Aus der Geschichte', 39.29-31).

⁷⁰⁸ [Ὅταν καβ]αλικεύῃς ἐν τῷ καβαλαρικίῳ τῆς βασιλείας [μου μετὰ τῆς] βασιλείας μου καβαλικεύων καὶ σὺν [τῇ βασ]ιλείῳ μου μετὰ τὸ καβαλικεύσαι τὴν βασιλείαν μου [ἀπελθὼν τ]ὴν αὐτὴν ὁδεύῃς τῇ βασιλείᾳ μου, ἵνα συνα[κολουθῶσι κοί]νῳς οἱ τῶν ἀμφοτέρων ἐγκλινοβάραγγοι [καὶ προοδεύωσι καὶ] βαρδαριώται ὅπηνίκα δὲ δεῖσῃ ἄλλην [ἄλλον ἀπέρχεσθαι] ἡμᾶς, ἵνα ἀκολουθῶσιν οἱ πρὸς [τοῦτο τεταγμέ]νοι (Heisenberg, 'Aus der Geschichte', 39.45-52).

⁷⁰⁹ It remains unclear why the Paramonoi are not mentioned in the sentence about the separate horse riding of the young emperor and the emperor.

repeatedly that the Varangians would accompany the emperor when he was to leave the palace, but does not mention the Paramonai being part of the emperor's escort.⁷¹⁰

Varangians did not only escort the emperor when he was going about on horseback, they were also standing close to him during ceremonial occasions. At the *prokypsis* ceremony, the Varangians were supposed to stand in the courtyard, near the columns of the *prokypsis* (an elevated platform), holding their axes in their hands. The moment when the emperor appeared, they would lift the axes onto their shoulders.⁷¹¹ Also during the coronation ceremony of Michael VIII there were Varangians standing close to the emperor.⁷¹² In a mockery of the fourteenth century court, the *Porikologos* (Book of Fruit) mentions that Varangians were present (παρίστανται) while emperor Quince received his *archontes*:

When the emperor had ordered this and the *archontes* had entered, the Varangians following them were also present: Walnut and Chestnut, Hazelnut, Date and Pistachio, Apricot and Wolf bean, Pumpkin and Helm bean, Salsify, Mushroom, Laurel and the wise Pinenut...'.⁷¹³

Unfortunately it is not clear which of the fruit or vegetables represents members of the Varangian guards. Also in the Chronicle of Morea we find a reference to the Varangians (in fact, here called 'Franks') standing near the emperor and watching over him.⁷¹⁴

⁷¹⁰ Pseudo-Kodinos does not specify when the Vardariots would go in front of the emperor: Pseudo-Kodinos, 182.2-5.

⁷¹¹ Pseudo-Kodinos, 197.23-31.

⁷¹² Pachymeres I, 145.15-17.

⁷¹³ Προστάξαντος οὖν τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ εἰσελθόντων τῶν ἀρχόντων παρίστανται καὶ οἱ μετ' αὐτῶν βάραγγοι· ὁ Καρύδιός τε καὶ ὁ Κάστανος καὶ ὁ Λεπτοκάρυος, ὁ Φοίνικός τε καὶ ὁ Πιστάκιος, ὁ Βερίκοκός τε καὶ ὁ Λουμπινάριος καὶ ὁ Κολοκύνθιος καὶ ὁ Σμιλάκιος, Λαγηνίδιός τε καὶ ὁ Μανιτάριος καὶ ὁ Ροδάφνιος καὶ ὁ σοφὸς Κουκουνάριος (Winterwerb, *Porikologos*, 142.92-143.104). Admittedly, in other manuscript versions the Varangians are replaced by the *koitonarioi* and the *paramonarioi* (sic), see Winterwerb, *Porikologos*, 142.

⁷¹⁴ John Schmitt (ed.), *The Chronicle of Morea, TO XPONIKON TOY MOPEΩΣ. A History in Political Verse, Relating the Establishment of Feudalism in Greece by the Franks in the Thirteenth Century* (London 1904), 286.4319.

The Varangians did not only escort the emperor or stand close to him for ceremonial purposes; they were supposed to protect him and undertake action when necessary. This corresponds with the first of the three main practical functions of the Varangians, as noted by Bartusis: taking care of the protection of the emperor. They were standing or walking close to him when he was to appear to the public, and at that moment they would be armed and ready to use their weapons. There are no instances of actual fighting in defense of the emperor, but the sight of the Varangians did impress onlookers. Pachymeres describes such a situation when he says how Michael VIII, at his own coronation in 1259, refused to crown the young John Laskaris, while bystanders did not dare to say anything about it, because the ‘Keltic axe-bearers’ stood there ready, depending on the order given, either to protect or lay their hands on the child.⁷¹⁵

The Varangians did not only protect the person of the emperor in public, but even more so in the palace area, his own household. The question here is to what extent the Varangians’s tasks were connected with the imperial residence: did they in fact guard the palace and regulate admission to it? There are some indications that the Varangians did so indeed. The historian Gregoras relates how he and some others were making their way to the 1351 synod on hesychasm, which took place in the Blachernai palace. When they were about to enter, some ‘axe-bearers’ and ‘staff-bearers’, who usually lingered in the inner area of the palace, saw them from afar and came to the gate to tell them to wait in the forecourt.⁷¹⁶

Another example from 1358/59 shows that Varangians used to guard the entrance to the palace and would even ask for a bribe. In a letter to a friend who has left Constantinople, Demetrios Kydones describes the torments of life in Constantinople as

⁷¹⁵ τὸ Κελτικὸν πελεκυφόρον περιεστὸς ἔτοιμον ἦν καὶ κατὰ φυλακὴν καὶ κατ’ ἐπίθεσιν πράττειν, εἴ γ’ ὀρισθεῖη παρὰ τῶν δυναμένων μάλιστα (Pachymeres I, 145.15-17).

⁷¹⁶ Gregoras II, 896.15-20.

opposed to the pleasures of living on one's own land. Service in the palace is 'worse than Hades', which is guarded by 'the Varangian, who intimidates and demands payment for entrance from those who get nothing in return'.⁷¹⁷ From these passages and from Pseudo-Kodinos' description about their function as escorts in the palace precinct, it appears that a great part of the Varangians' tasks was performed in the palace complex. They were not only protectors of the emperor in person, but also of his residence. A story of a night time incident implies that they were sleeping in the palace complex as well: Gregoras says that in the 1320s, right at the time when 'the imperial axe-bearers, soldiers and sword-bearers were about to fall asleep' the neighing of a horse could be heard by everyone inside the palace.⁷¹⁸

The night-time incident is an indication that the Varangians were housed in the palace complex during the reign of Andronikos II. Additional proof of this emperor's usage of Varangians is implied by the existence of two named individuals; a certain Manuel, who was a Varangian of Andronikos II around 1300 and was healed through a miracle, and his colleague John Rodelphos, who told the story to Nikephoros Xanthopoulos.⁷¹⁹ However, as we have seen earlier, Gregoras claims that towards the end of Andronikos II's reign, just before 1328, the Blachernai palace was abandoned by all palace staff save for some young servants. What happened to the Varangians in this period is not known. We do know that Andronikos III, who had established his own, more itinerant court outside Constantinople in the 1320s, claimed not to make use of the services of the Varangians. In a speech he explained:

⁷¹⁷ Βάραγγοι δὲ ἐκφοβῶν καὶ μισθοὺς ἀπαιτῶν τῆς εἰσόδου τοὺς οὐδὲν ἀπὸ ταύτης ὠφελομένους (Kydonēs I, no.46.15-16). See also the German translation and commentary by Tinnefeld, *Kydonēs* I,1, no.44, 270-274.

⁷¹⁸ τῶν περὶ τὸν βασιλέα πελεκυφόρων καὶ στρατιωτῶν καὶ ξιφηφόρων καταδαρθάνειν μελλόντων ἐξηνέχθη χρεμετισμὸς πάντα περιηχῶν τὰ βασίλεια, ὡς ἐκπλαγῆναι πάντας τοὺς ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις. (Gregoras I, 303.21-24).

⁷¹⁹ Ambrosios Pamperis (ed.), *Λόγος διαλαμβάνων τὰ περὶ τῆς συστάσεως τοῦ σεβασμίου οἴκου τῆς ὑπεραγίας Δεσποίνης ἡμῶν Θεοτόκου τῆς ἀειζώου πηγῆς καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ ὑπερφυῶς τελεσθέντων θαυμάτων* (Leipzig 1802), 82.

Look at how I put my life at risk: I am not gluttonous or self-indulgent, nor do I supply myself with spear-throwers or axe-bearers, like an emperor is supposed to have because of the envy of his power, and also those who are banished by fate from their circle of parents and family and are forced to be brought here and there and always have to face the expectation of being killed instantly.⁷²⁰

Here Andronikos III makes clear that he knows that emperors are supposed to be kept safe by bodyguards, because other people are jealous of his power, but he sees his own decision not to be guarded as an act of bravery and proof of his willingness to put himself in danger for the sake of the empire and its subjects. As Gregoras explains later, when he characterizes Andronikos III after his death, this emperor's life style was unceremonial, but his idea 'to live unguarded most of the time, without the imperial axe-bearers' should be assigned to his firm belief in God.⁷²¹ Gregoras adds that with this attitude Andronikos III 'left the door open to all sorts of dangers'.⁷²² Being unprotected by bodyguards was, at least in Gregoras' eyes, an unusual situation for an emperor and could not be approved of, even though Andronikos III did this out of a strong belief in God.

However, was this really the case? It is possible that during the chaotic 1320s Andronikos did not make use of bodyguards? In that period the young emperor had established an itinerant counter-court of his own which was somewhat different from his grandfather's court based in Constantinople. There may not have been enough Varangians for both emperors or the absence of Varangians around Andronikos III can be seen as an indication that they were loyal to Andronikos II or based in Constantinople. On the other hand, in contrast with Gregoras, Kantakouzenos indicates that after the end of the reign of

⁷²⁰ ὁρᾶτε γὰρ ὅπως τῆς ἑμαυτοῦ ζωῆς ἀφειδῶ, μήτε γαστριζόμενος καὶ τρυφῶν, μήτε δορυφόρους ἢ πελεκυφόρους ἐπαγόμενος, ὡς εἴθισται μὴ ὅτι βασιλευῖσι διὰ τὸ ἐπίφθονον τῆς ἀρχῆς, ἀλλὰ καὶ οὕς ἡ τύχη τῶν γονέων καὶ συγγενῶν ἐξορίσασα πλανήτας ἐνθεν κάκειθεν ἠνάγκασε περιφέρεσθαι καὶ διηνεκῶς τὴν τοῦ αὐτίκα τεθνήξεσθαι πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν ἔχειν ἐλπίδα. (Gregoras I, 398.18-24).

⁷²¹ Οὕτω γε μὴν πολλὴν καὶ βεβαίαν πρὸς θεὸν ἐκέκτητο πίστιν, ὥστε καὶ ἀφύλακτος διῆγε τὸ πλεῖστον καὶ αὐτῶν ἄνευ τῶν βασιλικῶν πελεκυφόρων (Gregoras I, 566.13-15).

⁷²² τότε καὶ πᾶσι κινδύνοις ἀνέωγε θύρα (Gregoras I, 566.18-19).

Andronikos II (1328) Andronikos III did make use of Varangians. In 1329, during a ceremony in the city of Phokaia, where Andronikos III had stayed for a couple of days, the emperor ordered Varangians to hand over the keys of the city to a certain Arrigo. Kantakouzenos explains: ‘for it is the custom that they [Varangians] keep the keys of a city in which the emperor dwells’.⁷²³ This tradition is not attested elsewhere, but it implies that there were Varangians present in Andronikos III’s entourage at a certain moment after his grandfather had lost the throne. In which capacity they went with him is unclear, but since this ceremony took place while Andronikos III was on campaign in Chios, it has been suggested that he had taken the Varangians with him to participate in the fighting.⁷²⁴

Andronikos III then did not rule completely without the use of Varangians. Also Kantakouzenos’ description of Andronikos III’s coronation confirms the use of Varangians as guards, who were taking care of the security during the procession towards the Hagia Sophia together with a hundred armed youths.⁷²⁵ Moreover, we know that at the moment when Andronikos III himself passed away, there were Varangians in imperial service. In 1341, on the eve of the death of Andronikos III in the Hodegetria monastery of Constantinople, Kantakouzenos sent the empress and her two sons from the monastery back to the Blachernai palace and got them heavily protected, using a garrison of soldiers, 500 men from his own and ‘also the axe-bearing Varangians who were there’.⁷²⁶ Thus, we can be certain that during the later years of Andronikos III’s reign, the Varangians had not disappeared, and were present in Constantinople to protect the palace, the emperor and his imperial family. It is also an indication that Kantakouzenos knew the protective power of the Varangians. It remains unclear, however, if Andronikos III made much use of them.

⁷²³ τούτους γὰρ ἔθος τὰ κλεῖθρα τῶν πόλεων ἐνθα ἂν ἐπιδημοίη βασιλεὺς, κατέχειν (Kantakouzenos I, 389.15-16).

⁷²⁴ Kyriakides, *Late Byzantine Warfare*, 85.

⁷²⁵ Kantakouzenos I, 200.

⁷²⁶ καὶ τοὺς τοὺς πελέκους ἔχοντας βαράγγους ὅσοι ἦσαν (Kantakouzenos I, 560.12).

As opposed to the Varangians from the reign of the two Andronikoi, the Varangians from the reign of Michael VIII are better known for other tasks than protecting the emperor. Pachymeres does not mention them in the sense of imperial bodyguards, but emphasizes their role as prison guards. Therefore, Bartusis concludes that guarding prisoners was a specialty of the Varangians during the reign of Michael VIII and the early reign of Andronikos II.⁷²⁷ This conclusion can be supported by evidence from some individual cases. In 1273 the anti-unionist *chartophylax* John Bekkos, for example, was handed over to the ‘Keltic bodyguards’ to be imprisoned in the tower of Anemas.⁷²⁸ This prison was located close to the Blachernai palace and hosted several famous prisoners in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁷²⁹ If we accept the identification of the tower of Anemas with one allegedly torn down by emperor John V in the late fourteenth century, following instructions of sultan Beyazid, the tower may not have served long as a prison.⁷³⁰

That the Varangians were responsible for guarding the palace prison around 1300 is indicated by two more examples, both concerning the prisoner Michael Komnenos. In 1299, a certain Harry from England (Ἑρρῆ ἐξ Ἑγκλίνων), most likely a Varangian, guarded Michael Komnenos and some others in the palace prison in Constantinople, while emperor Andronikos II left the capital for Thessaloniki.⁷³¹ Pachymeres relates how Michael managed to plan an escape and got Harry involved. In passing, the historian reveals some practicalities of prison guarding. First we learn that Harry shared his task of guarding the prisoners with two other guards and a child. Then he is characterized as

⁷²⁷ Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 274.

