RISE OF GREAT ESTATES IN TWELFTH-CENTURY BYZANTIUM AND THE KOMNENIAN FAMILY

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ABSTRACT

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Eleventh century of the Byzantine Empire seems to have witnessed a political arena that was full of hustle and bustle and that had colourful and diverse players interacting for supremacy. It might be suggested that many eleventh-century emperors supported in one way or another expansion of influence of the powerful magnate families (military magnates from mainly Anatolia) in order to strike a balance against potential massive popular uprising. And as a result, in the twelfth century, a representative of the military aristocracy, Komnenos family, with the help of other allied families, managed to usurp the throne and ushered a period of stability, prosperity and self-confidence that lasted a century. This essay sets forth, in a nutshell, a thriving and procreative economic process that was manifest from the tenth century onwards and that culminated in the growing of great estates, and its social consequences that in effect made possible of the advent of the Komnenian system and also enabled the imperial family to consolidate and enforce its rule in the twelfth century.

ÖZET

Anahtar Kelimeler: Onikinci Asırda Bizans İmparatorluğu, Komnenos Ailesi, Bizans Ekonomisi, Tarım Üretimi, Büyük Toprak Sahipliği, Köy ve Bizans Köylüleri, *Paroikoi*, Manastırlar, Bizans Aristokrasisi, Askerî Topraklar ve *Pronoia*

Onbirinci asırda Bizans İmparatorluğu, taht üzerinde hakimiyet kurmak için birbirleriyle çekişen pek çok renkli aktörün var olduğu karmaşık bir siyasi arenaya şahit olmuştur. Bu devir imparatorlarının büyük kısmının, ki bazıları aristokratik ailelere mensuptur, Konstantinopolis'deki gittikçe güçlenen şehirli orta ve alt sınıf halkın siyasî tesirini azaltmak amacıyla, esasen Anadolu menşeli büyük toprak sahibi aristokrat ailelerin güçlenmelerini sağlayıcı tavizler verdikleri söylenebilir. Onikinci yüzyılda ise askerî aristokrasiyi temsilen, diğer güçlü ailelerle de birleşen Komnenos ailesi iktidarı zor kullanarak ele geçirmiş ve bir asır sürecek olan iktisadî ve siyasî istikrar, zenginlik ve kendine güven devrini başlatmıştır. Bu tezin ana konusu, onikinci asırda Komnenos siyasî sisteminin oluşmasına ve bu sistemin kendisini temellendirmesi ve güçlenmesine yol açan başarılı ve yaratıcı bir iktisadî sürecin özet bir şekilde tanımlanmasıdır. Bu süreç onuncu asırdan itibaren varlığını hissettirmiş, büyük toprak sahipliğinin oluşması ile de yeni sosyal hadiselere yol açmıştır.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The topic and aim of the present thesis is to discuss certain aspects of the socio-economic nature of the Byzantine countryside in the twelfth century that gave rise to the Komnenian system and that interacted with it. Without a sound understanding and appraisal of what was taking place in the overall economy and its social organization in the countryside, Komnenian political system cannot be fully appreciated. It goes without saying that there was interplay if not an inevitable dialectical relation between the socio-economic structure of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and the advent of the new imperial house. The unavoidable socio-economic developments, developments that resisted political considerations and always took a direction of its own, in the Byzantine countryside from the tenth century onwards, constituted a social raw material that was to be manipulated and appropriated by the Komnenian rulers and their associates.

Development of large estates, and their socio-economic organization and political appropriations therein constitute the main discussion in this present work. In order to better understand this social process and how the Komnenian family with its associates, they were in effect one of the social products of the aforementioned process, made use of it, certain issues have been addressed in the following chapters:

First chapter, the introduction, deals with the political developments before the advent of the Komnenians and the nature and domestic strife of the Komnenian

family in the twelfth century. Second chapter is about the basic economic situation of the Byzantine world. Main argument is that twelfth century witnessed an apparent economic progress along with a sustainable demographic growth that made it possible. Another component was monetary matters. Unlike the feudal European states Byzantines knew and used a systematized coinage and the state authority took advantage of this system by levying taxes in cash and utilized money as remuneration. Therefore monetary development of the eleventh and twelfth centuries is an indispensable feature within an environment of economic and demographic increase.

In the third chapter main argument is discussed: Great estates, lay and monastic, and their socio-economic roles in an environment of economic growth. In parallel of this, peasants' situation in the villages (*choria*) and in the estates (*proasteia*) and how they worked on their fields and what they cultivated will be touched upon. The problem of military lands are also to be examined albeit briefly.

Komnenian family owned great properties in mainly Paphlagonia region of Anatolia and it was, along with the *Doukai* and certain other members of the magnate families[1] such as *Phokas*, *Skleros*, *Botaneiates*, and *Diogenes*, representatives of a new era of the economic and political dominance of great estates owners. Unfortunately scarcity of the sources hinders the scholars' efforts and does not make possible to reach exact conclusions; conclusions that everybody agrees with. Kazhdan and Epstein have stressed that during the eighth and even ninth centuries there is no indication of existence of great estates belonging to the individual lay

[1] For a vivid narrative of how the magnate families turned to be real menaces, at the end of the tenth century, for the emperor see Treadgold, 1997:513-519.

people and ecclesiastical institutions, namely monasteries, and dependent peasants, tenant farmers – *paroikoi* –, although in the tenth century there appeared a tension between the free peasantry and a new social group, *dynatoi* (the powerful). The social group called powerful endeavoured to infiltrate into the villages in order to acquire vast tracts of land and to exploit tenant farmers who are to work on their fields. Even though it is not easy to understand how this process continued or whether or not they succeeded in their attempt, a particular document about the land register of the town of Thebes in the second half of the eleventh century hints certain facts. In the document terminology indicating high social status is frequent, in contrast to the fact that no regular or low class peasants were mentioned (Only one person was described as poor (*ptochos*) in the document)[2]. Nevertheless another fiscal document issued before 1204 in Attica refers to, in contrast to the Theban register, tenant farmers (*paroikoi*) and great estates (*proasteia*). Therefore one can assume that while great estate owners acquired considerable agricultural fields and tenant farmers, free peasantry and free villages still existed[3] (Kazhdan and Epstein, 1990:56-58).

Eleventh century (The period from just after the death of Basil II, 1025, to the reconsolidation of the system under the Komnenians during the 1090s) seems to have witnessed a political arena with more colourful and diverse players (comparing with the twelfth century Komnenians) interacting for supremacy. Savvides divides the period into two parts; first being "the bureaucracy-oriented dynasties" (1028 – 1057),

[2] Svoronos, 1959:18, line 66 reads: "… *Nikolaou ptochou huiou Andreas tou Troulou.*". Also see Svoronos, 1959: 5, 142, 144-145: Svoronos has concluded that in this period great landowners, who are the most numerous, possessed the majority of the agricultural fields in the region of Thebes. They bore such titles as *protospatharios*, *archontos*, *spatharokandidatos* and they resided in Athens, Thebes and Euripos. Also see Harvey, 2002:75-76.

[3] See Granstrem, Medvedev and Papachryssanthou, 1976:18

and the second being a sub-period of "Comneno-Ducae", (1057 – 1081), a precursor of the Komnenians, who all did great harm to the Byzantine state. Major harmful policy, according to Savvides, was that they all supported in one way or another expansion of influence of the powerful magnate families (military magnates from mainly Anatolia) in order to strike a balance against potential massive popular uprising[4] (Savvides, 1987, 248). Therefore there seem to have been three main contestants in the political sphere: Constantinopolitan bureaucracy, members of the Constantinopolitan guilds (which included in their actions the general urban populace) who sided with the different groups in the central bureaucracy or with the provincial magnates, and wealthy military families in the provinces. The balance was eventually tipped off in favour of the military aristocracy who gained more privileges during the eleventh century and they started using their influence to overthrow the emperors and usurp the throne. Hendy has also seen "a conscious political division" of the two opponent forces in the century: The first was the power of landed military aristocracy and provincial administrators, and the second group was a combination of civil aristocracy (City based) and Constantinopolitan bureaucracy. Since Basil II maintained a conscious policy of strict control over both groupings until 1025 at a time of ever increasing military and economic expansion, they were not allowed to have a fair share in the system. After the death of Basil, however, liberated by "artificial and anachronistic constraints" they quickly became involved in the race towards supremacy. The "civil faction" seemed initially victorious thanks to the highly centralised character of the state administration. Nevertheless military

[4] Vryonis has suggested that "Byzantine *demokratia* … is the political agitations and manifestations of the *demos*, the urban populace" and because the people of the City, majority of whom were members of the guilds, played active and decisive roles in the deposition of four emperors in the eleventh century, emperors were careful enough "to win the support of the urbanites by extensive grants and favors" (Vryonis, 1963: 291, 293).

aristocracy was amassing power and forging alliances in the meantime and they manifested themselves through the revolts of George Maniakes (1043) and Leo Tornikes (1047) during the reign of Constantine X. Monomachos. In parallel to these events the general populace of Constantinople (lower and high members of the guilds, well-to-do merchants and artisans, and simple poor people of the City) started to play important political roles from the second decade of the eleventh century. Many members of the guilds entered into senate and many were assigned military duties, although the nature of this military is uncertain[5]. A particular occasion in which all of those factions got involved to various extents was witnessed once more when Michael VII was deposed and Nikephoros III Botaniates was acclaimed emperor in 1078. Civil elements of the City (patriarch, members of synod, certain members of the senate, clergy, people of agora – from the lowest to the highest strata – and certain monks) gathered around Hagia Sophia, after the acclamation of Nikephoros, they attacked the Great Palace, captured and deposed the emperor Michael VII (Hendy, 2008: 570-580).

At the end of the eleventh century the Byzantine state suffered large territory losses and was harassed by internal political strife. Byzantine army was shaken drastically at the hands of Seljuk Turks near Manzikert in 1071. The forthcoming results were more dramatic than this single defeat; the Anatolian plateau was quickly overrun by unruly Turkic tribes and *Nicaea*, the gate of Constantinople was captured and functioned as the residence of the new Turkic Sultan. At the same time Normans in Italy constituted another trouble for the *basileus*. They did not only take last Byzantine outposts in Italy, but also started to advance into the very heartland of

[5] Vryonis calls these military units, quoting the phrase of Psellos (*politikon strateuma*), "people's army" and "citizens' army" when depicting the bloody civil war that cost at leat 3.000 lives in the City and that culminated in the deposition of Michael V Kalaphates in 1042 (Vryonis, 1963:307).

Byzantium. Amidst these military upheavals rival candidates to the throne contributed to the chaos by rebellions and by courting different groups of soldiers. Not until after General Alexios from the Komnenian family succeeded to the throne, did the Byzantine administrative and military structure regain its power and stability and began to function fairly well. Magdalino attributes the glory of Byzantium in the twelfth century mainly to the personal qualities of the three *Basileis*; Alexios (1081-1118), John (1118-1143) and Manuel (1143-1180) and also accepts a possibility that the Komnenian regime, at least for a short period of time, "provided for greater internal cohesion, military efficiency, and even economic prosperity" (Magdalino, 1983:336).

Komnenian dynasty, that was also equipped with the increasing awareness of blood descent and of marriage ties, created an imperial clan, which seems to have replaced the Anatolian magnate families of the tenth and eleventh centuries and which, as Magdalino has commented, amounted to "a vast, unproductive, [and] prodigal imperial establishment" (Magdalino, 1993:177). Starting with Alexios I, relatives of the emperors were received fiscal privileges and high titles and they were appointed to the most important military and civil posts[6]. This attitude was a sharp contrast to the system of Macedonian emperors whose "administrators were selected

[6] Magdalino has commented that "rewards and honours were not the icing on the cake of government, but, as Psellos, Kekaumenos, and Anna all recognized, the essence of government" (Magdalino, 1996:147-148). It is because, as Zonaras wrote, Alexios "treated the palace as his own home" (Magdalino, 1996:150). It is also because the Komnenian family lost its dearest properties to the Turks following the military confrontation in Manzikert, Alexios felt an urgent need that his family's property losses are to be compensated (i.e. increased). Therefore he reserved the fiscal privileges for his own family members and for his followers, shunning the former civil aristocracy of Constantinople."The effects of these concessions of fiscal revenues were offset by the confiscation of properties of other landowners" (Harvey, 1993: 141-142). For example certain properties of the Iviron monastery were confiscated in probably two stages: First before 1095 and second before 1101. The confiscated estates were donated by the emperor Alexios I Komnenos to John Doukas and Nikephoros Melissenos. And Alexios' brother Isaakios was awarded certain revenues some of which came from the confiscated properties of Iviron as well (Harvey, 2002:70).

according to the ruler's good pleasure but without any significant family requirements". Therefore "a big clan of [family] enterprise" replaced the old system of "personal relationship with the emperor" (Oikonomides, 1997: 210).