⁷²⁸ Pachymeres II, 485.12-13.

⁷²⁹ For more references to the tower of Anemas see: Janin, *Constantinople byzantine*, 172-173.

⁷³⁰ The Spanish traveller Clavijo tells us about the destruction of a tower close to the Blachernai palace, a tower which Majeska identifies with the tower of Anemas: Majeska, *Russian Travellers*, 415n38.

⁷³¹ For the entire story about Harry see Pachymeres III, 85.11-87.18.

follows: ‘Harry also was the master of the other guards and had many under him, being considered loyal to the emperor in many ways’.⁷³² As head of the prison guards, this Varangian apparently had an important position in the court of 1299. Despite this positive characterisation, Harry is bribed with the promise of marrying the sister of Michael Komnenos. Then, the prisoners, having made Harry their accomplice, escape by killing the two other guards and tying down the child. They leave the child in the prison and lock the door, which they are able to do ‘because Harry, as guards are [used to], is entrusted with the keys of the gate of that place’.⁷³³ In order to hide his deceit, Harry then ‘shouts to the guards from below, pretending to wake them up in order that they watch the prisoners, so that he is hopefully free to perform his service in secret’.⁷³⁴ The guards do so, thinking that Harry has an important nightly task to perform, a direct order from the emperor perhaps. In this way the prisoners manage to escape.

This story confirms that the Varangians were guarding the palace prison around 1300. It also indicates that one English Varangian, who kept the keys to the prison gate, was the head of all the other prison guards, one of whom appears to have been very young. It is also implied that certain guards were assigned to watch certain prisoners or cells. The fact that Harry calls out to the other guards ‘from below’ tells us that the prison or prison area was more than one storey high or had a wall which provided space for guards on a high level. More information about the prison is presented by Pachymeres when he continues to narrate the history of Michael Komnenos in an episode mentioned earlier. In 1306, despite the escape in 1299, the same man is again ‘locked up, close to the imperial

⁷³² ἦν γοῦν ὁ Ἑρρῆς καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν φυλάκων ἐπιστάτης, καὶ πολλοὺς ἀνὰ χεῖρας ἔχων, πιστὸς τὰ πολλὰ δοκῶν βασιλεῖ. (Pachymeres III, 85.21-22).

⁷³³ τῷ γάρ Ἑρρῇ, ὥσπερ αἱ φυλακαί, οὕτω καὶ αἱ τῆς πύλης τῆς ἐκεῖ κλεῖδες ἐπιτετράφατο. (Pachymeres III, 87.2-3).

⁷³⁴ ἐκεῖνος κάτωθεν τοῖς φύλαξιν ἐκφωνεῖ, διυπνίζων δῆθεν πρὸς τὴν τῶν κατεχομένων φυλακὴν, ὡς αὐτοῦ γε τάχα ἐν ἀπορρήτοις δουλείαις σχολάζοντος (Pachymeres III, 87.4-6).

palace, where the emperor lives'.⁷³⁵ On a cold December night, Michael decides to set fire to the prison. He asks for wood, bolts the door from the inside, lights the wood and soon the flames are seen from the outside. The emperor is still awake and he sends people to ward off the fire. A eunuch arrives, together with axe-bearing guards, who force the door open with their weapons. When the eunuch enters the space, he is instantly killed by the prisoner. Then, 'the imperial axe-bearers, indignant at what happened, slay him merciless with some strokes of their axes'.⁷³⁶ According to this passage, the Varangians did not just guard the palace prison by night, but were available to use violence with their axes as weapons.

Also in a non-Constantinopolitan context the Varangians were acting as prison guards. Pachymeres states that the emperor ordered John Bekkos and others to be locked up in the St. Gregory fortress, which was situated in a remote place: at the southern shore of the gulf of Nicomedia, present day Izmit. This fortress was commonly used as a prison.⁷³⁷ There they were 'kept imprisoned by the Keltic guards and someone from the watchmen of the emperor'.⁷³⁸ George Metochites confirms their imprisonment in the fortress and the involvement of the Varangian guard: 'After they were sent to the fortress in which we were kept, first they led out from there their own audacious servant of the corps of the so-called Varangians and the chief of those stationed there for our protection, and the rest of the corps of the [guards] of the treasury.'⁷³⁹ Also other occurrences in George Metochites' work show the Varangians active as prison guards.⁷⁴⁰

⁷³⁵ ἐγγειτονῶν γὰρ τῶν ἀνακτόρων ἐγκεκλεισμένος ὅπου δὴ καὶ βασιλεὺς ὄκει (Pachymeres III, 87.28-29).

⁷³⁶ τὸ δὲ πελεκυφόρον τάγμα βασιλείον, ἀγαιόμενοι τῷ συμβάντι, πελέκεσιν ἐκείνον ἀνηλεῶς κατακτείνουσι (Pachymeres III, 89.8-10).

⁷³⁷ Pachymeres III, 116n69.

⁷³⁸ ἐγκλεισθέντες ὑπὸ φρουροῖς Κελτοῖς καὶ τινι τῶν ἐκπροκοιτούντων τῷ βασιλεῖ (Pachymeres III, 117.25-26).

⁷³⁹ The History by George Metochites has three books, of which book I and II are published in J. Cozza *Novae Patrum Bibliothecae* (Tomus 8/2; Rome 1871), 1-227 and book III in J. Cozza-Luzi (ed.), *Novae Patrum Bibliothecae* (Tome 10/1; Rome 1905), 319-370. Hereafter these works will be referred to as

The prison tasks of the Varangians included questioning and torturing suspects, as the case of the monk Kotys shows: in 1280 emperor Michael VIII ordered that the anti-unionist monk Kotys be delivered to the Kelts in order to be hung up and tortured.⁷⁴¹ This prospect caused the monk so much distress, that he soon died, under the watchful eyes of many spectators: ‘no sooner had he been tied up, he died of fear and, having been raised like a miserable bundle, he was dropped to the ground, while many were watching’.⁷⁴² Apparently, the Varangians tortured this prisoner while others were looking on. In their function of prison guards the Varangians also simply maltreated their prisoners, as patriarch Arsenios experienced in the mid thirteenth century: ‘and they inflicted countless injuries on me’.⁷⁴³ Maltreatment by the Varangians is also reported by John Bekkos.⁷⁴⁴

Yet another function of the Varangians, as noted by Bartusis, is that they were acting as protectors of the imperial treasury, at least during the reign of Michael VIII. Pachymeres tells that in the mid-thirteenth century a massive amount of money was kept in a fortress close to the city of Magnesia. This money, the Laskarid imperial treasury, had been collected by emperor John Doukas and was still there during the reign of his grandson John Laskaris.⁷⁴⁵ In 1258, while planning his usurpation, Michael Palaiologos got access to the imperial treasury by making use of his new position of *megas doux*.⁷⁴⁶ Normally, explains Pachymeres, getting hold of this money would not be possible and anyone who tried would come to stand before ‘the axe-bearing Keltikon’, who guarded the treasury of

Metochites I, II and III. For the quote about the Varangian guards: Καὶ δὴ στείλαντες πρὸς τὸ ἐν ᾧ κατησφαλίσμεθα φρούριον, πρῶτως μὲν ἐξάγουσιν ἐκεῖθεν τὸν δραστήριον σφῶν ὑπηρέτην τοῦ τάγματος τῶν ὠνομασμένων Βαράγκων καὶ προὔχοντα τῶν ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐκεῖσε καθεστῶτων εἰς τήρησιν ἡμετέραν, καὶ λοιπῶν συστήματος τοῦ τῶν μονιτῶν (Metochites III, 325.7-13).

⁷⁴⁰ Metochites I, 89.7; Metochites III, 13.38 and 19.25.

⁷⁴¹ Pachymeres II, 615.7-8.

⁷⁴² ὁ δ’ οὐκ ἔφθη δεθεῖς καὶ τῷ φόβῳ διαπεφώνηκε καί, φόρτος ἐλεεινὸς ἀρθεῖς, πολλῶν βλέπόντων, τῇ γῇ παρεδίδωτο (Pachymeres II, 615.8-10).

⁷⁴³ μυρίας θλίψεις μοι προὔξενησεν (Arsenius, *Testament*, in J.-P. Migne, *PG* 140, col. 956B).

⁷⁴⁴ According to Gregory II of Cyprus, see S. Eustradiades ed., *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 4 (1909), 110-113.

⁷⁴⁵ Pachymeres I, 97.21-26.

⁷⁴⁶ Bartusis, *The late Byzantine Army*, 274.

Magnesia.⁷⁴⁷ Also George Metochites connects the thirteenth century Varangians with the treasury.⁷⁴⁸

I would like to add another function to the list: honorary handymen in the palace courtyard and the palace buildings. This is based on the description of the Palm Sunday ceremony, as mentioned by Pseudo-Kodinos. Together with the other guards, the Varangians were to clear the *peripatos*, a sort of walking gallery, from laurels which had been used as decoration for Palm Sunday.⁷⁴⁹

Overall, it appears that the Varangians were active throughout the entire Palaiologan period and that they performed a wide range of tasks. As for the organisation of the Varangians, their number and their leaders, not much can be established with certainty. Pseudo-Kodinos says that during the accompaniment of the emperor on horseback, the Varangians were led by the so-called *akolouthos* (literally ‘he who accompanies’), an office of the lower ranks: ‘The *akolouthos* is to be found responsible for the Varangians, accompanying the emperor ahead of them, which is why he is called *akolouthos*.’⁷⁵⁰ Pseudo-Kodinos adds that during the *prokypsis* ceremony and also on other occasions when the emperor would go out accompanied by bodyguards, the Varangians were supposed to follow the *dibellion*, carried by a *skouterios*, who also held the emperor’s shield.⁷⁵¹ The actual foremen of the Varangians, however, were called *primmikerioi*.⁷⁵² As opposed to the *akolouthos* and the *skouterios*, the *primmikerios* of the Varangians did not hold an official rank. Pseudo-Kodinos says how the *primmikerioi* of the Varangians received their plates during the Christmas banquet after the *protonotarios*, followed by all

⁷⁴⁷ τὸ Κελτικὸν καὶ πελεκυφόρον Pachymeres I, 101.22-23.

⁷⁴⁸ Metochites III, 325.13.

⁷⁴⁹ Pseudo-Kodinos, 226.12-15.

⁷⁵⁰ Ὁ ἀκόλουθος εὐρίσκεται μὲν ἔνοχος τῶν Βαράγγων, ἀκολουθεῖ δὲ τῷ βασιλεῖ ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἀκόλουθος κέκληται (Pseudo-Kodinos, 184.20-24).

⁷⁵¹ Pseudo-Kodinos, 183.15-17.

⁷⁵² Pseudo-Kodinos, 216.13-14.

the Varangians.⁷⁵³ Very little is known about the actual *primmikerioi* or leaders of the guards and their position in court society. By using the plural, Pseudo-Kodinos indicates that there were more than one, but we cannot be sure how many there were, nor that they were English speakers, like the Varangians. Apart from Pseudo-Kodinos, the only other mention of the title ‘*primmikerios* of the Varangians’ is by the contemporary hagiographer Theoktistos the Stoudite, who mentions the healing of a blind child of a *primmikerios* of the Varangians in a posthumous miracle by patriarch Athanasios I of Constantinople.⁷⁵⁴ There is also mention of a certain Charatzas, *primmikerios* of the guards (τῶν ἐξκουβιτόρων) in a patriarchal document of the mid-fourteenth century, but this source is too patchy to tell us anything about this person.⁷⁵⁵ His name does not point at an English background. On the other hand, we have already seen how a certain Englishman, Harry was the actual head of some of the Varangian guards around 1300 – even though he is not mentioned as *primmikerios*. He guarded specific prisoners together with three others, but was leader of more, and seems to have had a respectable position at court. He was personally acquainted with the imperial family and eager to marry into the elite.

In conclusion, it is evident that the Varangians were a significant part of court society throughout the entire early Palaiologan period, even though their roles changed slightly under each emperor. During the reign of Michael VIII we have examples of Varangians functioning as prison guards, as guards of the imperial treasury and as protectors of the person of the emperor and even the young emperor Andronikos II according to the *prostagma* of 1272. In this period, the emphasis lay on their function as prison guards. Also during the first half of the reign of Andronikos II, there is evidence of

⁷⁵³ Pseudo-Kodinos, 216.12-16.

⁷⁵⁴ Alice-Mary Maffry-Talbot, *Faith Healing in Late Byzantium: the Posthumous Miracles of the Patriarch Athanasios I of Constantinople* by Theoktistos the Stoudite (Brookline, Mass. 1983), 94.22-29.

⁷⁵⁵ *MM* I, 325.

Varangians serving as prison guards. But it also becomes clear that Varangians were firmly connected with the palace and the imperial family. An example of this closeness is the English Harry and the evidence of Varangians as protectors of the palace. A night-time incident in the early fourteenth century made clear that the Varangians remained in the palace complex overnight during the reign of Andronikos II. Unlike his grandfather, Andronikos III was reluctant to make use of the Varangians as guards. Still, we find two examples of Varangian activity during his reign: they were protecting him during his coronation ceremony and accompanying him on campaign. Kantakouzenos seems to have employed Varangians when he felt the need to fortify the palace after the death of Andronikos III.

The tasks of the Varangians were numerous and varied from guarding and torturing prisoners to escorting the emperor (and the co-emperor on particular occasions), protecting the palace precinct, protecting the treasury (at least initially), standing close to the emperor on ceremonial occasions, accompanying him and fighting for him on campaign, keeping the keys of the city he was staying in and occasionally acting as handymen in the palace. There is evidence that they stayed in the palace complex overnight. Nothing is known about their recruitment or background, apart from the fact that they were English-speaking men. Whether their leaders, *primmikerioi*, were English as well remains unknown. The Varangian guards could have had families from which the Varangians were recruited: we know that the Varangian guard called Harry intended to get married. Despite this relative abundance of information, nothing is known about the number of Varangians at court.

4.2 VARDARIOTS

In his chapter on the function of the offices, Pseudo-Kodinos gives a rather extensive description of the appearance, function and origin of the Vardariots:

The Vardariots are dressed in similar red clothes, made of woven cloth, not from the *korte*, but home-made, on their heads they carry a Persian headdress, called *aggouroton*, which has yellow cloth instead of *margellia*. From the belt of each of them hang whips, which they call *manklabia*, to whip those deserving to be whipped, while they always carry staffs too. When the emperor goes out on horseback, they precede him and while they carry it [their staff] upright, they bring order to the people. They too have a *primmikerios*. Being formerly of Persian origin, the emperor, having transported them from there, made them settle at the river Vardar, through which they are called Vardariots.⁷⁵⁶

This passage gives an indication of the ethnic background and function of the Vardariots.

With regards to their ethnicity, it is implied that the Vardariots were of ‘Persian’ [Turkic] origin, which is still visible in their ceremonial costume and name. Earlier on in the ceremony book, Pseudo-Kodinos states that this guard division is made up of Turks because they wish the emperor many years ‘in the language of their former fatherland, which is Persian [ie. Turkish]’ when he receives all courtiers at the Christmas banquet.⁷⁵⁷

However, Pseudo-Kodinos statements should be treated with care. Normally, the word Persian would be a Byzantine anachronism for Turks (Seljuqs or Ottomans), but here the term may refer to Maygars (Hungarians) who were resettled in the region of the river Vardar (present day Macedonia) in the tenth century and were also called Turks.⁷⁵⁸ In the twelfth century, emperor Manuel I Komnenos formed a palace guard division out of these

⁷⁵⁶ Τοιαῦτα ἐνδύματα κόκκινα ἐνδύονται μὲν καὶ οἱ Βαρδαριῶται, διὰ πανίου, οὐκ ἐκ τῆς κόρτης ἀλλ’ ἐξ οἰκείων, ἐπὶ κεφαλῆς δὲ περσικὸν φόρεμα, ἀγγουρωτὸν ὀνομαζόμενον, ἔχον ἀντὶ μαργελλίων πανίον κίτρινον. Κρέμανται δὲ ἐπὶ ζώνης ἐκάστου τούτων λῶροι, οὓς καλοῦσι μαγκλάβια, μαστίζειν τοὺς ἀξίους μαστίζεσθαι, φέροντες αἰεὶ καὶ δικανίκια. Ὅτε δὲ καβαλλικεύσει ὁ βασιλεὺς, προηγούνται καὶ φέροντες αὐτὰ ὄρθια εὐτακτοῦσι τὸν λαόν. Ἔχουσι δὲ οὗτοι καὶ πριμμικήριον. Τούτους πάλαι Πέρσας κατὰ γένος ὄντας ὁ βασιλεὺς *vacat* μετοκίσας ἐκεῖθεν εἰς τὸν Βαρδάριον ἐκάθισε ποταμόν, ἀφ’ οὗ καὶ Βαρδαριῶται καλοῦνται. (Pseudo-Kodinos, 181.23-182.10).

⁷⁵⁷ κατὰ τὴν πάλαι πάτριον καὶ τούτων φωνήν, ἥτοι περσισί (Pseudo-Kodinos, 210.7-8).

⁷⁵⁸ Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 280; Nicolas Oikonomides, ‘Vardariotes-W.l.nd.r-V.n.nd.r: Hongrois installes dans la vallee du Vardar en 934’, *Sudost Forschungen*, 32 (1973), 1-8, 2.

Christianized ‘Turks’, possibly replacing a guard division called *manglabitai*.⁷⁵⁹ George Akropolites indicates that the Vardariots were still serving the emperor in the mid thirteenth century, but does not pay attention to their background.⁷⁶⁰ For this reason, one cannot determine the ethnicity of the Vardariot palace guard division in the early Palaiologan period with certainty, despite the fact that Pseudo-Kodinos calls them Persians (Turks) and claims that they greeted the emperor in Persian (Turkish).

With regard to the function of the Vardariots, Pseudo-Kodinos indicates that one of their tasks was to clear the way in front of the procession when the emperor went out on horseback (*kavalikeuma*), using their batons, and possibly also whips when necessary. The presence of Vardariots during the *kavalikeuma* is confirmed by Michael VIII’s *prostagma* of 1272 for his son Andronikos II: ‘for going out on horseback you [emperor Andronikos II] may have Varangians and Paramonai accompanying you, while the Vardariots go in front.’⁷⁶¹ Apparently, also the young emperor was allowed to make use of the Vardariot order troops. In addition to the accompaniment during the *kavalikeuma*, which consisted of the emperor (or young emperor) riding his horse and receiving petitions outside the palace complex,⁷⁶² the Vardariots would also precede the cavalcade (*kavalarikion*), a procession on horseback, of both the emperor and the co-emperor, according to Michael VIII’s *prostagma*.⁷⁶³ Another function of the Vardariots was guarding the (inner?) court during ceremonies: Pseudo-Kodinos explains that during the *prokypsis*, the appearance ceremony, the Vardariotai would be stationed at the gate of the courtyard, further away from the

⁷⁵⁹ Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, 231 ; *ODB* III, 2153.

⁷⁶⁰ Macrides, *Akropolites*, 307 and 310n20.

⁷⁶¹ Εἰς τὸ καβαλίκευμά σου ἵνα ἔχῃς βαράγγους καὶ παραμονὰς συνακολουθοῦντάς σοι καὶ βαρδαριώτας προοδεύοντάς σου (Heisenberg, 'Aus der Geschichte', 39.29-31).

⁷⁶² Ruth Macrides, 'The ritual of petition', in P. Roilos and D. Yatromanolakis (eds.), *Greek Ritual Poetics* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 356-370, 362-364.

⁷⁶³ Heisenberg, 'Aus der Geschichte', 39.45-52. The meaning of the word *kavalarikion* is unclear, and as a translation ‘riding school’, ‘stables’ and ‘cavalcade’ have been suggested. In the context of the passage in the *prostagma* the word seems to refer to an activity rather than a location. For a discussion see Macrides, *Pseudo-Kodinos* (forthcoming).

emperor than for example the Varangians, who guard the private apartments in the palace.⁷⁶⁴

How, then, does the function of the Vardariots compare to other guard divisions? Bartusis reckons that the Vardariots had more a ‘policing than a military function’ because their weapons were not of the same class as the ones of the Varangians and the Paramonai, who carried axes and swords.⁷⁶⁵ Bartusis also claims that Pseudo-Kodinos lists the Vardariots not with the ‘regular guards’ but together with the Kortinarioi, the ‘unarmed palace servants’.⁷⁶⁶ However, in this case we should be careful to attach too much value to the organisation of the ceremony book. Although Pseudo-Kodinos mentions the Vardariots right after the Kortinarioi, both when he discusses their place at the *prokypsis* ceremony and when he characterizes their appearance and provenance, he does not classify the Vardariots as inferior to the other guards. On the other hand, one indication supporting Bartusis’ interpretation of the lesser military function of the Vardariots is to be found in Pachymeres, who mentions the Vardariots in the same breath as the Kortinarioi, the chamberlains and the ushers, when he discusses the (former) retinue of a Despot.⁷⁶⁷ In contrast, a case against the assumption that the Vardariots were mere ‘policing’ guards is the fact that they joined Theodore II in his campaign of 1256. They had their own tents and were headed by their *primmikerios*.⁷⁶⁸ This implies that they were supposed to contribute to the fighting, which is not surprising since at that time Theodore had enlisted as many able men as possible, including those serving the emperor in hunting exercises.⁷⁶⁹

⁷⁶⁴ Pseudo-Kodinos, 181.1-2.

⁷⁶⁵ Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 279.

⁷⁶⁶ Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 280.

⁷⁶⁷ Pachymeres II, 417.3.

⁷⁶⁸ ‘And so it happened that we went to the tents of the Vardariots. When their *primmikerios* saw me he wondered and asked what I sought in coming to his tent’ (Macrides, *Akropolites*, 307, with commentary on 310-311).

⁷⁶⁹ Kyriakides, *Late Byzantine Warfare*, 84-85.

There is no indication that the Vardariots were favoured by particular emperors, but we should keep in mind that they are mentioned in connection with Theodore II by Akropolites, in connection with Michael VIII and Andronikos II (as young emperor) in the *prostagma* of 1272 and by Pachymeres in connection with a retinue for Despot John Palaiologos, brother of Michael VIII. After the late thirteenth century there is no mention of the Vardariots, apart from their appearance in the ceremony book. This could mean that under Michael VIII and Andronikos II the Vardariots were more prominent than under Andronikos III, John V and John VI Kantakouzenos, although this remains an argument *ex silentio*. Besides the information given above, little else is known about them. We know that they, like the Varangians and other guard divisions, were headed by a *primmikerios*, but only one twelfth century *primmikerios* of the Vardariots is known by name. Their headgear and use of language when greeting the emperor indicate a link with their origin, though it is not clear if they were still mercenaries in the early Palaiologan period. Their weapons (a whip and a staff) and their task of bringing order to the people point at a ‘policing’ function, but we cannot exclude the possibility that they were also providing military assistance or other guarding tasks.

4.3 PARAMONAI

Less is known about the other guard divisions. The Paramonai (the word παραμονή can be translated as watchman), for example, rarely appear in the sources. They seem to have been a new division, because they are mentioned for the first time in a source of 1272.⁷⁷⁰ Pseudo-Kodinos says that during the reception ceremony (*parastasis*) they were to be found in the courtyard of the palace complex:

In the courtyard of the palace there are soldiers who are called Paramonai, who have horses and over whom [presides] an *allagator*. And with them there are others, also Paramonai, except they are without horses, who also have an *allagator* and they all carry swords in their hands.⁷⁷¹

Apparently, according to Pseudo-Kodinos there were two kinds of Paramonai, those who were on horseback and those who were not. However, there is no other source confirming the division of the Paramonai, which makes it difficult to conclude that they indeed consisted of two groups. A similar problem concerns the leader of both kinds of Paramonai: the so-called *allagator*. As Bartusis explained there is only one reference to an individual *allagator* (from 1247), but ‘nothing connects him to the Paramonai’.⁷⁷² Also, Pseudo-Kodinos does not mention the *allagator* as a formal office, ie. the title does not appear in the precedence lists. As a ranked office only a *protallagator* (literally ‘first *allagator*’) occurs, whose tasks were to accompany the train of ceremonial attendants (*syntaxis*) at the rear and if someone was left behind he would guide him back into the train and would put it in the right order. If his superior, the *megas primmikerios*, needed

⁷⁷⁰ Heisenberg, ‘Aus der Geschichte’, 39.

⁷⁷¹ ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ δὲ τοῦ παλατίου στρατιῶται ὀνομαζόμενοι οὕτω παραμοναί, ἔχοντες ἄλογα, ἐφ’ ὧν καὶ ἀλλαγάτωρ. Καὶ μετ’ αὐτοὺς ἕτεροι, παραμοναὶ μὲν καὶ οὗτοι, πλὴν ἄνευ ἀλόγων, ἔχοντες ἀλλαγάτωρα καὶ οὗτοι, φέροντες ἐν χερσὶ πάντες τὰς σπάθας αὐτῶν. (Pseudo-Kodinos, 180.3-11).

⁷⁷² Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 276.

someone from the train, he would ask the *protallagator* to fetch him.⁷⁷³ This seems very much like a function that would suit the (ceremonial) head of a division of the imperial bodyguards. That this is not an unreasonable thought is implied by two other precedence lists, which mention *protallagatores* of the guard divisions *monokavalloi*, the *mourtatoi*, the *tzakones* and the *tzangratoroi*. However, since there is no obvious connection between the ranked *protallagator* and the unofficial *allagator* of the Paramonai, and since the *protallagator* is not mentioned in relation to the Paramonai it seems unlikely that the *protallagator* had anything to do with this guard division. I will come back to the *protallagator* under the heading of the guard divisions related to this official.

Despite the lack of evidence for the division of the Paramonai and the lack of proof that their leaders were *allagatores*, the fact that the Paramonai existed as a bodyguard division in the early Palaiologan period is confirmed in several other sources. The Paramonai appear in literary sources like the fourteenth-century satirical *Opsarologos* (Book of Birds): ‘when the emperor had commanded that the *archontes* be assembled, also the *koitonarioi* and the Paramonai appeared’.⁷⁷⁴ The word is also used in several Greek romances, but it is unclear whether it stands for the generic term watchmen or for the imperial guard division Paramonai. Michael VIII’s *prostagma* of 1272 reveals at least one function of the Paramonai: they were, together with Varangians, responsible for the accompaniment of the young emperor and the emperor when they were going about on horseback (*kavalikeuma*): ‘for going out on horseback you [emperor Andronikos II] may

⁷⁷³ Pseudo-Kodinos, 185.5-14.

⁷⁷⁴ Προστάξοντος οὖν τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ εἰσελθόντων τῶν ἀρχόντων παρίσταντο γοῦν οἱ κοιτωνάριοι καὶ παραμοναί (Winterwerb, *Porikologos*, 252.45-46). Also, in some manuscript versions of the *Porikologos* (Book of Fruit), the Varangians are replaced by the *koitonarioi* and the *paramonarioi* (sic), see Winterwerb, *Porikologos*, 142.

have Varangians and Paramonai accompanying you, while the Vardariotes go in front'.⁷⁷⁵

It is unclear whether during this accompaniment the Paramonai were on horseback or were escorting the young emperor on foot. In the same *prostagma* there is mention of the young emperor mounting a horse for the *kavalarikion*, which was something like a cavalcade or riding school, but here only the Varangians and the Vardariots are mentioned as escorts.