Alexios used all his sisters and daughters in order "to build up the connections of the Komnenoi with other aristocratic families. [He] made similar use of his nephews, nieces, and grand children, notably the children of his brother Isaac" (Magdalino, 1996:149). Since Alexios was a usurper from the start he owed his success, to an extent, to the family of his wife, Eirene Doukaina. Frankopan has commented, quoting Anna Komnene, that "an important faction of their [Komnenians] own supporters had emphatically underlined the fact that it was because of Alexios' wife, and not because of the young general himself, that they had agreed to participate in the coup" (Frankopan, 2007:4). Magdalino has given a list of the in-laws of the Komnenians by the end of his rule as follows: "Doukas (x4), Diogenes, Melissenos, Taronites, Botaneiates (x2), Bryennios, Kourtikios, Katakalon, Euphorbenos, Dokeianos, Synadenos" (Magdalino, 1996:149).

Nevertheless adversaries of the ruling Komnenians came from within the family[7] and real danger would occur when there was a power vacuum caused by the death of an emperor, as was also commented upon by Alexios' wife Irene with these words: "In the absence of a successor it is necessary to seek an emperor". Therefore John II, Alexios' eldest son, had to organise a fait accompli in order to be crowned; seeing that both his elder sister Anna and his own mother Irene would not support his cause, he, with his supporters that included armed men, his relatives and "not a few of the promiscuous crowd" from the Constantinopolitan populace, literally, attacked

[7] Even during the reign of Alexios I Komnenos "plots were uncovered which implicated those who were close to the emperor – directly or indirectly by marriage, … Michael Taronites, the Emperor's brother-in-law, provides one such example" (Frankopan, 2007:12).

the great palace. John and his followers, in spite of the resistance demonstrated by the palace guards, managed to smash open the palace gates and occupied the palace. He was the eldest son of Alexios, therefore he deemed himself a natural successor of his father, but fearing "his rivals' [i.e. his nearest blood relatives] inordinate passion to seize power" he remained in the palace for a while and managed the affairs from there until he thought that the danger was over. In order to solidify his position he, immediately, started bestowing titles and honours to his relatives, especially to his brother Isaakios, who did not oppose his accession and helped him in his struggle. Additionally John "appointed the administrators of public affairs from among his blood relatives". Nevertheless his opponents were far from being coerced. Even before his first year in throne elapsed, in 1119, his elder sister Anna, her husband Nikephoros Bryennios and many of their men[8] plotted to kill him when he was camping at a place just outside the city walls of Constantinople. Although conspirators bribed the soldiers who were keeping the city gates, their plan was foiled and John's life was saved. In this incident one can perceive the tragedy of the Komnenian emperors, as was also expressed painfully by John (although it was actually Choniates that spoke) when he uttered these words upon hearing that his sister Anna was "the chief instigator of the plot": "kinsmen have become the enemy". Yet even if their nearest kin plotted against them with the intention of murder, they were unable to inflict a severe punishment on the conspirators. Since the new system of family government entailed collaboration, or at least approval, from the family, emperors actually needed even their treacherous relatives. Probably

[8] It is also evident that members of the imperial clan, while enjoying the benefits accruing from their great landed properties, also supported a number of their "own men, thus creating a social pyramid of mutually depended interests", which would, in turn, provide the high members of Komnenian aristocracy with a great social and political sphere of influence (Oikonomides, 1997: 211).

that's why Choniates wrote on this plot that "conspirators … were not maimed or flagellated, but they were deprived of their possessions, which, after some time, were returned to most of them" (Magoulias, 1984: 5-9).

When John II died in Cilicia in 1143, the same ambition of imperial power struggle yet again manifested itself. His eldest surviving son, Isaakios, was in Constantinople and his younger son Manuel was with his father, in Cilicia. According to Choniates, *megas domestikos* John Axouch organized a great ceremony, while emperor John was still in his deathbed, during which all the military and nobles present in Cilicia "loudly acclaimed [Manuel]" as a rightful successor. After he had secured the allegiance of the great majority of the army and the nobles against those who "deemed themselves more worthy to rule the empire [e.g. elder brother Isaakios]", he and another official were sent by Manuel to Constantinople in order "to make arrangements for the smooth transfer of power". John won the place guards over, and thereby managed to seize the brother Isaakios from the palace and put him into custody in Pantokrator monastery, made the citizens acclaim Manuel emperor and procured the loyalty of the Church with the help of imperial letters and a "sum of two hundred pounds in silver coins" (Magoulias, 1984: 26-30). Nevertheless this was not the end of opposition. Whole reign of Manuel was filled with a fear of treachery. Yet, during his reign, opposition to Manual seems to have developed a more organized character. Magdalino has argued that *megas domestikos* John Axouch might not, in fact, have been a person of true loyalty to Manuel. Taking another historian, William of Tyre, into consideration he has suggested that "it was

not John Axouch but an unnamed *mystikos*[9] who acted to prevent Isaac from seizing power in Constantinople". He has further reflected that, since Kinnamos did not mention John's mission to Constantinople, and since William of Tyre even recounted an episode during which John Axouch expressed views, while the emperor John was in death bed and dignitaries were deliberating the issue of succession, which were not in favour of Manuel but he sided with his elder brother Isaakios, John Axouch might have acted not "out of love for Manuel" but "out of respect for John II's dying wishes" if he acquiesced to the transition of power to Manuel (Magdalino, 1987: 212-213). Three more incidents can further enlighten this. First one which was written by Kinnamos and which has been re-interpreted by Magdalino is that, during a dinner to which prominent family members including brother Isaakios, cousin Andronikos and (although not from family) John Axouch were invited in sometime between 1144-1146, John Axouch, apparently with the consent of brother Isaakios, praised the late emperor John II exceedingly and to a degree that he even "showed ingratitude to the son [Manuel]". They started arguing about this and the situation suddenly got out of control. Andronikos abused Isaakios with angry words and then Isaakios, unable to restrain his rage, drew his sword and tried to chop his head off. Emperor Manuel came to help to Andronikos at the last minute by stopping the sword with his horse-whip, but he was wounded by his wrist (Magdalino, 1987: 207-208). Second incident is that, personal bodyguard of John Axouch, Poupakes, helped Andronikos escape from Manuel. Poupakes, according to Choniates, gave

[9] *Mystikos* (the secret one) was an administrative person/office in the Byzantine state. The office was first created in the ninth century and it evolved during the centuries. By the eleventh century it assumed judicial responsibility, and in the twelfth century the office took certain important functions: They were essential figures in the imperial family and treasury, they assumed the duty of organization of salary payments and they were emperors' agents for the patronage and protection of monasteries. For a detailed study on the duties of the twelfth-century-*mystikos* see Magdalino, 1984a.

Andronikos “provisions and guides to show the way”. Manuel, in return, “had Poupakes arrested and had him publicly scourged” and had him flogged violently. As a close person to John Axouch, Poupakes might have acted with the implicit approval of Axouch (Magoulias, 1984: 74-75). Manuel was to accuse Axouch’s son, Alexios, at a later day, of treason and tonsured him into a monastery (Magoulias, 1984: 82). These episodes, coupled with Andronikos’ constant attempts to Manuel’s life, might suggest that from the very beginning of Manuel’s reign a more concentrated and organized opposition was forming from among the family. Conflicting interests went from bad to worse when Manuel died in 1180 leaving his son Alexios, he was but a minor, under the guardianship of his foreign mother who was not acknowledged by all as a legitimate sovereign, and family members became involved in a destructive war for the throne without restrained.

CHAPTER 2

GENERAL ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

2.1. Economic Situation

A grim picture of deteriorating socio-economic life of Byzantium from the ninth to the twelfth centuries used to be drawn before the more complicated works of scholars who were better equipped with recent textual, archaeological and numismatic evidence appeared. Hendy endeavours to demystify the much accepted opinion of his time and the time preceding that the ninth and tenth century Byzantium was supposed to have had a thriving agricultural life which was spread over coastal Balkans, Anatolia and Aegean islands and which was effected by free peasantry who also constituted the backbone of army and navy, a dynamic city life, and a maritime trade which was carried out by Byzantine merchants; as a result Empire secured its economic and defensive needs by a reliable revenue which was also evidenced by a stable currency. In the course of the twelfth century, however, Anatolian plain, source of agricultural wealth and manpower, was lost to the Turks, farmer soldiers were replaced by expensive, untrustworthy, hence ruinous mercenaries that were wielded by oppressing feudal lords and its trade fell prey to the expanding Italian towns (Hendy, 1970:31-32 and Lefort, 2002:232-233). Hendy suggests a more in depth analysis to counter this opinion. That the empire lost its provinces of inner Anatolia and southern Italy after the eleventh century is true, but it also enlarged its territories towards northern Balkans, captured Crete and Cyprus and

even exercised some sort of dominion over the Crimea and southern Russia. Moreover coastal strip of Anatolia remained under the direct control of Byzantium throughout the twelfth century: The coastal area stretching from Trebizond to Dorylaion (Eskişehir) and down to the south to Sozopolis (Uluborlu), and towards the east to Antioch, was more fertile and productive for any agricultural operation and more densely populated than the inner plateau. General agricultural productivity of Anatolia, however, having possibly being subject to extensive commercial farming in Hellenistic and Roman periods in addition to climatic and geographical transformations might have deteriorated by the formative period of the Byzantine state. Thus the agricultural significance of Anatolian soil was probably exaggerated by the earlier scholars (Hendy, 1970:32-36).

In addition, loss of grain supplier provinces, Egypt and North Africa were captured by the Arabs by the eighth century and Sicily was lost to Normans in the beginning of the tenth century, might have been compensated by another mode of production: livestock.[10] Whereas average daily bread ration in the Late Antique period was around 3 to 6 pounds, twelfth century Byzantine villager, as Kazhdan asserts, had to be content with the bread of one pound and a half for a day. There seems to be a considerable decrease in grain ration which might not necessarily indicate an economic downfall since Byzantines complemented their bread ration with meat, cheese and milk. The fact that Bulgaria which was firmly incorporated to the state in the course of eleventh and twelfth centuries became a major cattle supplier province also gave an additional security to the alimentation question of

[10] Animal husbandry was very important activity in Epiros and it is evident from the booty of Andronikos III in 1336; he allegedly took 300.000 oxen, 5.000 horses and 1.200.000 sheep from Albanians (Laiou, 2002:325-326).

Byzantium (Kazhdan, 1982:117-119). Farmer's Law might demonstrate the importance of animal husbandry in that roughly 37 articles deal with animals (mainly ox, occasionally dog and rarely pig, sheep, ass etc), only 27 articles refer to agricultural production. Some articles also state that animals like dog, sheep or pig were protected even if they destroyed nearby fields until they continued doing harm to the farms third time (Kazhdan, 1982:119 and Ashburner, 1912:91-92).[11]

Although the Empire lost inner Anatolia and Southern Italy in this period, these regions were not sources of major agricultural activity but rather places of animal husbandry, especially for cattle and horses. It is known that some "aristocratic" families had large estates in Anatolia reserved for horse breeding (Hendy, 1989, p. III 5). After the loss of these territories Balkan regions such as Thrace, Bulgaria, and Macedonia took precedence for meat sources and for providing horses. Therefore it might not have been only out of good luck that inner Bulgaria was conquered by Byzantium after the loss of the Anatolian plateau. Agricultural activity was mainly carried out in the Balkans. Trace, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Thessaly and Bithynia provided cereals while Aegean coast and islands supplied the empire with wine and olive oil (Laiou and Morrisson, 2007, pp. 97-98). Empire seems to have depended much, during and after the twelfth century on its European lands. Hendy is dubious whether what this shift of territorial proportion might economically stand for, and suggests that more studies should be made on the economic significance of the absorption of inner Balkans into Byzantine system (Hendy, 1970,

[11] Articles 49 and 53 of the Farmer's Law indicate that only after three intrusions one can acquire the right to kill the animal. Harmful animal should be returned to its master in the first and second incidents. Moreover ox seems to be, quite reasonably, a much more precious animal in that article 44 reads that if somebody runs into an ox in the wood and kills it and carries the meat, his hand will be cut off (Ashburner, 1912:91-92).

33). Politically speaking however, Anatolian plateau was not densely populated and importance of agricultural production was secondary to pastoralism, and inner Asia Minor was the basis of pastoral *dynatoi* who were inheritors of the earlier *thematic* soldiers and who were threatening the supremacy of the central authority. Hendy therefore argues that the empire actually did not loose an economic and demographic resource of significance but got rid of this recalcitrant and menacing *dynatoi* after the loss of the inner Asia Minor to Turks (Hendy, 1989, p. III 6).