Another task of the Paramonai, again mentioned in connection with the multi-functional Varangians, may have been prison guarding.⁷⁷⁶ Also the weapon of the Paramonai (a sword), as mentioned in Pseudo-Kodinos, who also calls them 'soldiers' (*stratiotai*), implies that they performed more than just a ceremonial function. This is confirmed by an incident which took place 1315 and is described by George Metochites: while a fugitive had gone into hiding around Adramyttion, 'certain members of the imperial Paramonai looked for and sought after him, having been sent out, and hurrying in order to fetch him from there.'⁷⁷⁷ Apparently, the Paramonai were still present in the court of Andronikos II and performed policing tasks. Bartusis thinks that this was the last we hear from the Paramonai, but he disregards the fact that sources like Pseudo-Kodinos and the Book of Birds are of a later date.⁷⁷⁸ It is very well possible that Paramonai also served the emperor after 1315.

Unlike the Varangians and Vardariots, there is no indication that the Paramonai were mercenaries or of foreign origin. On the contrary, George Metochites points out that the Paramonai were Byzantines, when he mentions that there were two kinds of guards in

⁷⁷⁵ Εἰς τὸ καβαλίκευμά σου ἵνα ἔχῃς βαράγγους καὶ παραμονὰς συνακολουθοῦντάς σοι καὶ βαρδαριώτας προοδεύοντάς σου (Heisenberg, 'Aus der Geschichte', 39.29-31).

⁷⁷⁶ Metochites I, 89.6-8.

⁷⁷⁷ ὑποστρέφοντα δὲ κατέσχον περὶ τοῦ Ἀτραμύτιον, οἵτινες ἐκ τῶν βασιλικῶν παραμονῶν ἐζήτουν καὶ ἀνηρεῦντων αὐτὸν ἀποσταλέντες ἐπὶ τούτῳ λαβεῖν ἐπειγόμενοι (Herbert Hunger and Otto Kresten, *Das Register des Patriarchats von Konstantinopel. I. Edition und Übersetzung der Urkunden aus den Jahren 1315-1331* (Vienna, 1981), vol. 1, no. 10.83-85). See also *MM* I, 12.

⁷⁷⁸ This was brought to my attention by Savvas Kyriakides. See Kyriakides, *Late Byzantine Warfare*, 83 ; and also Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 276.

the palace (the word used here is *archeion*), ‘of which those of our own are called Paramonai and those of foreign and outlandish [origin] are called Varangians.’⁷⁷⁹ This may not have been the complete picture, but Metochites makes at least clear that the Paramonai were native guards. It is also significant that, as in Michael VIII’s *prostagma*, the Paramonai are mentioned together with the Varangians. Pseudo-Kodinos does this too when he specifically mentions the Varangians and the Paramonai but describes the other guard divisions as ‘the rest’ in a passage about the clearance of the *peripatos*, a raised walkway, of laurels which had been used as liturgical decoration for Palm Sunday: ‘it is cleared by the Varangians, together with the Paramonai and the other troops who are to be found in the courtyard.’⁷⁸⁰ That Paramonai are mentioned in one breath with the Varangians implies that they were of a certain importance, perhaps second to the Varangians.⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷⁹ ὧν τοῖς μὲν ἐκ τῆς ἡμετέρας οὔσι φυλῆς ἢ προσηγορία παραμοναὶ, τοῖς δὲ ἐξ ἐθνικῆς καὶ ἀλλοδαπῆς βάραγχοι προσηγόρευται (Metochites I, 89.6-8).

⁷⁸⁰ Διαρπάζεται δὲ παρὰ τε τῶν Βαράγγων, τῶν παραμονῶν καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν τῶν ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ εὐρισκομένων τάξεων. (Pseudo-Kodinos, 226.12-15).

⁷⁸¹ This claims also Bartusis: Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 283.

4.4 TZAKONES

With the Varangians, the Vardariots and the Paramonai we seem to have covered the most important guard divisions of the Palaiologan period.⁷⁸² Pseudo-Kodinos does mention some other guards too, although the evidence about their existence or palatine function is scarce. The main indication that they were serving the emperor in the palace complex is the fact that they were present during the daily reception ceremony (*parastasis*). For example, directly behind the Paramonai, who were standing in the courtyard during the reception ceremony, there were palace guards known as Tzakones: ‘then the bodyguards called Tzakones can be found, carrying clubs.’⁷⁸³ Apart from clubs, their attire consisted of a *kapasion* (a specific kind of headdress) and a cuirass which had a depiction of rampant facing white lions.⁷⁸⁴ The Tzakones in the courtyard must have been an impressive sight. Pseudo-Kodinos explains further on that Tzakones were headed by a *stratopedarches* (replaced by a *protallagator* in other precedence lists), who ‘is in charge of those guards to be found in the fortresses, who are called Tzakones.’⁷⁸⁵ This refers to Tzakones other than the bodyguards in the palace, which raises the question whether the palatine Tzakones were part of a larger group of soldiers.

As Bartusis explains, the late Byzantine word Tzakones either refers to an ethnic group, ie. inhabitants of Lakonia in the Peloponnese (also called Lakones), or ‘a variety of military professions including light-armed soldiers, fortress guards, palace guards, and paramilitary police.’⁷⁸⁶ Pachymeres explains that Lakones are the same as Tzakones and

⁷⁸² It is perhaps for this reason that Van Dieten claims that the imperial guard in the Palaiologan period consisted of three groups, the Varangians, the Vardariots and the Vigiles (=Paramonai). See Gregoras/Van Dieten II, 1, 134n40.

⁷⁸³ Εἴτα εὐρίσκονται οἱ ὀνομαζόμενοι σωματοφύλακες τζάκωνες, φέροντες καὶ οὗτοι ἀπελατίκια. (Pseudo-Kodinos, 180.11-14).

⁷⁸⁴ Pseudo-Kodinos, 180.18-23.

⁷⁸⁵ Ὁ στρατοπεδάρχης τῶν τζακώνων ἐπιμελεῖται τῶν εἰς τὰ κάστρα εὐρισκομένων φυλάξεων, οἵτινες τζάκωνες ὀνομάζονται. (Pseudo-Kodinos, 187.19-22).

⁷⁸⁶ Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 46.

also Gregoras points out that this was the common term for these people from the Peloponnese.⁷⁸⁷ Pachymeres elaborates that they were employed by Michael VIII in Constantinople, soon after the reconquest of the city:

And so he assigned places to many Lakones, arriving from the Morea, and gave them the opportunity to dwell among the inhabitants of the city. Bestowing them the yearly *roga*, he also supplied them with many other allowances, and used them for many [things] inside and outside [Constantinople], for they displayed worthy practice in the wars.⁷⁸⁸

It appears that Tzakones were mercenaries who were transferred from the Morea to Constantinople in order to take on military tasks inside and outside the city around 1261. One can imagine that at a certain moment a small contingent of Tzakones was placed in the imperial palace as bodyguards. It is possible that they, like their namesakes in the army, were being paid for their services on a yearly basis – but this remains guesswork. In any case, we learn that they were instituted by Michael VIII, although we are left in the dark with regards to their tasks in the palace at that time. Bartusis points out that acting as bodyguards was not the core activity of the Tzakones. They were light-armed soldiers defending the city walls, while one of their main tasks during the 1260s and 1270s appears to have been serving in the imperial army as marines.⁷⁸⁹

Also Andronikos II made use of Tzakones. In the early 1280s George Metochites was imprisoned in the prison of the Great Palace. In a treatise on the union of churches he mentions the replacement of the men working in this prison by lightly armed Makedones,

⁷⁸⁷ Pachymeres II, 401.27 ; Gregoras I, 98.12-13. For the connection between Tzakones and Lakonia see also: Hélène Ahrweiler, 'Les termes Τσάκωνες — Τσακονίαι et leur évolution sémantique', *REB* 21/21 (1963), 243-249. It has also been suggested that the word derives from *diakon/diakones*: Stamatis C. Caratzas, *Les Tzacones* (Supplementa Byzantina, 4; Berlin / New York, 1976), 128 and 156 (hereafter Caratzas, *Les Tzacones*).

⁷⁸⁸ ὅπου γε καὶ Λάκωσι πλείστοις, ὕστερον ἐκ τοῦ Μορέου ἀφιγμένοις, ἐπιμερίσας τόπους, ἐπὶ τῆς πόλεως παρεῖχε κατοικεῖν ὡς αὐτόχθοσι καί, ῥόγαις ἐτησίοις δωρούμενος καὶ πλείστοις ἄλλοις φιλοτιμήμασιν, ἐπὶ πολλοῖς καὶ ἐντὸς καὶ ἐκτὸς ἐχρᾶτο, ὡς ἀξίαν τριβὴν ἐν πολέμοις ἔχουσι. (Pachymeres I, 253.6-9).

⁷⁸⁹ Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 45.

who were also called Lakones (ie. equalling Tzakones in the early Palaiologan period, as we have seen above). He explains that the original prison guards were called to war because they could handle the crossbow. The Tzakones, however, elaborates Metochites, were of a superior sort (of a higher class), good-looking and with a strong constitution. And because they, being guards, were often close to the prisoners, they attempted to discuss the union of the churches with them.⁷⁹⁰ Metochites, a zealous anti-unionist, further describes the guards' opinion as opposed to the union, and with an ignorant common opinion. We do not learn more about the tasks of these guards, but we may assume that at a certain moment in the 1280s the Tzakones, like the Varangians, were acting as prison guards, and that they were specifically assigned to the prison in the Great Palace.

As Pseudo-Kodinos' description of the *stratopedarches* of the Tzakones has shown, another task of the Tzakones was to guard fortresses. However, we should not confuse the Tzakones who were stationed at fortresses with the Tzakones who were brought to Constantinople by Michael VIII. Tzakones as lightly armed men guarding the empire's forts are already mentioned in the tenth century *Book of Ceremonies*.⁷⁹¹ Tzakones continued to function as local guards throughout the ages, as several late Byzantine sources indicate. Bartusis thinks that their name was later applied to the soldiers from the Morea who were employed by Michael VIII in the 1260s, but that the original Tzакonian guards were without a specific 'ethnic or geographic character'.⁷⁹² There was even the term '*tzakonike* service', which encompassed the nightly watch over a *kastron*, especially taking care of the control of fire, and general law enforcement.⁷⁹³

⁷⁹⁰ George Metochites, *Peri tes tou Agiou Pneumatos ekporeuseos*, Cod. Vat Graec. 1716, in: Caratzes, *Les Tzakones*, 334-337.

⁷⁹¹ *De Ceremoniis* I, 696.

⁷⁹² Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 306.

⁷⁹³ Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 307.

As for the Tzakones' function as palace guards, they were most likely drawn from the Tzakones brought to Constantinople by Michael VIII. They were serving this emperor and we also have evidence that they were used as prison guards during the early reign of Andronikos II. For the fourteenth century, however, the evidence is poor. No sources other than Pseudo-Kodinos point to the presence of Tzakones in the palace.

4.5 MOURTATOI

Pseudo-Kodinos explains that behind the Tzakones, who were in turn standing behind the Paramonai in the courtyard, there were the so-called Mourtatoi during the reception ceremony: ‘And after those [guards/soldiers] there are others, who are also on foot, called Mourtatoi, each of them carrying a bow.’⁷⁹⁴ Pseudo-Kodinos further explains that here was a lower-ranked official called *stratopedarches* of the Mourtatoi, who appears to have been the head of these archers.⁷⁹⁵ Pseudo-Kodinos does not give any further information on the tasks of the Mourtatoi or their superior, but based on his short description it seems likely that the palatine function of these archers was limited. Bartusis also pointed out that this is exactly one of the problems concerning this division: is there any other evidence confirming that they were guards in the imperial palace?

Other sources seem to point at the military function of Mourtatoi rather than at their function as guards. They are mentioned in Western sources as soldiers, for example in the anonymous *Directorium ad faciendum passagium transmarinum* (1330): ‘they have no other occupation’ than ‘the exercise of arms’.⁷⁹⁶ And the *Chronicon Tarvisinum* mentions them as crossbowmen and archers from Candia, who were fighting for the Venetians.⁷⁹⁷ It appears that the Mourtatoi were not only employed by the Byzantine emperor, but also by other rulers in the Eastern Mediterranean. In Byzantine sources other than Pseudo-Kodinos

⁷⁹⁴ Καὶ μετὰ τούτους ἕτεροι, πεζοὶ μὲν καὶ οὗτοι, ὀνομαζόμενοι δὲ μουρτάτοι, τόξα ἕκαστος φέροντες. (Pseudo-Kodinos, 180.14-17).

⁷⁹⁵ Pseudo-Kodinos, 139.14-15 and 187.17-18.

⁷⁹⁶ nam nullam ut plurimum aliam artem habent (Charles Raymond Beazley (ed.), *Directorium ad faciendum passagium transmarinum* (Reprinted from The American Historical Review, New York, 1907), 102) (hereafter *Directorium ad faciendum*). The section about the ‘Murtati’ is placed in context of a description of the treacherous races and peoples a crusader will have to deal with or employ. The translation is from Bartusis: Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 277.

⁷⁹⁷ Antonio Lodovico Muratori et al. (eds.), *Rerum italicarum scriptores: raccolta degli storici italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquecento* 25 vols. (Città di Castello, 1913-1922, first edition 1723-1738), vol. 19, cols. 748D, 749D. See also Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 278.

and the precedence lists the Mourtatoi appear as soldiers.⁷⁹⁸ The word occurs for example in an official document: in a *chrysobull* of 1259, issued by Michael VIII, the Mourtatoi are mentioned as ‘goods’, taxable goods in fact, the charges of which the monastery of Lavra on Mount Athos did not have to pay.⁷⁹⁹ This may sound strange, indicates Bartusis, but since we know that military taxes like the charge for weapons were sometimes levied, this reference could mean that, slightly before this *chrysobull* was issued, there was a charge on someone for the delivery of Mourtatoi.⁸⁰⁰ Whether these Mourtatoi were meant to be palace guards remains guesswork. Also in the fourteenth-century *Achilleid* the word *mourtaton* appears, but I am not sure if this is a reference to a Mourtatos, which seems unlikely, or a misspelling.⁸⁰¹

Whether they were serving in the imperial palace or not, it is clear that the guard division of the Mourtatoi was relatively new. The first time they appear is in the above mentioned source of 1259. This means that as opposed to the Varangians and the Vardariots, but like the Paramonai and the Tzakones, the Mourtatoi were most probably only a late Byzantine guard division. As for their ethnicity, the sources are not entirely conclusive. It has been suggested that they were originally Turkish prisoners of war, and therefore Hellenised Turks, because the word *mourtatos* seems to have entered Greek via Arabic and Turkish.⁸⁰² The fourteenth-century western source *Directorium ad faciendum passagium transmarinum* specifies this as follows:

They are descendants of Turks by one parent and of Greeks by the other. As bad as the circumstance of their birth makes them, they are all the worse from the union of

⁷⁹⁸ The word Mourtatos can also refer to a proper name, see for example *Actes de Docheiariou*, no.10, 115.64, *Lavra* II, Appendix X, 311.22 and *Lavra* III, no.136, 62.33.