Although incomplete, much evidence points to an economic upsurge, a flourishing agricultural practice and a burgeoning trade and artisanal production in the twelfth century and especially in the European provinces and Aegean islands of the empire. Travel accounts of westerners and Arabs, Byzantine literary texts, numismatic evidence, archaeological excavations, church construction activities, archives of Mt. Athos, all of which indubitably illustrate both increase in population and in agricultural land and other types of land exploitation coupled with an active rural and urban life (Magdalino,1993:140).

Urban expansion went hand in hand with the economic growth in the countryside and "reached its apex in the eleventh and twelfth centuries". Although cities, in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, were centres, primarily, of administrative and military organizations, they "also acquired, soon enough, the usual role of an urban agglomeration, as places where both production and exchange of commodities took place" (Laiou and Morrisson, 2007:131).

> Effective demand for manufactured products was concentrated in the cities: for one thing, the Byzantine aristocracy was an urban one. Elite demand for expensive, high-status items increased in the eleventh-twelfth centuries. Rich aristocrats and urban elites manifested a new interest in

> luxuries. But the urban middle class was not far behind; its members, too, were interested in what the aristocracy enjoyed. And demand trickled down, even to less affluent people, and even to the countryside, with its modest need for inexpensive glass or metal jewelry (Laiou and Morrisson, 2007:132).

Laiou and Morrisson have argued that "… the very expansion of the urban space produced something of a building boom" (Laiou and Morrisson, 2007:131). Construction of Nea Moni in the island of Chios in the middle of the eleventh century might illustrate how economic prosperity and imperial patronage were craftily combined. It was not, in the beginning, an imperial project, neither was it an aristocratic enterprise but it was an illustration of an age where economic developments had a share. According to the story behind the creation of the this monastic institution, three hermits discovered a miracle-working icon of the Theotokos, and subsequently they visited the future emperor Constantine XI Monomachos in the island of Mitilene where he had been banished from Constantinople and prophesized that he would be emperor should he support the monastery. After his accession he had the monastery built and supported its development generously. Bouras has also argued that "under the pretext of creating a home worthy of a miracle-working icon, they aimed not only at founding a large monastery but also at securing for it a considerable income and almost complete exemption from taxation" (Bouras, 1982:26). Architectural design of the main church of the monastery might be indicative of the fact that "the interaction of various geographical areas becomes more dynamic, particularly, it seems during the twelve-year reign of Constantine Monomachus" (Ousterhout, 1992:59). Monastery received liberal gifts from the emperors as well as obtained various landed properties in Thrakesion theme (close to the modern city İzmir), near Philadelphia, in Thessaly

and in the capital. It possessed villagers who were exempt from taxes (i.e. they paid their taxes to the monastery not to the fisc) (Bouras, 1982:30-31). Thus a small island benefited economic and political opportunities that the Byzantine society in the eleventh and twelfth century offered.

This view might be supported by the codification of the *Farmer's Law* at the end of the tenth century, which deals with numerous instances between peasant communities and which might have reflected the realities of the countryside whereby peasants were constantly forming close relations with each other and involving situations which called for legislations by the state due to the growing impact of economic revival (Ashburner, 1910 and 1912).

Kazhdan, by approaching the issue from a different angle, also concludes that the eleventh and twelfth centuries constituted an epoch of economic prosperity since Byzantines lived considerably longer lives. The average life span of a group of Byzantine authors, fifteen writers whose life stories were recorded somewhat reliably, in the twelfth century was 71, whereas that of some one hundred western writers in the same century was only 63. Komnenian emperors enjoyed a long life span as well. Alexios I died when he was about 70, John II when he was 56, had he not died of an unfortunate hunting accident he would have lived much longer, Manuel I died at 62 and his cousin Andronikos I was deposed and lynched when he was 62 (Kazhdan, 1982:116-117).

Economic prosperity and political cohesion of the empire, however, can be said to have shattered rapidly during and after the thirteenth century. Angeliki Laiou points out that the empire lost its capability to sustain the unity and meaningful

coexistence of its disparate lands by the fourteenth century. Various regions of the empire behaved quite independently from each other as if they were separate entities which only exacerbated the future prospects (Laiou, 2002: 311). That the Latins were expelled from the power politics of Constantinople in 1261 did not coincide with their total disposal of the economic influence over the city; stripped of its domestic territorial cohesion and of its navy, the empire seems to have been dependent much more on the maritime trade system which was operated mainly by Genoese and Venetians. Laiou argues that since Byzantine state was unable to act as a unifying apparatus, its position was taken over by Italian merchant cities after the fourteenth century through their trade networks thereby facilitating the economic manipulation of the former and current Byzantine territories. This system, eventually, gave way to "regional economies" within Byzantium, whose positions were determined by their functions among the structure of the eastern Mediterranean trade rather than shaped by the necessities of the Byzantine central administration (Laiou, 2002: 312). Depopulation and decrease of wealth, however, followed suit: Laiou maintains that wealth of *paroikoi* households decreased at a higher degree than the number of the same households. This may signify an overall tendency of diminishing agricultural productivity, resulting from the fact that the population reached its natural level and it cannot be sustained thereafter with the same system of socio-economic organization (Laiou and Morrisson, 2007: 90). She notes, on the other hand, that at the same time there were quite many agrarian fields which lay empty and there was a competition among the estate holders for *paroikoi* to settle on the land or for *eleutheroi*, the poorest of the peasants, to work on the field as wage labourers (Laiou, 2002: 316). If there are empty agricultural fields and a demand for

labour on the part of the landlords but no workforce to cultivate the farms, then we may turn our attention to political sphere; it is possible that the peasants who endured the devastating effects of the foreign armies (including Catalan and Turkish raids) and civil wars throughout the first half of the fourteenth century, might have moved to other places and chosen to work on the more secure lands which may have been protected to some extent and some may have even chosen to join to the soldiers in civil wars.

2.2 Coinage and Its Impact on Economy

Money distribution in the Byzantine Empire, as a general rule, was mainly actuated by the state establishment in Constantinople, whose main concern was to sustain its administrative structure and to meet the military expenses. The bulk of the gold coinage was, thus, distributed by means of cash salaries, *rhogai*, to the dignitaries who resided in, apart from Constantinople, in important administrative provincial cities or towns of military significance, like Thessaloniki, or to the market places from which armies would purchase their subsistence. The gold coinage, unless it was intentionally taken out of circulation, would return to Constantinople by way of annual tax collection, which was essentially extracted from agricultural produce (Harvey, 2002:80).

Nevertheless it is highly problematic to ascertain to what extent the Byzantine economy was monetized through the ages. Hendy has suggested that coin, gold, silver or copper, formed just a portion, sometimes a small one, of the wealth of the provincial aristocratic families and of the affluent populace of Constantinople origin.

He has further commented that "the possession of coined money" did not necessarily correspond to the basic visible feature of "the possession of wealth"; not even in the eleventh and twelfth centuries when overall situation of Byzantine economy reached its peak. Since "trade, industry and credit" only played a minimal role or they were even nonexistent in certain areas in the community life, money in coined form was not an efficient and operable way of private investment, other than it was used to pay for the expenses of administration and of military by the central government of Constantinople. One of the greatest private establishments at the end of the eleventh century (Monastery of *Petritzos* which was founded by the *megas domestikos* of the West, Gregory Pakourianos) clearly invested its surplus in agricultural fields and in any other immoveable property[12]. The richest stratum of the empire would, then, tend not to store cash, which Hendy has argued that "did not easily and obviously express either status or even the possession of wealth itself", but to find other more convenient ways of investing the assets and thereby expressing grandiose: they would collect items made of precious metals, jewels, silk and gold bullion. They could also store these items in safe places in monasteries; in so doing their role in economic exchange was to be minimized as well (Hendy, 2008: 218-220).

Harvey, on the other hand, has pointed out that another way of money distribution was the gifts, especially those the emperors bestowed upon monasteries. According to the legal practice known as *solemnion*, either direct cash from the imperial treasury or fiscal revenues of a certain area were assigned to a particular

[12] Although the monastery would definitely need cash which was realized probably from the selling of their surplus produce in order to purchase landed property, it did not regard money something valuable for an investment but exchanged it in return for immoveable assets. Those peasants (maybe independent peasantry) who received cash for the property they sold would use the money to meet the fiscal obligations they had failed by that time, or to settle in another place, probably as *paroikoi.*

monastery. Athonite monasteries were especially favoured by the emperors in the eleventh century. Basic function of these payments was to ensure that the monastery would acquire sufficient means of survival, therefore it was probable that the majority of the cash allowances went to the monasteries which were located in the urban centres (for the relative lack of agricultural production that is necessary for the provisioning of the monastery), and the growth of monastic life throughout the countryside would facilitate the use and spread of coinage as well, although it is virtually impossible to evaluate the effect of the transmission of coinage beyond the city borders (Harvey, 2002: 82-83).

Nevertheless lack of coinage was evidenced in several areas in the empire. There was a great disturbance in Paphlagonia and some adjacent regions, for example at the second half of the thirteenth century, when the empire Michael VIII decided to reassess the tax payments and demanded more. Pachymeres commented on this occasion that "although the land particularly easily yielded useful things [sc. crops], it only sparsely yielded coinage (*nomismata*)" (Hendy, 2008:298).

It was also attested in Choniates that the revolt of Peter and Asan in Bulgaria at the end of the twelfth century, which was eventually to lead the establishment of the Second Bulgarian Empire, was initially prompted by the great disturbance created by the demand of Constantinople over the levying a cash tax instead of tax in kind, because there was evidently not enough cash in the region or the economy of Bulgaria was not penetrated by a monetized system (Magoulias, 1984: 203-204).

Harvey, none the less, has favoured the opinion that overall Byzantine economy continued expanding, mainly due to the increase in population and

corresponding boost in the agricultural production, during the eleventh century, and this economic expansion can also be evidenced by "the increased flexibility of the monetary system during the eleventh and twelfth centuries". Classic coinage system based on gold, silver and copper coins was rather cumbersome and was not helpful in any commercial activity. Although Harvey has interested less in the causes than the results, he has observed that both the first phase of the debasement of the gold *nomisma*, which lasted to the end of the reign of Constantine IX Monomachos (1555) and which was a mild debasement, and the second phase which happened to be during 1070s and 1080s and which represented a violent debasement, created an increase of unspecified quantity of coinage; this "increase in money in circulation was probably matched by an increase in the number of transactions", therefore an increase in economic vitality in production and consumption levels (Harvey, 2002: 89). Harvey has further pointed out that the debasement of the coinage in the eleventh century and subsequent fiscal reform of 1106-9 allowed the government increase the income which comes from cash payments and enforce higher rates of land-tax and he concludes that the fiscal pressure placed upon the rural population helped the state to expand its direct control over the lands, providing the Capital with more wealth. He saw this development however as a proof of economic vitality (Harvey, 1995, pp. 255-258).

Grierson has distinguished two phases of the rapid debasement: that of the period between 1042 and 1055 (The reign of Constantine IX Monomachos) and that of the period between 1070 and 1080 (a period which is characterized by the invasion of the Asia Minor by Seljuk Turks). He is more interested in the causes of the monetary instability and he has suggested that the first speedy debasement was a

direct result of "the extravagance and lack of public feeling of the Empress Zoe and of Constantine IX". Mainly relying on the accounts of Psellos and on those of other Byzantine historians, like Kedrenos, Grierson has alleged that the great wealth collected by Basil II still survived until the reign of Constantine IX Monomachos, although previous emperors had lavishly dissipated it. These great riches were, as Grierson quoted from Psellos, squandered completely by the imperial couple, and this marked "the turning point in the prosperity of the state and beginning of its decline". Not only did Constantine IX spend previous wealth but he also started debasement which was to prove disastrous for the empire in the following decades. Second phase of debasement, however, can be justified in that sudden military defeats and subsequent losses of territory prompted a considerable increase in military spending, and this spending was made possible through a further debasement (Grierson, 1954: 379-394).

Laiou and Morrisson have asserted that, although without defining the possible causes, there were three phases of debasement and they have also indicated that the debasement actually started in the 950s with a faint step and the first phase went on until the reign of Michael IV (1034-1041). This was not ruinous because the debasement was mild and it only reduced the gold purity in the coin (*nomisma*) by only six to ten percent[13]. The second phase was again not so harmful for the general economy of the state. This period lasted from the reign of Constantine IX[14] until the end of Romanos Diogenes (1068-1071). By the end of this phase the purity of gold in

[13] A golden *nomisma* (solidus) consisted of 24 carats of pure gold, which corresponded to 100 percent of pure gold in the coin.

[14] Also see Kaplanis, 2003:768-801: Kaplanis has commented, in parallel - in part - to Hendy, that debasement in Constantine's reign (1042-1055) was not caused "by the increase in the number of transactions in an expanding economy", it was rather a simple result of the urgent need to finance the war against the Patzinaks.

nomisma fell to 70 per cent. Although eleventh-century historians blamed the imperial couple of Zoe and Constantine for depleting the treasury which had been collected by Basil II, they all failed to notice the debasement practice. For the debasement in the second phase Laiou and Morrisson have argued that "luxury constructions were not the only reason for tampering with money, a process which, in an era of limited credit, was the only way to increase public income". They have agreed with Harvey that the increase in the gold coinage circulating matched with a "corresponding increase in the number of monetized transactions", which was also evidenced by a relative stability in prices. However the third phase proved catastrophic. Only in this period did the contemporary historians start to realize the debasement. During the 1080s gold amount in the *nomisma* was just around 10 percent (Laiou and Morrisson, 2007: 147-155).

Hendy, who has been much interested in the causes, has stated that "the pattern of the eleventh-century debasement …. had a fiscal basis" and has placed the responsibility of this practice on Michael IV (1034-1041). Considering the short period of time during which the debasement was implemented (debasement was started by Michael IV from 1034 and the rate of debasement was accelerated from the reign of Michael VII (1071-1078) to the first decade of Alexios I (until 1090), Hendy has suggested the changes in such a short time could only reflect a fiscal operation rather than a drastic alteration in overall economic system. Reign of Michael IV was characterized by lavish expenditures and bitter taxation, and there was a connection between the two; the latter being a result of the former. Great construction projects depleted the treasury and the central government resorted to debasement in order to obtain more cash. According to Scylitzes, Michael IV came

from humble origins and he was also a money-changer before he was crowned; therefore he could easily resort to debasement, or at least he showed less "prejudice against debasement"[15]. After Michael VII (1071-1078) however things went from bad to worse and the empire saw every kind of military and political crises. Hendy has proposed that the debasement "was a natural consequence of the budgetary imbalance that arose out of increased expenditure on the one hand, and a decreasing revenue on the other", although he did not wholly discard the effect of the lavish expenditure of Michael IV on the first phase of the debasement (Hendy, 2008: 233-236).

Finally Alexios I Komnenos managed to drive out the Normans in 1085 and virtually annihilated the Patzinaks in 1091 and he restored the peace to the empire. Subsequently military success was followed by a series of fiscal and administrative reforms. Devaluated coinage system was overhauled in 1092 and taxation system was reorganized during 1106 – 1109. These reforms brought a respite and stability to the provinces that had been harassed by the fiscal confusion (Harvey,1996:167-184).

2.3. Population Growth as an Economic Phenomenon

Recent studies[16] confidently claim that population grew considerably between two catastrophic plagues of 541 (Justinianic Plague) and 1347 (Black Death). However it was actually not *the Black Death* that put to an end to the population

[15] This argument, however, was rejected by Laiou and Morrisson on the grounds that the debasement actually started long before Michael IV became emperor (Laiou and Morrisson, 2007: 148, footnote 169).

[16] Harvey, (2002), pp. 48-50; Laiou and Morrisson, (2007), p. 91-96; Lefort, 2002:267-268; Lefort, (1993), pp. 104-105;Lefort, (1986), pp. 14-15.

growth but the general system inherent in rural economy which is mainly agricultural. The demographic growth could not have continued forever, there must have been certain boundaries and by the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries this boundary was reached. Land became scarcer and a "Malthusian bind" was reached (Laiou and Morrisson, 2007, p. 90). After this point, the population growth could not act positively but it became a hindrance to the society which was no longer able to sustain it with the traditional agricultural system. *The Black Death* was just an accelerator and not the generator of the crises.

Harvey, having analysed the *praktika* of *Thebes* reaches the same conclusion that the population grew in the eleventh century in central Greece. He pointed out that in the eleventh century the state insisted on applying full land tax, *demosion*, on *klasmatic* fields – an agricultural plot which having been deserted by its owner, was automatically transferred to state property, ready to be sold or leased – whereas the general practice in the tenth century was to impose a 1/12 of the *demosion* on the *klasmatic lands*. This shows, according to Harvey that since the demand and hence the value of land increased in the region in response to population growth, the state would be able to enforce full rate of *demosion* even onto the *klasmatic* lands (Harvey, 1982-83:22, 24-25).

Hendy contributed to the research carried out by C. Mango and E. Hawkins on religious buildings in Cyprus. Mango and Hawkins point out that there was continuous growth in the numbers and donations concerning "painted churches" and "ecclesiastical foundations" in twelfth century Cyprus and concluded that during the twelfth century, the political and military importance of the island, which they attributed first to the impact of the Crusades and of the newly established Crusader

states along the Levantine coastland and to the imperialistic attitude of Alexios I, grew and attracted imperial attention from Constantinople (Mango and Hawkins, 1966, pp. 204-205). Hendy, on the other hand, while accepting the increasing political importance of the island, asserts that the reason behind the growth of the ecclesiastical institutions cannot be fully understood unless a background of a sustainable demographic expansion has been taken into account (Hendy, 1970, p. 47). This idea is particularly illustrative since ecclesiastical institutions function within a well established society; there has to be a solid population around churches and monasteries in order to serve and be served. There has to be enough labour force in order to gather the necessary surplus production, therefore a proliferation of ecclesiastical properties suggests, if not requires, a corresponding population growth.

The population growth in the contemporary medieval West and its impact on society accentuate more or less similar consequences. From the eleventh century onwards Western Europe witnessed a substantial demographic increase. Again predominantly agricultural in economy, the only incentive in economic development came from human labour. The growing number of people from every social stratum scattered around to find new sources of income. Some cleared lands which were not previously in use and took up agriculture, some gathered in towns or created new towns. While the younger generation of "nobility" set off for adventure (The source of Norman incursions to England, to Sicily and to Southern Italy and of crusades can also be related to demographic expansion) some looked for new lands in which to settle and colonized Slavic lands in Eastern Europe. These might not have been possible without a considerable increase in population (Pirenne, 1937, pp. 66-85). Farmers provided more income to their lords, since the number of tenants and

agricultural fields increased. They also provide more provisions to existent and future towns hence a stimulus to trade and founding of new towns. Townsmen in return contributed to the monetary economy through their transactions and finally the old system of *serfdom* gradually but consistently transformed towards a system of interactions which allowed more flexibility and freedom thanks to the replacement of forced labour by the monetary burden. Notions of *"serfdom"* and *"feudal relations"* did not exist in Byzantine society although some similarities might be deduced from scraps of evidence. However since the societies of Byzantium and those of Western Europe shared the same means of subsistence which is predominantly self sufficient agriculture, the impact of population growth to the overall socio-economic system appears similar in many respects; for example the increase in cultivated fields, in towns and villages, in agricultural products, in trade and in monetary exchange. Yet again since the system was largely supported by traditional agricultural practices, the growth of the population could not be sustained after a while and the crisis broke out and was exacerbated by *Black Death* of 1347.

Nevertheless it is difficult to establish a coherent population density in the provinces since "it was always unevenly distributed". Improved security which might have partly owed to the efficiency of the Byzantine army, construction and restoration of rural castles and small towns in the ninth and tenth centuries in Anatolia and the Balkans might have also helped the population growth be sustained. While it is not always possible to discern from textual documents when and how much the population increased, some other evidence can demonstrate certain features of it, notably the situation of the forests and woodlands. The general conviction of this study is that once forests are in recession it indicates a human interference to

make room for more area for agriculture. Therefore forests in the western Macedonia started to recede around the year 1000 or before, in Thessaly around 900, in eastern Macedonia and in Thrace forests became smaller by the fourteenth century.[17] Jacques Lefort has studied the cadaster of Radolibos and has found that even before the twelfth century less productive areas around the village were cleared from the wood and other scrubland and they were opened to agricultural work. He concludes that since the newly acquired fields were small in proportion and their locations were dispersed, probably not the landowner but the peasants themselves initiated and carried out the clearance work. There was an earlier example of such a personal initiative: A peasant by the name of Pantoleon, son-in-law of Dobrobetes cleared an area in Radolibos and turned it into an agricultural field.[18] Lefort establishes a general demographic pattern of increase throughout Eastern Macedonia from the twelfth century until the fourteenth century by using the archive material of the Iviron monastery of Mount Athos which consisted mainly of *praktika*, concerning *Radolibos*. According to the *praktikon* of 1103 there were 122 households in the village, whereas the *praktikon* which was composed in 1316 shows that the households increased to 226. He suggests that this demographic growth made possible the two ways of land exploitation: partial deforestation and incorporating uncultivated areas to agricultural occupation. He also concludes that since many other new villages were founded in the region and forest exploitations continued as he deduced from Mount Athos archives and from topographic and geographic analysis, a demographic increase in the Eastern Macedonia between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries was evident (Lefort, 1986).

[17] See Dunn, 1992:244-246

[18] Actes d'Iviron 2:48, pp. 184, 187. Area of the village of the Radolibos, sometime between 1098 and 1103, included a small field (*choraphion*) that was cleared by a certain villager, Pantoleon.

Harvey suggests that the growing large estates also signify an increase in rural population in this period. Since the state authority insists with *chrysobulls* that only landless peasants who had not any fiscal obligation to the treasury could settle into the villages which were owned by great estate holders, he concludes that establishing new lands to be cultivated by formerly landless peasants is a clear indication of a population increase. He also points out that in 1047 the Iviron monastery possessed large estates on which 246 *paroikoi* were settled. The number of *paroikoi* increased to 294 by the beginning of the twelfth century despite confiscations of some of its estates, and finally 460 *paroikoi* were counted working on the estates by the early fourteenth century while there was no increase in the estates (Harvey, 1989: 48-50).

Lefort drew a picture of Macedonian countryside. In the ninth century village communities dominated the region, and there were only "a few large holdings". Villages, located on the hill slopes, had agricultural fields on the flat areas and they also made use of the hills and mountains for raising animals and gathering fruits. In the tenth century, however, demographic growth forced the farmers to search for new abodes and farms and they started to settle on the estates situated on the least productive lands outside the villages; on hill tops or much below the best agricultural plots. The total area under cultivation, therefore, increased and pushed the forests and pastures to the mountain slopes. To give an example of an average farm in a village settlement in twelfth-century Macedonia, Lefort estimates that four people, most probably a family with two children, may have lived on the farm and they might have had a minimum of 25 *modioi*[19] of agricultural land, half a team of oxen (only

[19] Approximately equivalent to 6 acres or 25 *dönüm*.

one ox) which implied a cooperation between farmer families who needed a full team of oxen (two oxen) for a proper ploughing; they may even had small animals, and garden or vineyard plots dotted around (Lefort, 1993:106-109). This *paroikos* family must have possessed some of the land (maybe the garden and small plot of vineyard) and cultivated some with a tenancy agreement and paid the rent to the landowner. The family must have also had the right of transferring the property, be it the land they owned or they leased, to the heirs.[20] Lefort concludes that "as life became safer, [especially during the twelfth century] Byzantine peasants gradually put down roots, even on estate lands. In itself, this process is a sign of economic growth" (Lefort, 2002:238-239).

Economic expansion and demographic increase were so apparent during and after the tenth century that many people of influence and wealth dared to purchase even unproductive lands and turned them into fruitful enterprises: Emperor Nikephoros Phokas' uncle Manuel Maleinos bought some land in Paphlagonia in the mid-tenth century to build a monastery. "He developed the land so well that he "turned the desert into a town"". Such work continued in the mid-eleventh century: Eustathios Boilas cleared a very rough terrain in the eastern Anatolia and developed meadows, orchards, vineyards and gardens, by the help of his slaves whom he was to free and to settle on the estate as *paroikoi*. Lefort indicates that land clearance was carried out more extensively after the tenth century. In this way were the available agricultural fields expanded. They were to be found either around the existing villages or in distant areas which necessitated creation of a small village, or hamlet.

[20] An eleventh-century judge Eustathios Rhomaios decided that *paroikoi* could not be expelled from their farms and they were to be regarded as masters, after thirty years of land use, so long as they continued paying their rent to the landowners (Lemerle, 1979:179-181).

If they were around the villages they were barely mentioned in the documents and difficult to date; one can only guess from the increasing figures of the fields (this is not to be confused by the dividing-up of the fields into smaller plots by way of inheritance) or if the newly cleared fields were in distant parts one can discern their existence by the appearance of new hamlets (*agridia*)[21] in the documents. This creation of new hamlets coincided with the state's attitude, in the tenth century, to sell the *klasmatic* lands with reduced tax rate. Lavra, for instance, purchased its estate on Kassandra peninsula from the fisc in 941.[22] Lefort who studied documents in the Athonite monasteries estimates that twelve new hamlets were created before the eleventh century, fifteen before the twelfth century, just a few in the twelfth (this is so because either the creation of new hamlets was not properly documented or because documents did not survive), fifteen in the thirteenth and even twelve between 1300 to 1350, although socio-economic conditions seem to have deteriorated at this time (Lefort, 2002:271-273).