⁷⁹⁹ *Lavra* II, no.71, 10.79.

⁸⁰⁰ Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 278.

⁸⁰¹ Dirk Christiaan Hesselning (ed.), *L'Achilléide byzantine* (Amsterdam 1919), v694.

⁸⁰² Ernest Stein, *Untersuchungen zur spätbyzantinischen Verfassungs- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (Amsterdam 1962, reprint Hannover 1925), 55.

two bad bloods, that is, Greek and Turkish, so one can say of their origin that on one side they are of Satan and on the other of the Devil. Although they are called Christians, they are quite foreign to Christian worship and works [...].⁸⁰³

In this source we learn that the word *mourtatos* (*murtati* in Latin) stands for a mixed ethnic group, a union between Turks and Greeks, and that the Mourtatoi were Christians, though not proper ones in the eyes of the author of this text.

Little that we know about the Mourtatoi, we know even less about their superiors. As explained above, Pseudo-Kodinos mentions a lower-ranked official called *stratopedarches* of the Mourtatoi, who appears to have been the head of these archers.⁸⁰⁴ No further information is given about this official. And although other precedence lists mention a *protallagator* of the Mourtatoi instead of the *stratopedarches*, there is nothing known about this specific office either. This leaves me to conclude that the Mourtatoi may have been employed by Michael VIII and the other Palaiologan emperors, but that apart from Pseudo-Kodinos there are no sources pointing to their palatine function. And even if we perceive Pseudo-Kodinos' information as a reflection of reality, the function of the Mourtatoi in the palace seems to have been very limited, because they are only mentioned as appearing in the courtyard during the reception ceremony.

⁸⁰³ Et dicuntur Murtati qui de Turchorum ex uno parentum, ex altero vero de Graecorum progenie descenderunt. Hi tanto peiores esse ab initio suorum natalium comprobantur quanto nequius ex copula duorum malorum sanguinum, Graecorum videlicet ac Turchorum, originem habuerunt; ut ex uno Sathan, ex altero vero diaboli dici possint. Hi licet Christiani dicantur et sint, tamen a cultu et opere Christiano sunt plurimum alieni (*Directorium ad faciendum*, 102). The translation is by Bartusis: Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 277.

⁸⁰⁴ Pseudo-Kodinos, 139.14-15 and 187.17-18.

4.6 KORTINARIOI

Apart from the aforementioned divisions, the only other guards to stand in the courtyard during the reception ceremony were the Kortinarioi (literally: tent-attendants). Pseudo-Kodinos says: ‘there are also Kortinarioi, who are liable to someone called *komes*. Even though they are of a lower rank, they stand below the *prokypsis*.’⁸⁰⁵ Here, Pseudo-Kodinos classifies the Kortinarioi as inferior to other guard divisions. He also does not mention their weapons, so we may assume that they did not have a (para)military or even a policing function, like the other guards did. The ceremony book continues to explain their appearance:

The Kortinarioi render service in the imperial tent, which is also called *korte*. Indeed, their *komes* and they themselves wear red fabric made of the old fabrics of the *korte*, out of which also the red *skoufia* [a kind of hat⁸⁰⁶] on their head is made, which they wear in the palace, but without *kapasia* [a part of a hat⁸⁰⁷]. They also wear stockings of such a kind, with dark shoes. Outside [the palace] they wear similar *skoufia*, but with *kapasia*.⁸⁰⁸

From this description of their function and dress one gets the impression that the Kortinarioi were not so much defensive guards, but that their and their superior’s function was very much attached to the imperial tent. This was even reflected in their dress, which matched with the tent because it was made out of the same fabric. But it seems that when the tent was not put up, the Kortinarioi were serving in the palace, although it remains

⁸⁰⁵ Εἰσὶ καὶ κορτινάριοι, ἔχοντες καὶ οὗτοι ἔνοχον, ὃς κόμης καλεῖται· οἵτινες δὴ κἂν ἐλάττων τάξις εὐρίσκονται, ἀλλ’ οὖν κάτω ἴστανται τῆς προκύψεως. (Pseudo-Kodinos, 180.24-181.1).

⁸⁰⁶ *Skoufia*, after the Latin *cuphia* (or Italian: (s)cuffia), is according to Trapp a kind of hat ‘Kappe, Mütze, Haube’, see LBG, 1576.

⁸⁰⁷ *Kapasia* refers to a part of a hat, ‘Deckel, Stöpsel’, see LBG, 761.

⁸⁰⁸ Ὑπηρετοῦσι δὲ οἱ κορτινάριοι εἰς τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως σκηνήν, ἣτις καὶ κόρτη ὀνομάζεται. Ὁ μέντοι κόμης αὐτῶν καὶ αὐτοὶ δ’ οὗτοι πανία φοροῦσι κόκκινα ἐκ τῶν τῆς κόρτης παλαιῶν πανίων, ἐξ ὧν καὶ ἐπὶ κεφαλῆς σκουφίας μόνον κοκκίνας ἐντὸς μὲν τῆς αὐλῆς, οὐ μὴν δὲ καὶ καπάσια· ἔτι τε καὶ κάλτζας τοιαύτας, μετὰ παπουτζίων μαύρων. Ἐκτὸς δὲ φοροῦσι τὰς τοιαύτας σκουφίας μετὰ καπασίων. (Pseudo-Kodinos, 181.10-22).

unclear what they actually did. Their dress was adapted accordingly, without *kapasia* on their heads they were in their palatine dress, with *kapasia* they were ‘tent-attendants’.

The existence of the Kortinarioi and the *komes* of the imperial tent reaches back to the tenth century. They appear briefly in the *Book of Ceremonies* and more at length in the treatises on the imperial military expeditions, which were appendices to this compilation. These treatises give more information about the function of the *kortainarioi* and the *komes* of the *korte*:

The *drouggarios* of the *Vigla* takes the *komites* of the tent of the themata, and places them in attendance upon the emperor, for erecting the pavilion and taking it down, together with the tent-attendants [*kortinarioi*]. This is, in fact, why they are called *komites* of the tent.⁸⁰⁹

In this passage it becomes clear that the *korte* referred to both the imperial tent and the pavilion and that the *komites* was responsible, together with his staff consisting of *kortinarioi*, to set up the *korte*.⁸¹⁰ Since the *komes* of the tent and the *korte* itself regularly appear in Komnenian sources, we may assume that the master of the imperial tent with his tent-attendants was still active in this period.⁸¹¹ After the twelfth century, however, we have a gap in the sources. Whether the tent-attendants and their master were still functioning in the same way in the Palaiologan period remains unknown.

Apart from Pseudo-Kodinos, there is only Pachymeres who speaks of the Kortinarioi, yet only in passing. As mentioned earlier, regarding the retinue which would befit a Despot, before the late thirteenth century, Pachymeres says: ‘he [a Despot] was

⁸⁰⁹ Καὶ παραλαμβάνει ὁ δρουγγάριος τοὺς κόμητας τῆς κόρτης τῶν θεμάτων καὶ ἔχει αὐτοὺς εἰς παραμονὴν τοῦ βασιλέως εἰς τὸ θεῖναι τὴν κόρτην καὶ εἰς τὸ ρίψαι μετὰ τῶν κορτιναρίων. διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ καλοῦνται κόμητες τῆς κόρτης. (John Haldon, *Three treatises*, 130.570-573). The translation is by John Haldon: Haldon, *Three treatises*, 131.

⁸¹⁰ Haldon, *Three treatises*, 171-172.

⁸¹¹ Haldon mentions how Anna Komnene reports that Alexios’ I tent could receive both a great amount of officers and the imperial throne (Haldon, *Three treatises*, 172). There are also several eleventh century imperial documents, or sources like Skylitzes’ *Synopsis historiarum*, confirming the existence of a *komes* of the imperial tent – and most likely of his helpers the *kortinarioi* – in the Komnenian period.

allowed to have not only Vardariots and Kortinarioi, chamberlains and ushers, but also other elements of the imperial retinue'.⁸¹² Pachymeres hereby implies that the Kortinarioi were part of a Despot's retinue in the late thirteenth century, to be precise, part of the retinue of Despot John Palaiologos, brother of Michael VIII. It is unclear, however, if they were serving the Despot in his own tent when he went on military campaign or if they were part of his household staff as well. There is another indication that high members of the imperial family had their own tents and therefore may have been given imperial tent-attendants by way of *pronoia*: after the rediscovery of the corpse of emperor Basil II the Bulgarslayer in the beginning of 1260, emperor Michael VIII ordered that it be wrapped in expensive cloth, be put in a coffin and be brought close to Galata in Constantinople, which was still in the hands of the Latins at that time. Close to Galata it had to be put on display in the tent of his brother, the *sebastokrator* Constantine Palaiologos.⁸¹³

There is some evidence concerning the way in which the imperial tent was used in the Palaiologan period and it seems plausible that the Kortinarioi were helping to erect it or were serving in it. In 1258 near Magnesia, *megas doux* Michael Palaiologos (later Michael VIII) 'gave the order to put up the imperial tent, on the one hand to honour him [the patriarch], flatter him and serve him in every way, on the other hand out of a necessary excuse for the patriarch personally to be able to easily reach the emperor, at any given time, and not to be further from the emperor than one hour'.⁸¹⁴ We also know that Michael VIII used his tent in 1280 during the military campaigns of that year.⁸¹⁵ On the battlefield

⁸¹² τὴν γὰρ ἀρχὴν ἐνεχωρεῖτο τούτῳ μὴ ὅτι βαρδαιεῖας καὶ κορτιναρίους μόνον καὶ τοὺς ἐπὶ τοῦ κοιτῶνος ἔχειν καὶ γε τοὺς ἐπὶ τῆς εἰσαγωγῆς, οὓς δὲ καὶ ἐταιρειάρχους λέγουσιν, ἀλλὰ τι καὶ πλέον τῶν τῆς βασιλικῆς θεραπείας συνεπιφέρεσθαι. (Pachymeres II, 417.2-6).

⁸¹³ For this story see Pachymeres I, 175.12-177.10.

⁸¹⁴ Καὶ δὴ σκηνὴν μὲν βασιλικὴν ἐκείνου χάριν ὑποστῆναι κελεύει, ἅμα μὲν καὶ κατὰ τὴν εἰς ἐκεῖνον τιμὴν, ὑποτρέχων ἐν πᾶσι καὶ θεραπεύων, ἅμα δὲ καὶ ἐς πρόφασιν ἀναγκαίαν τοῦ ἔχειν ἐκ τοῦ ῥάστου πλησιάζειν τῷ βασιλεῖ, τοῦ καιροῦ διδόντος, αὐτὸν ἐκεῖνον τὸν πατριάρχην, μηδεμιᾶς ὥρας τοῦ κρατοῦντος ἀπολιμπάνεσθαι. (Pachymeres I, 103.23-27).

⁸¹⁵ Pachymeres II, 601.7.

an emperor would stay in his tent as if it were his residence. The tent would be set up, guarded and taken down by tent-attendants. But sometimes something went wrong: Michael VIII's grandson co-emperor Michael IX suffered a defeat in 1311 and when his army withdrew, the Turkish enemy managed to get hold of the imperial tent and Michael IX's insignia which were kept in his tent, including his precious headgear.⁸¹⁶ We may assume that the tent-attendants were long gone by then, or captured. That it could be different shows a defeat in 1329, during which the imperial tent was rescued from the plundering enemy: Gregoras says that after the battle of Pelekanon, between the army of Andronikos III and the army of Orhan, the Turkish forces found many weapons, empty tents and horses without owners on the deserted battlefield, but not the 'imperial horses with their red saddles and the imperial tent'.⁸¹⁷ This time they had managed to save the imperial tent. Emperor Kantakouzenos used the imperial tent for a different occasion. When he gave his daughter in marriage to Orhan, he transferred his whole family to the city of Selymbria and ordered that the imperial tent be set up near the city.⁸¹⁸ His wife and daughter spent the night there, while the emperor was with the army. Kantakouzenos' imperial tent was put to another use in April 1343, when Kantakouzenos persuaded the citizens of Berroia, besieged by the Serbs, to surrender to him. In order to reach the city, ladders were constructed out of trees felled in the wood, which were strung together with ropes from Kantakouzenos' own tent.⁸¹⁹

It is obvious that the imperial tent or imperial tents were made use of throughout the entire period under study. Although they are never mentioned as such, it seems likely that at least some tent-attendants (*Kortinarioi*) were taking care of the setting up, guarding

⁸¹⁶ Gregoras I, 258.10.

⁸¹⁷ τοὺς βασιλικοὺς ἵππους μετὰ τῶν ἐρυθρῶν ἐφεστρίδων καὶ τὴν βασιλικὴν σκηνήν (Gregoras I, 436.12-13).

⁸¹⁸ Kantakouzenos II, 587.22-24.

⁸¹⁹ Kantakouzenos III, 123.6-7.

and breaking down of the above-mentioned imperial tents. And when the imperial tent was not used they may have taken up residence in the imperial palace, hence their presence during the reception ceremony.

4.7 OTHER (OCCASIONAL) PALACE GUARDS

Besides the aforementioned guards there were sometimes others who were taking care of the security of the emperor or the imperial palace. We also have evidence of unspecified guards looking after the emperor. In 1296, for example, emperor Andronikos II left the Blachernai palace (*anaktoron*) by foot, accompanied by guards, to venerate the icon of the Hodegetria in the monastery of Hodegoi. Having done that, he returned to the palace on horseback.⁸²⁰ Although it is unclear which guards he used for his pilgrimage, Pachymeres' account confirms that guards were accompanying the emperor outside the palace.