Developments in the rural economy were obviously intertwined with the population growth. Since not all the people engaged in productive (i.e. agricultural) work, peasants had to feed more people who lived in towns or in the countryside (ever growing aristocracy, bureaucracy and monks) and who enjoyed a certain level

[21] Creation of *agridion* can be regarded as a sign of demographic and economic expansion, and it can also demonstrate that "economic stratification was being intensified" among the village community in that wealthier peasants endeavoured to extend their fields by bringing more land under cultivation, and they did it outside the present villages as "a response to increased crowding around the main settlement" (Harvey, 1989:35-36).

[22] Lavra purchased the *klasmatic* fields from the fisc at an extremely favourable price; one gold nomisma for 50 *modioi* land. However, under normal circumstances, one *modios* of first quality land might have been purchased by one gold nomisma. This practice of selling *klasmatic* land paved also the way to the process whereby the *dynatoi* – monasteries and lay landowners – progressively expanded their properties to the detriment of free peasantry, although the process was a gradual one (Oikonomides, 1986:165, 168). One of the greatest landlords of his time, Gregory Pakourianos, bought a great many *klasmatic* land thanks to the benevolence of his emperor Alexios I Komnenos (Oikonomides, 1996a:190).

of luxury which peasants lacked. Lefort indicates that this growing of non-productive mouths waiting to be fed "put pressure on agriculture to produce enough to feed" them (Lefort, 2002:271).

CHAPTER 3

The Village Community and the Rise of Great Estates as Social and Economic Phenomenon

3.1. Rise of Great Estates

It has been argued that during, especially the reign of Emperor Anastasius (r. 491-518), early Byzantine society witnessed a rise of aristocratic dominance. This process was further contributed by the establishment of the titles *pagarch* and *vindex*. Pagarchs were appointed from the provincial land-owning elite and they were assigned the responsibility of collecting taxes within a designated area on behalf of the state. They may also hold the title as a hereditary right, as did Apion family in Egypt in the sixth century (Sarris, 2006: 104). Therefore instead of relying on the provincial *curia* and its members for maintenance of fiscal affairs, last decade of the fifth century and the first decade of the six century could be gauged as an "era [that] was remembered as having marked the effective end of the curial self-rule". The natural result of this process was emergence of another legal power group, in the provinces, along with the members of the *curia*. Land-owning provincial magnates also benefitted from monetary reform which was inaugurated under Anastasius. Introduction of copper coins help the aristocracy foster its interest in the monetization of the economy and the benefits accrued therein such as commutation of certain legal responsibilities into cash payments (Sarris, 2006: 200).

Justinian (r. 527-565), on the other hand, endeavoured to re-strengthen the imperial grasp on the provinces. In the preface of his edict of 539 on Egyptian matters he affirmed that the recent developments in Egypt came to threaten "the very cohesion of the state". He continued to remark that the taxes gathered in Egypt did not reach Constantinople intact; they were, rather, made their way to the households of the provincial landed magnates, like pagarches, who were assigned the duty of collecting taxes, and to the governors; posts which the same magnates were frequently appointed. Justinian, therefore, acted abruptly and in order to curtail the local influence he re-shuffled the provincial administration in Egypt and he ordered that the governors and tax collectors would be held responsible of supplying the sums personally that they had failed to collect. Tenure of pagarchs was to be determined jointly by the emperor and the praetorian prefect; in this way a more centralized authority was to be exercised in the Egyptian provincial administration. The "vicious circle" Justinian intended to damage was that those whose fraudulence and tax evasions vexed the central authority were the very people that the provincial and fiscal administration were entrusted (Sarris, 2006: 212-214).

Justinian also employed two more precautions to check the rising social and economic significance of the landed magnates. He resorted to, although not often, confiscation of landed properties, about whose owners` loyalties the emperor had doubts. Second, Justinian endeavoured to establish his own control on the imperial estates. Through this move his intention was to strengthen his own domination amid the growing influence of land-owner magnates (Sarris, 2006: 215). The coming of

the bubonic plague must have crippled the already weakening efforts of Justinian[23] for his attempt in restoring the administrative and fiscal system of the empire. The plague reached the empire for the first time through the Nile and struck Egypt in 541; from Egypt it spread throughout the empire. This pandemic caused, among humanitarian drama, the substantial decrease in the number of taxpayers, and subsequently it must have aggravated fiscal crises that had already been about to be felt.[24] During 540s might be regarded as a period that ended the administrative and fiscal reforms of Justinian. Legislation activity virtually came to a hold[25] and aristocracy started to re-consolidate its influence within the recently reformed administrative apparatus. This might demonstrate that the government of Constantinople at last came to depend, for its harmonious administration, on the "active aristocratic support". Thus the administrative and fiscal reform attempts of Justinian by increasing central grip on the fiscal and political constitution in the provincial organization miscarried. That the imperial administration failed to exact a considerable share of the taxes from the great provincial estates might have harmed the interest of the others; i.e. simple villagers. Between 525 and 567 the amount of the total tax that was levied on Aphrodito, a town in middle Egypt by the Nile, tripled; nevertheless how much of this tax burden was exacted from among the meager peasantry, and how much reached Constantinople, and how much the local

[23] *History of the Wars* by Procopius bears "increasingly critical tone" against the emperor and this might suggest that Justinian`s reforms by and by began to lose its supporters. (Sarris, 2006: 217)
[24] Procopius accused Peter Barsymes, in Book 22 of his *Anecdota*, who was praetorian prefect of the east, of "depriving soldiers on campaign of their pay" and of "conducting the sale of offices". Procopius alludes to the state behavior which was facing shortage in fiscal income and therefore resorted to cuts in the general expenditure. This attitude was further supported by the light weight *solidi* that were issued after 542. By this, government attempted, on the one hand, to exact payments in full *solidi*, and on the other hand, to distribute light-weight *solidi* in order to overcome the fiscal deficit (Sarris, 2006: 218-219).
[25] Of the total 173 surviving edicts which were enacted between 533 and 565, only 31 dated after the year 543 (Sarris, 2006:219, n.107).

landed magnates benefitted from the tax collection, remained uncertain. Land-owning aristocracy also included the ecclesiastical institutions. Church, bishops in the provinces in particular, which held extensive landed property might be regarded as a "natural ally" with the lay landed aristocracy, since they both shared "common economic interest, and more often than not, social background" (Sarris,2006:219-221). During the reign of Justinian`s successor, Justin II (r. 565 – 578), provincial aristocracy seems to have consolidated its power in that emperor Justin decreed in 569, which would have been an utmost annoyance to Justinian, that provincial governors were to be elected by the local great land-owner aristocracy and the bishops of the province. Sarris has pointed out to the fact that, not only the lay land-owning aristocracy and the land-owning bishops were allies, the state also, having extensive lands in its own right[26], actually shared the same interest with that of church and lay aristocracy; all three were both landowners and employers. Therefore the "*rapprochement* between the imperial office, the senatorial aristocracy, and the leading members of provincial society" in 565 was not a coincidence but a natural outcome of certain economic and social features which bound them with "common interests and common purpose" (Sarris, 2006: 222-226)

When we look at the socio-economic situation of the Byzantine Empire during the second half of the seventh century it can be possible to discern a pattern of land ownership in the guise of so-called military land grants, and of so-called theme system about which, in effect, there was no contemporary source. The main reason for the extensive distribution of state lands for the provision of soldiers seems to

[26] Hickey has stated that "the imperial bureaucracy, or rather, imperial methods, very probably had a significant influence on the management of large estates like those of the Apions [of Egypt]". (Hickey, 2007: 296)

have been to save money, since Byzantium lost its most productive and tax producing lands to the Arabs; therefore Byzantine Empire was in urgent and great need of economizing in the mid-seventh century. Treadgold comments on this period as such:

> At that time [second half of the seventh century] the vast imperial estates known from the earlier period should still have been available for distribution. Strikingly, by the ninth century these estates had become insignificant[27], while the military lands had become extensive. Such considerations point to the conclusion that the imperial estates were distributed as military lands in the middle of the seventh century, most likely during the truce with Arabs between 659 and 662. …If he [Emperor Constans II] was indeed the founder not merely of the themes but of the system of military land grants, he provided Byzantium with a flexible, affordable, and effective tool for the long struggle with the Arabs that stretched ahead (Treadgold, 2002:132-133).

Theme system sustained the cohesion of the empire in military arena and was instrumental in fending off the prime enemy in the East; the Arabs, during the next three centuries. In Magdalino's words:

> Byzantium in the tenth century was realizing the benefits of the unglamorous strengths which it had built up in the struggle for survival in the seventh and eighth centuries, and which made it a model of cohesion and stability compared with the giants which had overshadowed it in 800. It was territorially more compact than either the Carolingian or the Abbasid state, … Unlike most medieval empires, it was not held together by aggressive warfare to satisfy a military aristocracy's need for land and booty (Magdalino, 2002:179).

Beginning with the reign of Basil I (867-886) the empire entered into a phase of re-conquests which in turn allowed the imperial lands re-emerged. Concomitant with this, during the reign of Romanos I Lekapenos (920-944) "there is the first clear evidence [in 934] that emperors were adopting a policy of building up imperial

[27] Nevertheless there seem to have been estates in the early ninth century that were administered by imperial officials. For example an epitaph-inscription of 813 that was discovered in the town Herakleia shows that a certain Sisinnios was a *basilikos kourator* (an imperial curator) in Tzurulon which was one of the seats of bishoprics. He was entrusted with the task of administering ecclesiastical properties in imperial *kouratoreia*. (Ševčenko, 1965: 564-574)

estates. In that year Melitene was taken and Romanos appropriated the property of the emir and the lands of the muslims who left the area … This was followed by the establishment of *kouratoreiai* in numerous areas conquered in the following decades, a policy probably designated to keep the magnates of eastern and central Anatolia out of the area" (Bartusis, 2013:119). Thus in the tenth century, possibly first time after the seventh century, there started to emerge an aristocracy "which was integral to the state system, but whose power did not rest exclusively on access to offices of state". Although the state office was still desirable for promotion through the ladder of prestige, some of the influential people "preferred to 'belch forth their family's great name'", as Stephenson quoted from Psellos (Stephenson,2010:22).

These developments reflected a "functional ideology" in the twelfth century according to which "… government, justice, and even legislation by privilege…" was taking shape, and which "the interplay between perceptions about how society should be ruled, and how influence is exercised through the relationships and connections among those who rule". The system of privileges started developing during the Komnenian era and was reached its maturity in the Palaiologan times (Laiou, 1996:92, 107-108).

After this introduction of the rise and fall of the great estates, either of the state or of the aristocracy, we can now turn our attention to the characteristic features of the twelfth century in terms of this socio-economic phenomenon. Another major change, gaining speed during the tenth century and crystallising in the twelfth might be observed in the socio-economic shift from a system of more or less free peasantry of the village (*chorion*) community to a structure which was dominated by great estates (domains, *proasteia*) and in which tenant farmers of certain dependency

(*paroikoi, douloparoikoi*[28]) with their properties (*staseis*) form the general characteristics[29] (Lemerle, 1979:201). Nevertheless this process seems to be "easier to recognise than to quantify" (Magdalino,1993:160).

Estates owners were the state (lands that were exploited by the fisc), crown (lands that were appropriated by the emperors and family), ecclesiastical institutions (especially monasteries) and individuals. Increase in the numbers of large estates can be explained in terms of "land hunger" of the powerful stratum of the society, the *dynatoi*. Civil, military and ecclesiastical officials always constituted a most favourable group due to their administrative duties and they tended to take advantage of the relative "weakness" of the less powerful members of the society. This seems to be a universal stance of the powerful against the poor. After the tenth century, following the population growth and increase in the value of the land, *dynatoi* attempted to expand their estates in order to better benefit from the economic upsurge. They either purchased land from the villagers or received land donations from the state (Laiou and Morrisson, 2007: 102).

[28] *Douloparoikoi* were agricultural labourers whose status are unclear. They might have been slaves or freedmen who rented a plot of rent from certain monasteries near Thessaloniki in return for a part of the harvest and corvées. Mark C. Bartusis "Douloparoikos" *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. Also see Oikonomides, 1983:295-302.

[29] Cf. Lefort, 1993:111-112: "… the tenth century witnessed a massive move onto the estates". Also cf. Actes d'Iviron 1:2, pp. 111-112: Because of the burden of the fiscal obligations many villagers opted to take refuge to large estates and became *paroikoi,* in addition barbarian (*ethnon*) invasions around 945 – 975 of the region of Thessaloniki caused the disappearance of 36 households that were donated to the monastery of Leontia. Also cf. Actes d'Iviron 1:10, p. 167: Because of the attack of the Bulgarian army many villagers took refuge to the domain of Polygyros, near Thessaloniki. Although the villagers deserted their villages out of fear of the enemy attack they continued paying the land tax for their deserted fields in a hope that they might turn back to their home once security was ensured (Paying basic land tax was a certain proof of land ownership). Also cf. Lefort, 2002:239: He has also concluded that mobility of peasants was directly linked to their degree of poverty and unsafe conditions. Many small land holding farmers fled to estates (*proasteia*), willingly, to become *paroikoi*. This might reveal that the social and economic conditions of *paroikoi* were not lower than those of the land holding farmers in the tenth century which is described by Lefort as an era during which "village and estate economies were in competition"

Before analyzing certain aspects of these two social organizational forms of agricultural production (i.e. village community and large estates) Lefort is in favour of "dismissing certain concepts that have given rise to outdated interpretations" such as, viewing village community as a conglomerate of free peasants of equal status, the vague and never-proven idea that village economy was more productive and less oppressive than the estate system and treating the *paroikoi* as an equivalent of serf (Lefort, 2002:236). Rather Lefort emphasises "the complementarity between villages, which produced the bulk of the production, and estates, which ensured better management". In this context Byzantine state provides a sustainable security and regulates fiscal operations by way of levying taxes and issuing fiscal privileges (Lefort, 2002:310).

Hendy, accepting the shift in the social organization of the farmers, argues that the "growth of the great territorial interest" in especially the twelfth century was "fundamentally incompatible" with the centralised system of Komnenians who sought a "more complete integration of the economic and military resources of the empire" by a series of administrative and economic reforms (Hendy, 1970:38). Nevertheless growth of landowning elites does not necessarily imply an open challenge to the ruling Komnenians in that the threat actually came from within the dynasty. The Komnenian emperors sought to run and integrate the resources of the empire by way of distributing privileges (lavish grants of land and *paroikoi*, in addition to fiscal immunities) and imperial titles especially among the family members whom were expected, in return, not to cause trouble. However, these constant acts of nepotism only augmented the strength of the Komnenian family and "the danger increased as the family proliferated, and it was ultimately responsible for

every political crisis after 1180." The danger was that such powerful and influential male family members could potentially "eclipse and eliminate" the emperor; in effect Manuel[30] was constantly harassed by an elder brother, by a paternal uncle and above all by his cousin, or his archenemy, Andronikos, who was eventually to cause the destruction of the ruling family. Magdalino and Nelson argue that Manuel's "excessive generosity" was a sign that he was well aware that he had to appease the relatives whose ill intentions he thought threatened his authority (Magdalino and Nelson, 1982:175).

Hendy also gives a political aspect and attributes the acceleration of this tendency in the twelfth century, apart from economic causes, to the emergence of "an imperial clan" which was formed by the Komnenian dynasty. Equipped also with the increasing awareness of blood descent or of marriage ties, Komnenian emperors allowed and even urged their relatives to have a share in the state income through distributing certain privileges in mostly three ways: by conferring the right of tax collection of a designated area on a person, by directly assigning a portion of the state income, or by a direct handover of the state land. The first method of privilege distribution mentioned above appears to have been the most favoured practice in the twelfth century (Hendy, 2008:86). However, because of lack of documentation it is not possible to assess, for sure, how much of the agricultural land was owned by the small peasant families and how much was in the hand of large estate owners in the tenth and twelfth centuries respectively (Magdalino, 1993:160).

[30] Manuel had no prospect of being an emperor before his father John was killed by an accident. Therefore "he had to assert control of the government in the face of influential and scheming relatives" (Magdalino, 1984a: 238).

Lefort studies the issue from an economic point of view and asserts that in the eighth and ninth centuries peasants' dealings with the central authority were of basically fiscal nature, which was a weak connection in times of trouble, and the tenth-century peasant seems to have had dealings with his father only "from whom he inherited his land rights" (Lefort, 2002:279). Beginning with the tenth century, however, rural economic relations became more intricate, and villages started to be connected to small towns. This led to a new countryside administration whereby stewards of the estate owners[31] were empowered to administer the villagers. Amid an economic expansion, rural affairs and wealth derived from rural possibilities (agricultural production and land itself) might be seen, by the state authority, as a very significant matter which should not be left to the villagers only. Lefort also argues that interests of the estate owners and those of the farmers were interconnected so much so that they sometimes worked together to better manage rural affairs, such as "to repair and exploit a vineyard or a mill" (Lefort, 1993:112-113).

Before the tenth century the socio-economic circumstances of the Byzantine Empire can be said to have been dictated by low population, production aimed not for the market but for family subsistence and for the demands of the state treasury, and low monetization. In this situation, a socio-economic life based on the village structure must have suited the Empire best. Therefore during the ninth and the tenth centuries, villages and their designated territories comprised the chief form of living and land exploitation in the countryside. Lefort estimates that in tenth-century

[31] Those stewards might have been chosen from among the villagers themselves, since in a document, dated to 996, pertaining the estates of the monastery of Iviron was a name of a steward (*meizoteros*) who fled to the domain of Polygyros in order to escape the advancing Bulgarian army; cf. Actes d'Iviron I, pp. 167, 170.

Macedonia villages existed at every four to five kilometres, each constituting an average territory of twenty square kilometres. At the beginning of the eleventh century fourteen heads of families who lived in the village Radochosta in Macedonia signed a fiscal document, thus allowing us to estimate how many families lived in a village. As is mentioned below, provincial thematic soldiers used to live in villages exploiting their farms (*stratiotika ktemata*), therefore they might have contributed the cohesion and protection of the village community (*koinotes tou choriou*). This community, however, was an inegalitarian one that sometimes demonstrated its individualistic attitudes rather than harmony.[32] Several factors made the village a de facto legal entity; such as collective tax responsibility of the peasants, a need to defend the village rights against the neighbouring villages, lay or monastic estates, and also the necessity for domestic organization. The Farmer's Law rules that the commune could be responsible for the running of the mill for the benefit of the village, and even in the eleventh century a village had to pay a collective tax for a mill on the Dobrobikeia territory.[33] Early documentation available in monasteries concerning tenth century transactions refers to the communal aspect of the decision making in villages.[34] A sort of organizational committee which was formed to represent the village before an estate administration and which comprised the village elders (*gerontes*) can also be observed in some of the monastic documents in twelfth

[32] A Novel of Basil II in 996 made reference to a simple villager who gradually acquired the properties of his fellow farmers and eventually turned the whole village into his private estate (Lefort, 2002:283).

[33] Cf. Farmer's Law article 81, and Actes d'Iviron 1:30, pp. 264, 269:Second half of the eleventh century the village of Dobrobikeia with its 24 taxpayers formed a commune and this commune (*he koinotes*) was imposed a tax for a watermill (*Hydromylos*) by the river.

[34] Actes d'Iviron 1: 9, pp. 156, 158: Inhabitants of the village of Siderokausia in 995 also formed a commune and when confronted by others misaproppriations they decided together to bring the issue to the court.

century Macedonia.[35] Apart from the committee, a twelfth century monastic document refers to the head of a village (*proestos*) which was a part of an estate, who talked to the estate administration on behalf of the village and represented the domain that the village belonged to[36]. State authority relied on the village community for extracting taxes and most probably for political concerns tried to protect this system against the powerful landowners in the tenth century. Nevertheless both the burgeoning economy with the spread of the use of money, the rise of the domestic and maritime trade opportunities, and the state's favourable attitude towards the expansion of the great landowners changed the nature of the rural conditions, especially during and after the eleventh century (Lefort, 2002: 275-281).

Apart from the changing economic factors and the attitude of the state, three more hypotheses can be surmised in order to explain how and why the village community gradually disappeared and transformed into the estate system of agricultural production; First is that generation after generation peasants' farms were to be divided among heirs, therefore the remaining holdings were no more capable of sustaining the family; if this coincided with unfavourable weather conditions, like the winter of 927/928, and even worse with insecurity, peasants might eventually have had to sell their properties to the estate owners and became their tenants for protection. The second point is that when estates were created on the village

[35] Actes d'Iviron 3: 55b, p. 69: The monastic document which was dated to September 1142 indicates that in a court case during which the borders of two villages, Semalton and Radolibos, were disputed, were present the village elders of the both places (*parousia ton Siamalthenon geronton … kai ton Radolybenon)*.

[36] Actes d'Iviron 2:51, p. 205: By the year of 1103 the villages that had been enjoying commune status were transferred to the domains of great estate owners. Two villages near Thessaloniki, Semalton and Zidomista were among them. Semalton belonged to a person whose name and occupation was not known and the village of Zidomista was a part of a monastic holding. Nevertheless both these landowners had their representatives in these villages: A *proestos* (a notable) for Semalton, and monk Cyril for Zidomista.

territories the farms were exploited much better in that estate owners might spend substantial amounts of money that the villagers could not afford, for the development and improvement of the agricultural lands and they could also exert influence on the central administration to attain favourable terms in relation to fiscal obligations, from which tenant peasants (*paroikoi*) benefited as well. And the third idea is that once estates started a more efficient production the fisc might also have had the opportunity to collect greater amounts of taxes and dues and to collect them much easily (Lefort, 2002:238).

As was seen in the novels of the Macedonian emperors, already during the tenth century great landed properties expanded considerably. Now that Macedonian emperors provided domestic security by way of an efficient army and a chain of defences which consisted of successive castles (*kastra*), *dynatoi* found it lucrative to obtain productive agricultural fields, in order to amass profit, to the detriment of the village community. Lay and monastic estates along with local metropolitans, archbishops, and bishops increased their properties by way of purchase, donation, coercion, wills or some other way. Even the state itself started to accumulate lands for its own profit. During the tenth century, victories against the Arabs enabled the state to retain the lands conquered around Malatya (*Melitene*), Tarsus (*Tarsos*) and Antakya (*Antiochia*). This development continued and in the eleventh century Lefort maintains that "the state played a determining role in speeding up a process that it had not initiated and had tried to stop during the tenth century". Lefort goes on to say that the growing power of the state, a high level of security, consciousness of the dynastic solidarity, and changes in the army recruitment method all furnished the state with the notion that there was no point left in defending the village community.

In addition the state started to collect greater revenues from the estates than it had previously gathered from the villages. The state, therefore, intervened in the social structure of the countryside and intentionally created estates from the deserted lands which had previously been sold, settled *paroikoi* on them and endeavoured to extend the lands which belonged to the fisc in the eleventh century (Lefort, 2002:277). Nevertheless before the central administration, especially the fisc, realized the benefits of permitting the landed properties of the powerful grow, it had regarded the expansion of landed wealth of the big estate owners as a threat to the annual tax collecting process. Oikonomides has argued that the more free villagers sold their fields and became *paroikoi*, the less the fisc collected annual land tax from them. Because *paroikoi*, as a fiscal rule, did not pay land tax to the state treasury but filled the coffers of big landowners through giving them the rent of the fields that they were tilling. In addition the powerful started acquiring certain privileges concerning paying less tax to the fisc. Macedonian legislation in the tenth century against the expansion of the landed wealth of the powerful, therefore, might have stemmed from the decrease of the annual fiscal revenue of the central treasury (Oikonomides, 1996b:106).

Monasticism had always been an ideal profoundly rooted in Byzantine society. Byzantine monastic institutions materialized themselves in three ways: eremitical (life in solitude), coenobitical (communal life), and monastic life of *lavra* type (solitary life within a community) which grew in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Monasteries needed agricultural land and labour to sustain themselves, therefore they came to be one of the contenders for economical resources. Acquisition of land by the monasteries grew as lay people donated their properties to

them. Although these donations had a spiritual side, they also represented an evasion of fiscal obligations imposed upon the people since monastic properties were usually immune to several secondary duties and confiscations. During the tenth century Macedonian emperors also regulated the land acquisitions of monasteries in order to meet the two challenges they posed: Since monastic authorities were among the *dynatoi*, their expansion into village community might disrupt the main fiscal system of the Byzantine state; and while some monasteries, by extensive land donations which might in effect represent a denial of spiritual ideals of leading a humble life, grew powerful, some might be rendered feeble by lack of adequate means to sustain themselves. Despite the imperial legislation growth of monastic estates and of the number of monasteries continued and they were even granted tax exemptions and privileges by the emperors themselves (McGeer,2000;21-25).

Benefits of acquiring landed property and *paroikoi*, thus, seems to have appealed both to the lay people and churchmen alike. Monastery of Lavra had vast lands half of which fell to the category of *perisseia*[37]. Nevertheless the monastery managed to hold on to the estates, and even succeeded in obtaining a very advantageous *epibole*[38] rate of one *nomisma* for nearly 600 *modioi*[39] of land (Lemerle, 1979:215).