We have seen earlier that a hundred armed and unarmed 'young men of good descent' were taking care of the security during the procession in Andronikos III's coronation ceremony, together with the Varangians.⁸²¹ It seems that young soldiers or sons of *archontes* were occasionally used as security guards. They may have been there because by that time the number of imperial guards had thinned to such an extent that temporary support was necessary. The need for extra guards was certainly evident when the palace or the city was under siege. Kantakouzenos mentions a certain Pepanos, who was *prokathemenos* of the imperial Blachernai palace, and who had been given the task by Andronikos II to secure a part of the city/palace walls against attacks of Andronikos III during the first civil war.⁸²² It is possible that there were other palace servants during this period who were acting as defensive guards or soldiers. This would be in line with the fact that Andronikos II had hardly any people living with him in the palace at the end of his reign.

Then there was an exceptional situation in the court of Kantakouzenos, who feared a siege of the palace complex by John V Palaiologos in 1353-1354 and for that reason

⁸²⁰ Pachymeres III, 255.28-257.5.

⁸²¹ Kantakouzenos I, 200.12-13.

⁸²² Kantakouzenos I, 289.5-11.

allowed about 100 Catalans to live in the palace complex in order to defend it.⁸²³ In this way Kantakouzenos made good use of the Catalans who had stayed in Constantinople after the Byzantine-Genoese war, which had ended in a truce in 1352. These Catalans became Kantakouzenos' personal guard division, and there is no indication that they joined one of the already established palace guards mentioned above.⁸²⁴

⁸²³ Gregoras III, 151.17-23.

⁸²⁴ Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army*, 284.

CONCLUSION

It is beyond doubt that people taking care of security took up a significant part of the imperial court. Their role was to protect the palace and the person of the emperor and make it more difficult to obtain access to him. As for the early Palaiologan period, we have evidence of several official guard divisions and some non-official guards. The evidence is plentiful for the reigns of Michael VIII and Andronikos II, but becomes scarce under Andronikos III, John V and John VI Kantakouzenos. It is known that during the last years of the reign of Andronikos II there were few others than servants in the palace and there is no mention of guards. We also know that Andronikos III took pride in the fact that he made little use of guards, even though there is evidence of active Varangians during his reign. This could mean that the overall importance of the permanent imperial guards and their number decreased, which explains their absence in the sources – although this remains an argument *ex silentio*. Regarding their number, however, an indication comes from the known number of Catalans who were employed by Kantakouzenos when the palace was under siege. Although this was an exceptional situation, we know that at that time there were at least a hundred guards present in the palace complex. Also during the coronation ceremony of Andronikos III the guards were assisted by a hundred young men of good descent. It seems logical to conclude that normally there were not more than hundred guards in total serving in the palace.

It is clear that after the recapture of Constantinople Michael VIII instituted some new guard divisions while making use of some old divisions too. The most important imperial guard, both throughout his reign and after, was the old division known as Varangians. We have examples of Varangians functioning as prison guards, as guards of the imperial treasury and as protectors of the palace, the emperor and the co-emperor

during escorts outside of the palace. Nothing is known about their recruitment or background, apart from the fact that they were English speaking men. Their prominent position in the sources reveals that they were the most valuable guard division in this period. Another old guard division made use of by Michael VIII were the Vardariots. They were possibly of Magyar or Turkish origin and there is evidence that they were active until the late thirteenth century. Their main task was to keep the crowds orderly during the emperor's (and co-emperor's) going out on horseback. We also know that they used to be part of the Despot's retinue. After the late thirteenth century there is no mention of the Vardariots, apart from their appearance in the ceremony book.

A new guard division of Michael VIII were the Paramonai, of Byzantine background. Together with the Varangians they were functioning as escorts of the two emperors when they were going about on horseback. There is also evidence that they were prison guards and in the early fourteenth century they were mentioned as chasing a fugitive. They also appear in other fourteenth-century sources, which indicates that this division was certainly present throughout the entire period under study. The fact that they are sometimes mentioned in one breath with the Varangians points at their important position – even though little is known about their actual tasks. Of less importance, but also a new guard division, were the Tzakones, who can be identified with the Lakones or the light-armed soldiers from the Morea brought to Constantinople by Michael VIII. They were serving this emperor and we also have evidence that they were used as prison guards during the early reign of Andronikos II, in the 1280s. After that, no sources other than Pseudo-Kodinos points to the presence of Tzakones in the palace. Another new, very obscure palace guard group were the Mourtatoi. We know that they were mercenary soldiers of Turkish-Greek origin, but only Pseudo-Kodinos mentions them as palace

guards. Lastly, there were the inferior Kortinarioi, who are attested since the tenth century and whose function was attached to the imperial tent. From Pachymeres we learn that they were usually also part of a Despot's retinue. There is no other reference to Kortinarioi being active in the fourteenth century, but since we know that the imperial tent was used several times, we may assume that they were still practicing their function.

Overall, it has become clear that the new divisions of Michael VIII (Paramonai, Tzakones, Mourtatoi) were part of larger groups of soldiers or guards who were functioning outside the palace as well. It is likely that they were drawn from the mercenaries who were recruited by this emperor to recapture Constantinople and become the ruler of the empire. They remained active in the palace under Michael's successor, but their role diminished in the fourteenth century, apart from perhaps the role of the Paramonai. Also the old division of the Vardariots disappeared from the sources, while the Varangians remained important. It is striking that there were no new permanent guard divisions instituted by Andronikos II, Andronikos III, John V and John VI. It seems that the later reign of Andronikos II, who made use of the support of young servants in the palace, the civil wars as well as Andronikos III's reluctance to be protected by imperial guards changed the picture of imperial security. It is also possible, although nothing is known about the payment of guards, that the lack of resources caused the fourteenth-century emperors to continue using the guards already present and to let their number diminish. In the 1350s, when the palace was under siege, Kantakouzenos found reason to employ Catalans as guards in the palace. This implies that the number of permanent imperial guards was by that time insufficient to defend the palace and the imperial family.

CONCLUSION

This thesis examined the early Palaiologan court from a restricted point of view and presented an investigation of the core of late Byzantine court society: the main palace, the imperial family, their servants and their guards. It excluded the other Palaiologan palaces, temporarily used, and the occasional members of the court, that is people who frequented the palace, but did not live in it. Despite the existence of precedence lists and the emphasis on hierarchy and order, it has become clear that the court society in early Palaiologan Byzantium was not so much an institution, but rather a place and a gathering of people, both officials and non-officials, relatively fluid in composition.⁸²⁵ Here I would like to elaborate on the two interrelated themes that have come to the fore during my investigations: space and social interaction. Spatially, the court equalled the imperial residence, yet, socially the court was the group of people around the emperor. The person of the emperor formed the pinnacle of the court society: besides the palace, it was the emperor who defined the court: the court was where the emperor was.⁸²⁶

In the first place, it should be noted that the Blachernai palace of the Palaiologan emperors provided the spatial prerequisite for the continuation and development of late Byzantine court society, or, in other words, as the present thesis has shown, the main palace of the Palaiologoi did not only suit but also formed the ceremonial, political and social aspects of the late Byzantine court. The reason for this might be that, even though

⁸²⁵ There are similar difficulties in defining non-Western pre-modern courts where terminology in contemporary sources is absent, for example that of the Abbasids. See Nadia Maria El Cheikh, 'Court and courtiers: A preliminary investigation of Abbasid terminology', in Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung (eds.), *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries* (Abingdon / New York, 2011), 80-90. For the fluidity of court societies see also Trevor Dean, 'The Courts', *The Journal of Modern History*, 67 (1995), 136-151 and R. J. W. Evans, 'The Court: A Protean Institution and an Elusive Subject', in R. G. Asch and A. M. Birke (eds.), *Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age c. 1450-1650* (Oxford, 1991), 481-491.

⁸²⁶ Kazhdan and McCormick, 'The Social World', 167.

we have evidence of travelling emperors, the court in early Palaiologan Byzantium was by definition not itinerant and the main palace in Constantinople therefore defined the court to a greater extent than some contemporary late Medieval royal courts.⁸²⁷ A striking example of this mechanism can be found in Pseudo-Kodinos' protocol for mounting and dismounting a horse in the courtyard of the Blachernai palace. The ceremony book says that the regulations for mounting and dismounting were to be imitated outside the palace, in case the emperor or the highest dignitaries and the patriarch needed to mount and dismount elsewhere than in the palace courtyard. Here we see how the spatial element of the Palaiologan court (the Blachernai palace, in fact its courtyard) was a precondition for the development of particular courtly rules of conduct and that these rules were transferable to other spaces too.⁸²⁸

Particularly noteworthy regarding the relation between the main palace and social-political developments, is the appearance of the Blachernai palace complex as a stronghold. We get the impression of a palace-citadel, a relatively secluded space on the slope of a hill, fortified and well protected, especially in the fourteenth century. Herein, the architectural development seems to have pragmatically reacted to the increasing political turmoil of the early Palaiologan era. Enforcements were necessary to protect the inhabitants of the imperial residence from real threats, which did not only come from outside the city walls. It is therefore not surprising that some scholars believe that the move to the northwest corner of Constantinople by Palaiologan emperors should be seen as a sign of imperial withdrawal: from 1261 there was disengagement from the capital,

⁸²⁷ An example of a contemporary court where there was less emphasis on a single space is that of the Mamluks, where the combination of palaces and tents played an important role in the system of government, see Albrecht Fuess, 'Between Dihlīz and Dār al-'Adl. Forms of Outdoor and Indoor Royal Representation at the Mamluk Court in Egypt', in Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung (eds.), *Court Cultures in the Muslim World. Seventh to Nineteenth Centuries* (London / New York, 2011), 149-167.

⁸²⁸ This becomes apparent when Pseudo-Kodinos explains how the *sebastokrator* should mount and dismount at the *tetrastylon* in the courtyard and 'if the emperor is to be found elsewhere, the *sebastokrator* should dismount in at the distance analogue to that of the *tetrastylon*.' See Pseudo-Kodinos, 148.14-21.

because the emperor was living behind the secure walls of his castle, while the official ceremonial, mainly taking place in the palace in a limited amount of space, hardly provided for regular contact between court and capital.⁸²⁹

Two points were made concerning this hypothesis of intensified imperial seclusion after 1261. One presents a different view of the official ceremonial, showing that it did provide for occasions of engagement with the people, for example when the emperor had to visit churches he could be seen riding in procession. The other point contests the novelty of imperial seclusion in the capital, pointing at the roots of this trend in the tenth century, when a high wall was built around the Boukoleon palace, part of the Great Palace.⁸³⁰

Indeed, that an architecturally secluded palace should not be equated with a secluded emperor, shows a similar discussion about seclusion in the Ottoman court in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Here it has been argued that in the sixteenth century the seclusion of the sultan intensified and that this is visible in the use of the palace architecture. Suraya Faroqhi states, for example, that the monumental outer gate of the Topkapı palace was of crucial importance. When the ruler occasionally emerged out of the more secluded areas of the palace, it served as a frame for his appearance. Ceremonial also enhanced the importance of gates inside the palace complex, creating different levels of access in a hierarchically organized whole of the palace complex.⁸³¹ However, the interrelation of architecture and ceremonial did not necessarily make the Sultan secluded in later years. Faroqhi notes a counter-trend against the Sultan's withdrawal from the public, which she places in the seventeenth century, when new forms of interaction were devised.

⁸²⁹ Magdalino, 'Court and Capital', 141ff.

⁸³⁰ Macrides, 'Ceremonies and the City', 234-235.

⁸³¹ Suraya Faroqhi, 'Part II Crisis and Change, 1590-1699', in Suraya Faroqhi et al. (eds.), *Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire. Volume 2: 1600-1914* (Cambridge, 1997), 411-636, here at 616-617 (hereafter Faroqhi, 'Crisis and Change'). For the Ottoman court, its palace and imperial seclusion see also Gülrü Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power. The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge Mass. / London, 1991).

Hunting, petitioning to the Sultan when he went out for Friday prayers, the Sultan's more frequent use of summer palaces and kiosks are some examples.⁸³² Kate Fleet and Ebru Boyar, on the other hand, show that such elements of interaction with the public were already present in the sixteenth century, thereby contesting the view of the Sultan as a distant and remote ruler in this era. They too mention the Sultan's visits to the mosque on Fridays, as well as occasional visits to holy places and tombs, their availability for petitioning, their pleasure trips, their use of summer palaces, military inspections and hunting.⁸³³ Crucial in this discussion of Ottoman display of power seems to be the difference between official ceremonial in- and occasionally outside the palace, in which the Sultan may have had limited contact with the outer world, and his appearance in public on more informal occasions. These occasions are perhaps less well documented, but should not be underestimated. Apparently, it was important for the Sultan to be seen enjoying the pleasures of life publicly. His power was legitimized and represented not only through official ceremonial but also by publicly taking pleasure in which was inaccessible to most mortals.

Turning to late Byzantium, this means that the question whether the emperor was secluded or not cannot only be answered by studying the palace architecture and its related official ceremonial as expressed in the fourteenth-century ceremony book. One should look to the movement of the emperor in the city and outside, the visibility to and interaction with people, both on official occasions and informal ones. As we have seen, emperors went around on horseback through the city to receive petitions, admittedly accompanied by guards, they went out hunting and jousting, visited churches and monasteries (the pious Andronikos II even did so occasionally on foot), went on military

⁸³² Faroqhi, 'Crisis and Change, 617-618.

⁸³³ Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul* (Cambridge 2010), 29-32.

expeditions and took the court to different locations, providing ample opportunities for the public to interact with the ruler. Also the presence of semi-residential towers with lookouts at the outside of the palace complex, as well as the use of other residences both inside and outside Constantinople, points to the visibility of the emperor for people outside the palace. As in the case of the Ottoman Sultan, the Palaiologan emperor may not have been as secluded as previously thought.⁸³⁴

Nonetheless, despite its towers and views over the city, the countryside and the sea, the architecture of the palace complex as a whole seems to have been directed inwards. The reason for this was not only to create a safe haven for the imperial family, but also to establish a ceremonial space for the expression of court hierarchy. We could say that the importance of the main courtyard and the arrangement of the palace buildings and high ceremonial spaces around it (the *peripatos*, the *prokysis*) turned this inner space of the palace complex into a centre around which (a great part of) the imperial ceremonial gravitated. That this is not unusual is shown by the example of the development of royal palace architecture in fourteenth century France, as studied by Mary Whiteley. Here we see the king every morning descending down to the inner courtyard through a great processional staircase with open bays, thereby allowing spectators in the courtyard a first glimpse of the royal presence.⁸³⁵ The early Palaiologan rulers were also visible on elevated places, either during daily ceremonies in the throne hall (where the throne was situated on a platform) or when they walked on the *peripatos*, the elevated walkway leading towards the palace church, but also while on horseback in the courtyard, when everyone else was

⁸³⁴ It would be interesting to further study the use of space and movement under the early Palaiologoi.