Nonetheless those who held a great landed property did not necessarily furnish themselves with considerable wealth in that estates of the lay individuals were always exposed to division by inheritance and a potential threat of

[37] "Each taxpayer held no more land than the quantity corresponding to the tax that he was paying". If somebody had more land (*perisseia*) according to the tax rate, it should be taken away: Alexander Kazhdan "Hikanosis" *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*.
[38] *Epibole* in this context was a rate of land and corresponding land tax that was applied to it.
[39] Approximately equivalent to 148 acres or 600 *dönüm*.

confiscation[40] by the emperor was always at hand; even ecclesiastical properties were not immune to state intervention. (Magdalino, 1993:161) In fact, even beginning with Alexios I Komnenos at the end of the eleventh century the fisc monitored closely the expansion of landed property and sometimes forced the landowners, lay or ecclesiastical, to cede some of their properties in favour of the fisc. The monastery of Iveron, thus, had to hand over more than 75.000 *modioi* of its land to the state treasury after 1089.[41] Although the state could, in one way or another, always regulate the landownership patterns, the prevailing social transition continued since the state came to rely on the revenues gathered from the land which was cultivated by *paroikoi* on its own estates and the dues from the great estate owners, rather than on the land tax expected from the village communities; therefore the tenth century legislation of the Macedonians might have seen unnecessary in subsequent centuries (Lefort, 2002:288; Harvey, 1989:45). In this vein the legislation in question might have been "a desperate rearguard action" even in the tenth century since by the time of the introduction of the legislation the social structure of the countryside had already been transformed to something else that could not be altered and shaped by a sheer legislation (Oikonomides, 1996b:125).

[40] For a recent study on confiscation of urban properties see Smyrlis, 2009, pp. 115-132. Smyrlis has studied confiscations of real estates in Constantinople during the Komnenian period and concluded that confiscations were nor arbitrary but they were in one way or other justified, and "these expropriations are set against the developments in the system by which the state remunerated its servants in the period after the eleventh century, increasingly by land grants" (Smyrlis, 2009:130).

[41] Actes d'Iviron 2, pp. 27-33: Monastery of Iviron possessed 23 domains in 1079. However it lost 11 of them in 1104 and it could not recover those estates again. The decrease of the landed property of the monastery resulted from a series of confiscations after 1089 by the government. Nevertheless Iviron managed to recover more than 30.000 *modioi* during subsequent years. Especially with the acquisition of the village of Radolibos in 1103, the monastery gained more than 20.000 *modioi* of land and it compensated, to a certain measure, the losses resulted from confiscations, In that the village of Radolibos was a populous site with fertile fields.

Mid-eleventh century documents in the Month Athos archives have references to imperial estates (*basilika proasteia*)[42]; villages that enjoyed commune status in the tenth century appear to have been amalgamated into state estates which might, at a later time, be handed over to lay persons or ecclesiastical institutions: villages in eastern Macedonia such as Radolibos, Obelos, Dobrobikeia, Semalton and Zidomista were turned into fiscal estates and then they were given to the monastery of Iveron in the mid-eleventh century. Although the Athos documents concerning the twelfth century are rare, this process can be surmised to have continued and by the beginning of the fourteenth century, at least in Macedonia, former village communities seem to have all disappeared and "an almost unbroken network of estates" replaced them (Lefort, 2002:289).

Lemerle has argued that although great estates had always existed in Byzantium through the centuries, what made the period distinctive was the change in the attitude of the state towards the peasants and great estate owners: Central government no longer acted to protect the free peasantry and curb the expansion of private landowners especially in the twelfth century. Moreover Komnenian government consciously supported the expansion of big private property. In addition custom laws were reinterpreted by jurists[43] thereby the powerful (*dynatoi)*[44] was

[42] Actes d'Iviron 1:29, p. 259: the fiscal document, dated to 1047, enumerates the properties of the monastery of Iviron in order to establish the land tax and it mentions, when delimiting a property, "*… tou basilikou proasteiou tou Rousiou…"* (Of the Imperial estate of Rousios).

[43] Ostrogorsky asserts that the good intention of the lawmakers were constantly shattered by the crafty Byzantine judges "who sided invariably with the powerful" (Ostrogorsky, 1947:122).

[44] *Dynatoi* was the legal term in the novels of the Macedonian emperors in the tenth century to denote; a) in a social sense those who were influential men or institutions so much so that they could coerce regular people to sell their property or exert superior illegal authority over them to reach their own ends and who enjoyed a high status "in the civil, military, or ecclesiastical hierarchies" b) in a fiscal sense those (either individuals or institutions, like monasteries) who possessed large landed property which constituted a single fiscal unit. Unlike the village community which was also regarded as a single fiscal unit, holdings of the *dynatoi* were often immune to

given free hand to enlarge their landed property and to infiltrate into village community by way of acquiring state and *klasmatic* land, and finally securing a lawful ownership of such land after a period of ten years (Lemerle, 1979:202-203 and Ostrogorsky, 1947:123). Ostrogorsky maintains that since humble farmers were not capable of buying *klasmatic* land which in most cases needed improvement that could only be undertaken by the wealthy, rich landowners eventually took hold of such properties[45] (Ostrogorsky, 1947:126).

Macedonian emperors used to distribute cash salaries, known as *roga*, every year to the civil and military men of title, who were employed by the state. However, since they were not allowed to engage in trade or craft,[46] they had no other opportunity than to buy houses or agricultural fields, to the detriment of village communities and small farmers, in order to invest their wealth. This, Oikonomides argues, eventually gave rise to the expansion of landed property of the magnates who were going to cause great trouble to the emperors and whose activity was contained by law in the tenth century (Oikonomides, 1997:200-207). However he has also stated that the legislation against the powerful was of fiscal nature and it had no social considerations in it. Because, although the emperors tried to curb the powerful from buying more land from the free peasantry, who paid their annual land tax

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secondary or extraordinary legal liabilities, therefore bestowing a great monetary superiority to them in contrast to the regular individual farmers (McGeer,2000 :26).

[45] Michael Attaleiates, as a lay landowner although not from a high social class, expanded his landed property in Rhaidestos, partly, by buying *klasmatic* land as well. Krallis has argued that Attaleiates had in his mind a long-term economical development and investment plan and his plan was visible in his buying *klasmatic* lands outside the city walls (Krallis, 2006: 64). Attaleiates' economic mind was again obvious in his *typikon* of the monastic institution that he created. His son and heir, Theodore, is to be entitled to possess two-thirds of the profit accrued from the economic activity (i.e. great landed property around Raidestos and urban rental income from Constantinople) of his monastic establishment (Talbot, A. M., 2000:345).

[46] Byzantine aristocracy can be said to have taken up commerce after the second half of the fourteenth century in order to compensate their loss of landed property to the Ottomans and Serbs (Kazhdan, 1993:9).

directly to the fisc, they did not or could not eliminate the social advantages and fiscal privileges of the great estate owners. This reluctance and incapacity, so Oikonomides stated, was a clear indication of the fact the "fiscal privileges and other advantages of the *dynatoi* … were an inevitable fact of life [of the tenth century]"(Oikonomides,1996b:107).

Legislation to protect free peasantry and village community which constituted the main source of the state income in the tenth century falls within two types: novel and rescript. As a direct representative of God on earth the Byzantine emperor was the supreme judge and held an unquestionable authority to issue legal provisions for his subjects to follow. Therefore emperors decreed novels, *nearai nomothesiai* (normative legal codes). Novels were issued for an indefinite time and could only be amended by another novel. Rescripts, *lyseis*, however, were interpretative in nature and constituted an answer to a legal question made by an officer to the emperor; once issued, rescripts held the same legal status as novels. Tenth-century emperors tried to contain the rising power of provincial *dynatoi* who mainly occupied inner Anatolia and who entered into a contest for the control of two valuable sources of income and wealth, agricultural land and manpower, with the imperial authority.[47] The village community, together with military lands – *stratiotika ktemata* – being a source of the traditional state income and a definite part of the established provincial order, a threat to this system by rural magnates urged emperors to curtail their disruptive attempts against village community by three ways: The first one was the rule known

[47] While Lefort interprets the novels as an exaggeration of the "dialectics of village and estate" by the emperors for fiscal and political reasons (Lefort, 2002:237), Magdalino views the legislation "as the beginning of the development whereby the state itself joined in the process of feudalization, by extending the definition of the fisc, the amount of land under fiscal ownership, and the effective lordship of the fisc over all free peasant proprietors" (Magdalino, 1994:102).

as pre-emption, *protimesis*. According to this principle villagers, when they wanted to sell their property, had to offer their land first to their fellow farmers who lived in the same community, thereby preventing the *dynatoi* from buying land and infiltrating into the village community. Although the powerful found ways to evade this rule[48], pre-emption principle was, at least theoretically, in force even in Manuel's time in the twelfth century[49]. The second one was to alter the after effects of unlawful property transactions. Even if the powerful magnates, in one way or another, acquired land from villagers, the properties in question were to be restored to the original owners, although with certain ameliorative provisions for the *dynatoi* that had to give the land back. However a third legal instrument had to be enacted because landowner magnates were obstructive in restoring the property they gained. This was the principle of prescription according to which villagers who had to sell their lands, under threat or some other method of coercion, to the powerful families or institutions had a right to regain them within a forty-year period. Basil II even declared in his novel dated to 996 AD that the peasants could reclaim their land without subject to time limitation. In conclusion McGeer has argued that "the initial aim of the land legislation was to preserve the imperial fiscal system" and by the legislation Macedonian emperors in the tenth century successfully contained the challenge of the landed aristocracy (McGeer,2000:5-31).

The loss of Inner Anatolia at the end of the eleventh century, however, seems to have delivered the final blow to the provincial aristocracy who had caused great trouble during the tenth century. With the accession of Komnenian dynasty who inherited large crown lands and imperial domains, *episkepseis*, from the previous

[48] For the ways of evasion by the powerful see Ostrogorsky 1947,pp. 119 and 121.
[49] See Magdalino, 1994: 102-103

era,[50] coupled with a reformed monetary and administrative system, emperors no longer tried to protect the properties of the small-owner peasants but shaped the socio-economic system of the realm according to the new circumstances.

Magdalino has suggested that three aspects of the great landed property phenomenon in the twelfth century are in need of clarification: first one is the identity of the greatest landlords, second is their estates' geographical distribution and the third is the relationship between the landlords and their source of production. The greatest landlords consisted of the people who were close relatives of the emperor or state or private institutions that owned and exploited: a) the fiscal lands, b) ecclesiastical properties, c) pious houses (*euageis oikoi*), and d) private estates. Fiscal land amounts to every kind of cultivable or uncultivable land that the state authority exploited itself; be it emperor's personal domain, or land that was owned and used by the fisc, or the land which was owned by smallholding peasants who paid basic land tax to the fisc and who did not fall to any of the other categories. Ecclesiastical lands include immovable properties of the episcopal churches and the monasteries. Pious houses were important institutions which were founded by the emperors and run by the imperial officials. Lastly relatives of the imperial family had great amounts of landed property which was granted to them by the emperor according to the fashion of the Komnenians. All of these landlords held numerous cultivable and uncultivable plots of fields and villages which had lost their former

[50] Other instruments of the Macedonian emperors to meet the challenge of landed magnates included creation of crown lands and imperial domains, *episkepseis*, whereby denying access the magnates to the coastal strip of Anatolia, where more prosperous towns also proved an efficient barrier, and to the newly acquired provinces of Cilicia and Northern Syria in the tenth century. (McGeer,2000:15, 30-31 and Magdalino,2007:178). Magdalino has also pointed out that there might have existed a "core imperial patrimony [over large areas] which emperors were careful never to alienate from the Crown [in especially the twelfth century]" (Magdalino,1993:168). In addition Basil II was in favour of direct exploitation of *klasmatic* land by the state, rather than selling it to the *dynatoi* (Oikonomides, 1996a:56).

commune status and whose peasants became tenants of the aforementioned landlords. The most influential of the landlords lived in Constantinople and had close relationship with the emperor. In fact, fiscal lands, lands which were exploited extensively by the pious houses and by the real persons (private landed properties) can be regarded, as Magdalino argues, to have belonged to "the Crown" because of their strong connection to the emperor himself.[51] The only large-scale landlords who were based in the provinces were the custodians of the ecclesiastical properties. Documentary evidence surviving from the monasteries of Mount Athos, and in the island of Patmos, and the textual sources (monastic *typika*) concerning the monastery in Bachkovo (established by the *megas domestikos* Gregory Pakourianos) and the monastery of Kosmosoteira[52] (founded by the *sebastokrator* Isaakios Komnenos) demonstrate that they held extensive sources of income (i.e. mainly arable land) and that they were very wealthy, and that they sometimes grew at the expense of the crown. Although the practice of land distribution might evoke a process of feudal disintegration, a detailed analysis of the nature of the landlords and their relations to the central state authority can yield an opposite result. Therefore, contrary to the opinion of Harvey who has suggested that the central administrative system declined in parallel to the economic expansion in that centrifugal tendencies strengthened as economy kept growing, (Harvey, 1989:266), and that for that reason the demise of the Komnenian power and the break-up of the state at the end of the twelfth century "was a result of the conflict between the bureaucratic apparatus of the imperial state… and rapidly developing feudal relations of production" (Harvey,1989:268),

[51] Harvey states that "the state had always been the largest landowner" and it exploited extensive lands with its own *demosiarioi parikoi* (*paroikoi* who worked on the state land) especially in the eleventh century (Harvey, 1989:67).