⁸³⁵ Mary Whiteley, 'Ceremony and Space in the *châteaux* of Charles V, King of France', in Werner Paravicini (ed.), *Zeremoniell und Raum. 4. Symposium der Residenzen-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, veranstaltet gemeinsam mit dem Deutschen Historischen Institut Paris und dem Historischen Institut der Universität Potsdam. Potsdam, 25. bis 27. September 1994* (Sigmaringen 1997), 187-198, esp. 188-189. For the open royal staircases see Mary Whiteley, 'Deux escaliers royaux du XIV^e siècle: les "grands degrez" du palais de la Cité et le "gande Viz" du Louvre', *Bulletin monumental*, 147 (1989), 133-154.

standing on foot, and during the staged appearances on the *prokypsis* platform. Here we see how spatial elevation and appearance created opportunities to express hierarchy, but also increased the visibility of the emperor.

Unlike the situation in France, however, the extent to which subordinates were familiar with the emperor remained limited in Byzantium. It is well known that the French kings were increasingly accessible to courtiers in their royal lodgings, thereby reducing the importance of the *grande salle*, the hall. In France, a system developed gradually where the king lived publicly, also in his private apartments.⁸³⁶ This was not the case in late Byzantium, where we see little evidence of the use of imperial private apartments for ceremonies or meetings.⁸³⁷ In early Palaiologan Byzantium, grand spaces like the courtyard and the *triklinos* of the imperial palace provided the surroundings for ceremonial interaction with the emperor. Most of the time it was here that the emperor met the permanent and occasional members of the court, as well as visitors. It was here also, that an attempt was made to bring order to late Byzantine court society. In the daily reception ceremony therefore we see officials being stationed according to their rank in the throne room, we see how the emperor and those holding the highest offices (in fact dignities, like Despot) were allowed to enter the courtyard on horseback while others had to enter on foot, how guards were staged in the courtyard mirroring the daily reception ceremony, how both male and female court officials were received in audience according to their rank in the *triklinos*, etc. Distance and discipline were essential elements of the Palaiologan court and these would be expressed both socially and spatially in designated rooms.

⁸³⁶ The difference between an English, more private, system and a French public system was advanced for the first time by Hugh Baillie, in his influential article: Hugh Murray Baillie, 'Etiquette and the Planning of the State Apartments in Baroque Palaces', *Archeologica*, 101 (1967), 169-199.

⁸³⁷ The *kellion* of the Blachernai palace did play a role during the footwashing ceremony on Maundy Thursday, see Pseudo-Kodinos, 228.4-230.22.

That there were private domains of the emperor in the palace which were relatively inaccessible, is as a continuum in Byzantium. The existence of such private apartments also gave significance to the people who regulated access to these spaces: the personal attendants of the emperor. Unlike the royal and princely courts of the West (for example France, England and Burgundy), the private apartments of the Byzantine emperors were not used for (ceremonial) attendance on the emperor by higher officials.⁸³⁸ The people actually serving the late Byzantine emperor in his private apartments were professionals and mostly of lower background. We have seen that servants (eunuchs, *prokathemenoi tou koitonos* and pages alike), who were concerned with daily routine in the inner sanctum of the palace, also acted as messengers and negotiators, in other words as ‘extended arms’ of the emperor. The protective screen of trustworthy personnel still existed in the early Palaiologan period. In some cases these servants took up influential political roles which would reach far beyond their daily tasks as attendants. Successful personal attendants, like the officials Basil Basilikos or Michael Kallikrenites, would benefit from their friendship with the emperor and would enjoy privileges or financial rewards.

Also being one of the imperial *paidopoula* could potentially lead to social climbing, especially when the emperor was susceptible to favouritism. But *paidopoula* serving in the palace were generally of lower descent and there is little evidence of them being advanced socially. Whereas the Nicaean emperor Theodore Laskaris had the tendency to promote favourite pages instead of likelier high aristocratic candidates, we see few examples of this mechanism during the early Palaiologan period. We also see little-to-no evidence of the

⁸³⁸ Malcolm Vale notes a rise in the status of the chamberlain and the valet of the chamber at the time when the ‘chamber’ became accessible, but remained more exclusive than the hall, see Malcolm Vale, ‘Courtly ritual and ceremony: some pre-Burgundian evidence (England and the Low Countries, 13th-14th centuries)’, in Werner Paravicini (ed.), *Zeremoniell und Raum. 4. Symposium der Residenzen-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, veranstaltet gemeinsam mit dem deutschen historischen Institut Paris und dem historischen Institut der Universität Potsdam. Potsdam, 25. bis 27. September 1994* (Sigmaringen, 1997), 83-89, here at 87-88.

palace as a centre of education for young aristocrats.⁸³⁹ In this sense late Byzantium differs from contemporary Western courts, where the palace became the centre where young nobles learned courtly conduct.⁸⁴⁰ For young aristocrats in Palaiologan Byzantium, being frequently in the palace was not a precondition for being part of the court. There was a group of *archontopoula* at court, who performed ceremonial tasks on certain feast days and took up (semi-) military functions, but their presence in the palace appears to have been occasional. The extent to which the emperor could control aristocratic youths was therefore limited. It seems that in this case, and perhaps also in the case of the emperor's dealings with the elite, the spatial element of the phenomenon court played a minor role.

Another court sphere where the interrelation between social and spatial elements was significant is that of the court of women. The imperial *gynaikonitis* was a space as well as a social group around the empress: as in most monarchical societies, gender segregation characterized life in the early Palaiologan palace. Although such segregation is well known for courts in Asia and in Islamic societies, recent comparative research has shown that even pre-modern European residences provided separate apartments for dowager queens, queens, and royal female relatives, where women interacted more with each other than with men.⁸⁴¹ In late Byzantium, the extent to which women were spatially separate may have resembled Western societies, but socially they may have been more separate than their Western counterparts: an important non-Western element is the presence of eunuch caretakers protecting imperial females and mediating between male and female spheres in the palace. Despite these elements of segregation, empresses seem to

⁸³⁹ Admittedly, this topic deserves further investigation.

⁸⁴⁰ For examples of the role of youths and education at court see Werner Paravicini and Jörg Wettlaufer (eds.), *Erziehung und Bildung bei Hofe : 7. Symposium der Residenzen-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, veranstaltet in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Stadtarchiv Celle und dem Deutschen Historischen Institut Paris, Celle, 23. bis 26. September 2000* (Residenzenforschung, 13; Stuttgart 2002).

⁸⁴¹ See the introduction to and contributions in Anne Walthall (ed.), *Servants of the Dynasty: Palace Women in World History* (Berkeley 2008).

have been able to influence their husbands occasionally or even to yield power on their own account.⁸⁴²

Another subject discussed in this thesis concerns the correlation between the imperial household, power and kinship. The palace, after all, housed the core of a social group in which the legitimization of dynastic rule was of utmost importance, that is, the imperial family. As we have noted before, court society was the constantly changing group of people around the emperor and inevitably first and foremost the members of his family. The people who were closest to him and were living with him were his wife and children, sometimes his mother and daughter-in-law. Only by way of exception would other close members of the family and the occasional outsider live in the palace. Since offices were not hereditary, since the ranking of offices varied and the nature of offices could change in accordance with the office holders, kinship ties with the imperial family were of great importance in order to be close to power – despite the increasing decentralization and impoverishment of the late Byzantine state.

First it should be emphasized that there is hardly any study of and therefore no consensus on the role of kinship in early Palaiologan Byzantium. Secondly, it is worth noting that the main aim of the early Palaiologoi, probably as was that of all rulers and certainly all usurpers, was to secure hereditary succession. For that reason, the emperors tried to keep their next of kin close and their relationship with the residents of the palace (their wife and children, sometimes their mother) as efficient as possible, while their attitude towards their adult family members was ambivalent. We have seen that the Palaiologan emperors tried to exercise balance between their support for and reliance on their family and rewarding or punishing their relatives and other members of court society.

⁸⁴² The court of the empress, especially those of Irene of Montferrat and Anna of Savoy, deserves deeper understanding.

We have also seen how the status of favourite officials was raised through intermarriage with members of the imperial family. Yet, although being a member of the imperial family may have determined one's official position or status at court, it did not necessarily ensure one's success in keeping it. Furthermore, being a family member was no guarantee of receiving the goodwill of the emperor; sometimes one did not even obtain a position at court. Time and again, the emperors sidelined confidants and family members who came too close to power, especially their brothers and sisters.

In the absence of a strictly organised court society, one of the ways to gain and hold political power lay in the field of keeping good personal relations with the emperor. The fate of people close to power depended greatly on imperial favour – and this included family members. As under the Komnenoi we see kin solidarity among the Palaiologoi, but more than ever the emphasis lay on the relation between the emperor and his heir. This becomes clear through the Palaiologan propagation of a system in which the successor would be proclaimed and crowned emperor during the lifetime of the ruling emperor, in a two-stage elevation to the throne with a large time gap between proclamation and coronation. Michael VIII was the inventor of this system and he made Andronikos *basileus* early in the 1260s while waiting approximately another ten years to crown him *autokrator*. It remains unclear why Michael VIII organized his succession in this way – he may have thought it politically necessary to have two moments in which dynastic succession would be confirmed in order to ward off other contestants. Or he may have wished to let his heir know that the throne was within reach, but that he should not contest the authority of his father. There is evidence that Michael VIII had difficulties defining the role of his emperor-son. A similar indirect succession was administered in the case of Michael IX and Andronikos III. The latter, who rebelled against his grandfather in order to gain access to

the throne, died before he proclaimed and crowned his son and thus he may have consciously made changes to the practice initiated by Michael VIII, although it has been assumed, despite the lack of evidence, that also Andronikos III proclaimed his son John emperor. In any case, the first civil war between the old and the young emperor and the second civil war between the dynastic heir and the usurper Kantakouzenos shows that the rather complex succession policy was as weak as any other.

It is therefore not surprising that contemporary critics were struck by Palaiologan succession practices – a development in Byzantine criticism which cannot be observed in earlier periods and is unique to the Palaiologan era, as Dimiter Angelov pointed out.⁸⁴³ In their *Kaiserkritik*, fourteenth-century writers compare the practices of the Palaiologoi to those of the idealised emperors of the Nicaean empire. Gregoras, for example, claims – incorrectly – that John III Vatatzes had not crowned his son emperor during his lifetime in order to avoid rebellion, thereby implicitly alluding to the rebellion of young emperor Andronikos III.⁸⁴⁴ He also says that Michael VIII's concern for his children and dynastic succession was unwise.⁸⁴⁵ The late fourteenth-century George of Pelagonia is concerned with praising John III Vatatzes in a panegyric and criticising Palaiologan emperors for everything they supposedly did worse than John III.⁸⁴⁶ He particularly lashes out at the system of hereditary succession, which he thinks to be a 'preposterous custom'.⁸⁴⁷ It seems that in the eyes of the fourteenth-century critics not so much the complexity or nature of the Palaiologan succession policy was faulty but its underlying ideology: the excessively

⁸⁴³ Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 280.

⁸⁴⁴ Gregoras I, 53-55.

⁸⁴⁵ Gregoras I, 154.2-10.

⁸⁴⁶ For George of Pelagonia and his Vita-panegyric of John III Vatatzes in comparison to other Palaiologan saints' lives see Ruth Macrides, 'Saints and Sainthood in the Early Palaiologan Period', in Sergei Hackel (ed.), *The Byzantine Saint. University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies* (London, 1981), 67-87. For George of Pelagonia's *Kaiserkritik* see Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 282-285.

⁸⁴⁷ August Heisenberg, 'Kaiser Johannes Batatzes der Barmherzige', *BZ* 14 (1905), 160-233, here at 197.13. The translation is after Dimiter Angelov, *Imperial Ideology*, 283.

tight grip of the Palaiologan emperors on the throne and their obsession with hereditary succession, which eventually caused clashes within the dynasty.

Overall, it seems that the relationship between the emperor and his next of kin defined to a great extent the nature of the late Byzantine court as a centre of power. Eventually, the emphasis on hereditary succession proved problematic and caused difficulties between the emperor and his closest relatives with whom he shared his residence. As I have made clear in this thesis, it is important to note that the successor stayed in the imperial palace with the imperial couple, while his brothers or sisters moved to their own residences upon their marriage. Furthermore, Michael VIII's *prostagma* of 1272 has shown that special ceremonial was reserved for the heir-apparent in and around the palace, although the motives for these regulations may point to difficulties in defining the role of the successor. In cases where siblings acquired great wealth and made attempts to challenge imperial authority, we see elements of side-lining – either reducing the threat by making them go as far away as possible or by controlling them in the palace complex. And when a dynastic heir, Andronikos III, felt that his world was too small and his hands were tied, he rebelled against his grandfather with whom he shared the palace. Therefore, a study of the palace and its residents contributes to our understanding of configurations of power, and indeed of the nature of political power, in a system of hereditary rule.

APPENDIX I

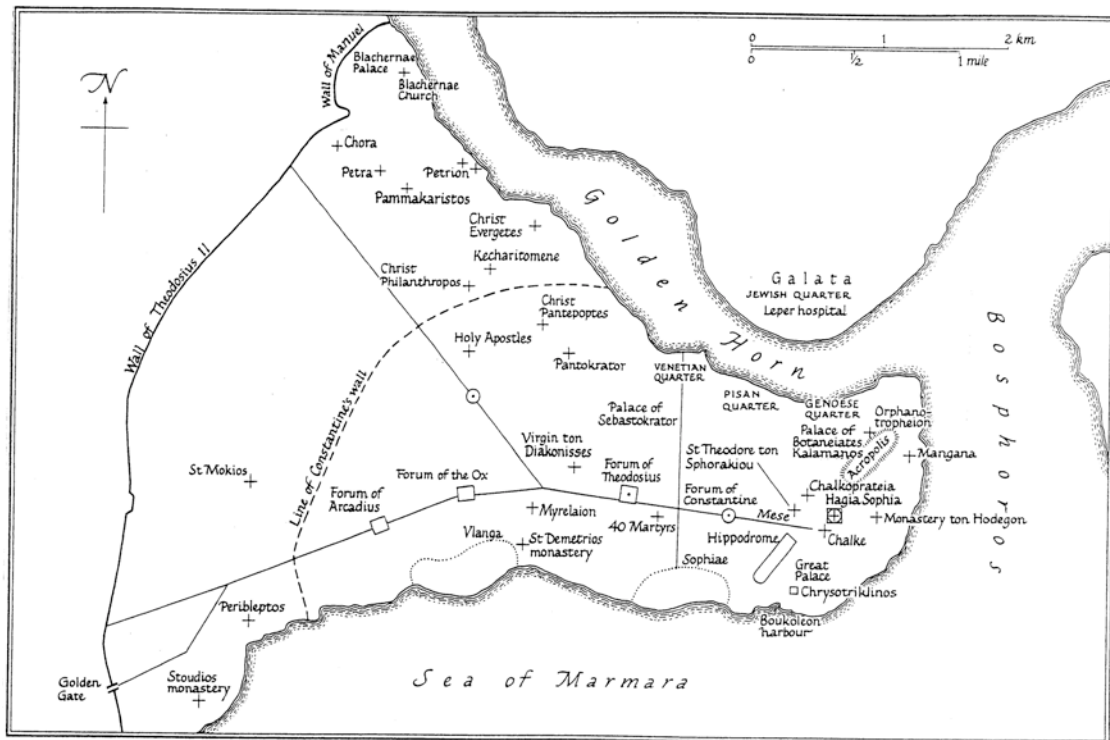


Fig 1. Medieval Constantinople.

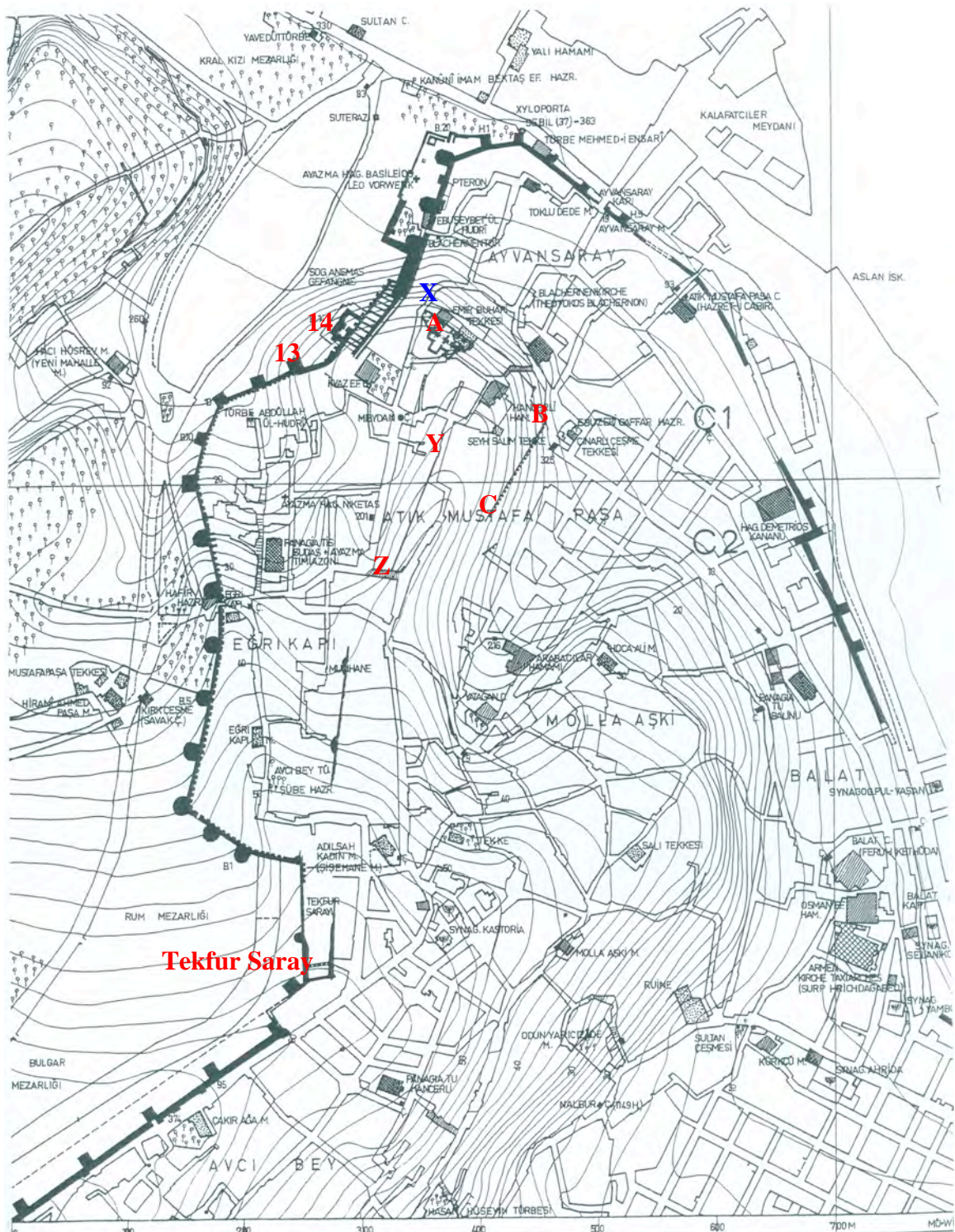


Fig. 2. Map of the Blachernai area (Müller-Wiener, 1977).



Fig. 3. Northern of the Blachernai palace complex, seen from the approximate location of the Blachernai Church and the *Hagiasma*, creating a platform.



Fig. 4. Northern wall of the Blachernai palace complex, looking towards the East, the point where the wall turns southwards.



Fig. 5. Northern wall of the Blachernai palace complex, looking towards the West, in the direction of the Emir Buhari Tekkesi.



Fig. 6. The approximate location of *Ta Hypsela*: the Dervişzade sokak bending around the Emir Buhari Tekkesi.



Fig. 7. Eastern wall of the Blachernai palace complex, seen from Kale Çk.



Fig. 8. Eastern wall of Blachernai palace complex, behind the third alley westwards from Ebe sokak (name of alley unknown).

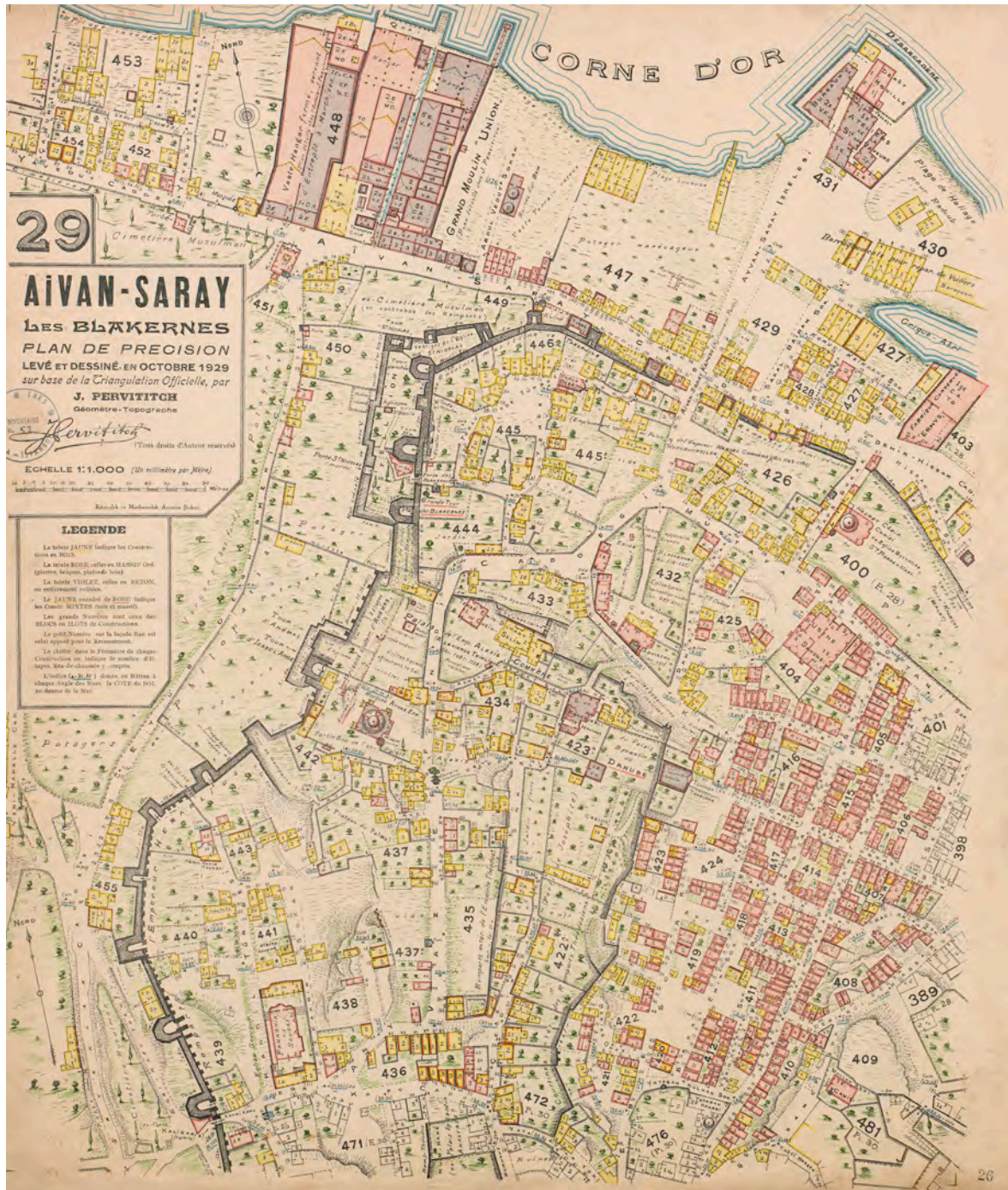


Fig. 9. Map of the Blachernai area (Pervititch, 1929).



Fig. 10. Air photo from the Blachernai area with indication of possible division of palace complex into a higher and lower area.



Fig. 11. Grand residential tower previously thought to be the tower of Isaac II (tower 14).



Fig. 12. Tower of Isaac II (tower 13).

APPENDIX II

On the images of the Virtues in the palace.

If you are expressing in colours the Emperor's character,
why have you painted only four virtues?

If it was not possible to represent [the other virtues that are begotten] of these
[four], why, instead of them all, have you not painted him in person?

And if you do not hold it accurate to paint this,
then you must believe to paint, oh artist, empty images.⁸⁴⁸

Another.

The emperor is in love, the painter leads him in.

Behold the maidens, beautiful like the seasons.

The maidens are four, the bridegroom one.

The wedding is pure, the bridal chambers renowned.⁸⁴⁹

On Prudence who points her finger at her head.

O maiden Prudence, is it on your own estimation

that you are pointing your finger at yourself?

Point it instead at the Emperor of the Roman country
who has shown his head to be your instrument.⁸⁵⁰

Another on the same.

Prudence pointed out with her finger

the self-taught goodwill of a wise mind.⁸⁵¹

On the image of Fortitude.

In representing the soul's boldness in the face of the passions,
the painter has given arms to Fortitude.⁸⁵²

[On the image] of Justice.

On seeing, O stranger, the image of the heavenly scales,
weigh well your actions in this life.⁸⁵³

[On the image] of Temperance.

Not only her crown, but also her modest gaze and her garments
that are drawn together, adorn Temperance.⁸⁵⁴

⁸⁴⁸ Philes, *Carmina* I, no. 237. The translation is partially by Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 247.

⁸⁴⁹ Philes, *Carmina* I, no. 238.

⁸⁵⁰ Philes, *Carmina* I, no. 241. Translation by Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 247.

⁸⁵¹ Philes, *Carmina* I, no. 242.

⁸⁵² Philes, *Carmina* I, no. 243. Translation by Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 247.

⁸⁵³ Philes, *Carmina* I, no. 244. Translation by Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 247.

⁸⁵⁴ Philes, *Carmina* I, no. 245. Translation by Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire*, 247.

APPENDIX III

THE KNOWN EARLY PALAIOLOGAN HOLDERS OF THE OFFICE *PARAKOIMOMENOS*, *PARAKOIMOMENOS TOU KOITONOS* AND *PARAKOIMOMENOS TES SPHENDONES*.

This table is based on a study of these offices via the PLP, TLG and Dimitris Kyritses, *The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries* (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1997), 399.

<i>Parakoimomenos tou koitonos</i>	<i>Parakoimomenos tes sphendones</i>	<i>Parakoimomenos</i>
Basil Basilikos (1260-1280)	Isaac Doukas (1260)	John Makrenos (1262)
	Dionysios (1267)	Dionysios Drimys? (ca. 1300)
	Gabriel Sphrantzes (1270-1281)	John Choumnos (1307-1308)
	Constantine Nestongos (1281-1307)	Rhaoul? (1309)
	Manuel Sergopoulos (1347-1354)	Andronikos Kantakouzenos (1320)
		Alexios Apokaukos (1321-1341)
		Andronikos Tornikes (1324-1328)
		John Phakrases (1328)
		Demetrios (1342)

Basil Basilikos: PLP 2458

Isaac Doukas: PLP 5691

Dionysios⁸⁵⁵

Gabriel Sphrantzes: PLP 27276

Constantine Nestongos: PLP 20201

Manuel Sergopoulos: PLP 25210

John Makrenos: PLP 92605

Dionysios Drimys?: PLP 5829

John Choumnos: PLP 30954

Rhaoul?: PLP 24106

Andronikos Kantakouzenos: PLP 10955

Alexios Apokaukos: PLP 1180

Andronikos Tornikes: PLP 29122

John Phakrases: PLP 29580

Demetrios: PLP 5298

⁸⁵⁵ Not mentioned in the PLP, but in Philes, *Carmina*, vol. 2, 260-263 (poem 242).

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