[52] For the immovable properties that the *sebastokrator* bequeathed to his monastery, such as estates, villages, tenant farmers and farms see Sevcenko, 2002: 828-829.

and contrary to Hendy who concludes that by the end of the twelfth century two opposing forces which took power from and nurtured on the continuous regional economic expansion, i.e. central authority and local notables, were responsible for the fundamental problems the empire was experiencing[53] (Hendy, 1989:III,43) and that by that time "polarization between the capital and the regions was complete", (Hendy, 1989:III,47), Magdalino asserts that the distribution of the empire's lands among those landlords does not constitute "a centrifugal movement of the landed property" since, as was mentioned above; a) the lands which were exploited by the crown remained extensive, b) greatest of the landlords were close associates of the emperor himself and they resided in the capital city, c) moreover the Komnenian emperors were particularly unwilling to donate landed property to the monasteries which were in the provinces and hence can be suggested to have represented the most influential and wealthy regional magnates, although they were greatly supplied with other privileges such as tax exemptions. In addition, even among the

[53] Judith Herrin has studied the provincial administration of Hellas and Peloponnes between 1180-1205, and has come up with a rather bleak opinion. Personal correspondence of the metropolitan of Athens, Michael Choniates (brother of the famous historian Niketas Choniates) revealed that while the central administration whose primary concern was to increase its revenues from the provinces (over-fiscalisation) without providing adequate services, failed considerably to manage the provincial affairs, both civil and military, the local church retained its cohesion and power, and de facto replaced the authority of Constantinople. Besides, local inhabitants started to regard the governors and their agents as a great burden and a source of mischief, since they levied inordinate taxes, demanded excessive and unlawful services, and even ignored the imperial chrysobulls that protected ecclesiastical properties. Herrin has commented that the provincial ecclesiastical administration came to be "an outstanding force for the unity of the Empire at a time of disintegration and separatist movements". Magdalino, also, agrees on this and commented that the churches were the mediators between the capital and the provinces since they acted as "leveller of the inequalities" (Magdalino, 1993:177). Herrin goes on to say that power vacuum helped the "lesser landowners" in the provinces grow and, when a suitable opportunity arose, improve their wealth at the central administration's expense; this independent attitude which was prevalent all over the empire, Herrin argues, brought them into conflict with the capital (Herrin, 1975:253-284). Magdalino, however, has pointed out that Michael Choniates' complaints about "the decline" and disorder in the province might have been "fairly recent" and could have only reflected the realities of the times during which, following the death in 1180 of Manuel I Komnenos, the empire was thrown into a complete chaos. Economically speaking, this chaos might have stemmed from the fact that the tax collected by the state was squandered "to maintain the honour and luxury of a vast, unproductive, prodigal imperial establishment" (Magdalino, 1993:173, 177).

ecclesiastical landlords, those based in Constantinople were the strongest; therefore it can be assumed that "the main structures of Byzantine feudalism remained, even at the end of the twelfth century, extraordinarily centralised" (Magdalino, 1993:162-163, 170). Besides, Komnenian emperors still held powerful and effective military and bureaucratic mechanisms which the other landlords certainly lacked, to safeguard and enforce the interests of the central system; although these mechanisms sometimes proved cumbersome, rapacious, and malign in the regional level at the end of the twelfth century as Herrin demonstrates in her article.[54] As to the distribution of the magnate properties, they seem to have concentrated along the coastline in the Balkans, coastline in Asia Minor, especially Bithynia and Meander vally which constituted the most fertile arable lands of the empire. Hendy demonstrates that Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly and Peloponnese were the main areas of magnate concentration, which were followed by Attica, Boeotia and Crete. Three most wealthy monastic institutions which were founded by the emperor John Komnenos and his wife Irene, (the monastery of Pantokrator in Constantinople), and by the aristocracy, (those of the Mother of God Petritzonitissa in Bachkovo and the Mother of God Kosmosoteira near Ainos), possessed great properties. These properties had originally belonged to the state (*episkepseis*) and were later donated to with fiscal immunities (Hendy, 2008: 85-90). Magdalino has also stressed that the great magnates who were mainly based in Constantinople and whose estates lied along the "whole littoral from Constantinople to central Greece … controlled an extremely high proportion of the empire's top-quality arable land – land that was valuable not only because of its fertility, but because of its accessibility to maritime

[54] See footnote #53

trade". Those magnates owned land also in the coastal strip of western Anatolia, such as Myrelaion and Hagia Sophia had large *episkepseis* around Ephesos and Miletos, and in Smyrna respectively, although there was a relative lack of *episkepseis* in Asia Minor which the emperors might have been reluctant to grant out due to the insecurity caused by the regular Turkish raids. Another point worth mentioning is that many twelfth century estates had a long history of magnate possession; some from very early times and some from recent past; this may indicate as well that the process towards accumulation of great landed property had a long and complicated history (Magdalino, 1993:164-166). That the distance between where the landowners actually lived and where their estates were bestowed a huge responsibility and power upon the agents who oversaw the work on the estates and other necessary transactions and transportation of the goods, and who had to take care of the daily problems with the tenants. Apart from agents, "absentee landlords" could have left the organization of the work on their estates to other local landowners and even to their tenants; although the landowners who lived close to their estates and who directly monitored the management of their estates must have gained much more and must have contributed to the development of their estates and to the increase of agricultural production in particular (Magdalino, 1993:170-171).

Nevertheless the practice of imperial endowments in the Komnenian period, Lemerle argues, did not include political domination of the landowners over the inhabitants (mainly tenant farmers – *paroikoi*) nor did it alter the previous ownership patterns; although the public treasury, the fisc, transferred its fiscal rights and benefits in favour of the person who received the land donation (Lemerle, 1979:209, 213-214). A *chrysobull* by Alexios I in 1084 addressed to the Lavra monastery

announced that the emperor's brother Adrian was granted the whole fiscal property of Pallene-Cassandra peninsula and he was given the right to collect the land-tax owed by the inhabitants who, previously, used to pay it directly to the state treasury. Whereas Adrian held the possession of the state land, he did not own the property which belonged to the monks of the Lavra monastery. The monks were to continue having their land although from that time on they had to pay the land tax to Adrian and not to the treasury. The judicial and political authority of the state in that peninsula, therefore, was not replaced by that of Adrian in that he could not increase the amount of tax nor could he interfere with the affairs of previous private landowners, i.e. the monks of Lavra. The emperor even sent a judge from Constantinople to the peninsula in order to make it clear to the landowners that the landownership scheme would not be altered to the detriment of previous owners and that their rights were to be respected. Even the Lavra *paroikoi* were safe from extraordinary taxes. Although Lavra, being a relatively powerful entity, seems to have protected its rights, humbler private landowners might not have been that lucky, and faced with an accelerated imperial land donations coupled with ambitious imperial family members, their rights and interests may have been abused (Lemerle, 1979:211-212).

Great estates (which also included forests, mountainous neighbourhood, uncultivated areas and grazing lands beside the large areas which were suitable for agricultural work) in the twelfth century were mainly exploited indirectly in that instead of employing paid labourers for farming, estate owners rented out the arable

land to the *paroikoi* (Lefort, 2002:240). Forms of direct exploitation[55] (employing wage labourers, slaves and work by corvée, *aggareia*) in the domanial lands can also be observed albeit to a lesser extent in the twelfth century. References to slaves disappeared from the sources after the twelfth century once they were freed and settled as *paroikoi*, whereas paid labourers (*misthioi*) were occasionally cited in the documents to the end of the empire, although their importance in the agricultural production is thought to have been limited.[56] As almost all the slaves and wage labourers (*proskatemenoi mistharnoi*) were settled on land as *paroikoi*, Lefort argues that "the status of wage labourer (like that of slave) could constitute a transitional stage in a process leading to a more stable condition" (Lefort, 2002:242).

Although partial, textual evidence can demonstrate that direct exploitation of the domanial land was limited. All the agricultural areas in the Estate of Eustathios Boilas in eastern Anatolia were divided up into plots, in the mid-eleventh century, and rented out to farmers (*paroikoi*), some of them being his former slaves. Michael Attaleiates' estate near Rhaidestos in Thrace was cultivated by *paroikoi* and by short-term leaseholders (*ekleptores*) in the same period. They, however, had to serve in the landowner's domain for a short period of time in a year.[57] That there is evidence of the existence of wage labourers and also a plough team (two oxen) belonging to the

[55] Harvey has commented that "Byzantium never witnessed large-scale demesne farming by compulsory labour services" (Harvey, 1989:5).

[56] Harvey has suggested that although there was evidence of the slave labour for agricultural work in the Farmer's Law, evidence is scanty from the tenth century onwards and the term slave might also have been used to denote to the domestic slaves rather than those who were employed in the fields. Similarly *misthios* (wage labourer) might simply mean a tenant farmer, *paroikos* (Harvey, 1989:36, footnote:5).

[57] At the end of the eleventh century *paroikoi* in the estate of Michael Attaleiates owed him certain services (*douleiai*) which constituted working 12 or 24 days a year in the domanial farmland of the landowner, probably for ploughing the land (Lefort, 2002:241). Harvey maintains that labour service that the *paroikoi* owed to the landowner depended on the local custom and it was "less onerous" than in some other European countries (Harvey, 1989:47).

landowner (*despotika zeugaria*) in the estate of Gregory Pakourianos in Petritzos in Bulgaria, can suggest that a portion of the estate was farmed directly. Similarly textual evidence demonstrates a form of direct cultivation on the landowner's agricultural plot in Baris, near Miletos at the end of eleventh century and in the village of Radolibos in Macedonia which owned by the Iveron monastery domanial farms were worked directly; although all of these farms constituted only three percent of the agricultural land of the village; the rest were rented out to and were cultivated by *paroikoi* (Lefort, 2002:243).

Practice of direct farming on the domanial plots might gain speed during the thirteenth century. Laiou states that during and after the thirteenth century *paroikoi* "were also expected to cultivate the domanial land". In 1321, Patmos monastery intended to cultivate its recently acquired land on Lemnos with labour service only (Laiou, 2002: 332, 336).

To conclude the great estates there is one more feature that worth mentioning here albeit briefly: Transmission of landed property from secular to monastic hands. Those who had accumulated a considerable wealth through imperial gifts and/or purchases sometimes decided to establish a monastery and donate their belongings to the benefit of spiritual deeds. These include in the eleventh century Michael Attaleiates, Gregory Pakourianos, Eustathios Boilas, Symbatios Pakourianos and his wife Kale, and in the twelfth century Isaakios Komnenos. In some cases properties were donated to an existent monastic institution, and in others properties formed the basis on which a new monastic structure would be built. Spiritual reason of this transmission of property was undoubtedly "the prospect of approaching death … [and to face this imminent end one] should be spiritually prepared and ready to die".

Thus Morris has argued that "The intimations of mortality in the cases of Attaleiates, Pakourianos, Boilas and Kale Pakouriane (whose husband predeceased her and who had already become the nun, Maria) were heightened by the fact that other members of their families had recently died" (Morris, 2002:123-124). Monastic endowment and donation, then, was a major part of a process of ensuring the maximum amount of intercession for the soul after death (Morris, 2002:128).

> The occasions for donation might vary, but they were usually associated with a moment at which a Byzantine felt that some transfer of his or her worldly goods to a spiritual milieu was advisable. This was a motive which could reach right down to the humblest levels of society, for, as the well-known novel of Basil II (996) put it, even small landowners might decide to devote their property and themselves to the religious life: For they say that it happens in many of the villages that the peasant builds a church on his land and with the permission of his fellow villagers, grants it all his property, then becomes a monk and spends the rest of his life there (Morris, 2002:132).

That burial of the *ktetor* [one who establishes a monastery] is to be found inside the monastic complex and that the inclusion of the names of immediate family members in prayers were "culmination of the process of identification of an individual or his or her family with the establishment concerned" (Morris, 2002:136).

Magdalino has stipulated that "the [aristocratic family] monastery was … the *alter ego* of the secular *oikos*. … the religious foundation was the household's ultimate fulfilment, and the best possible insurance against the various forces – social, political, legal, and fiscal – which threatened the integrity of the family and its fortune" (Magdalino,1984b: 102). Family monasteries were also economic investments and they would furnish the family and the heirs with legitimate profits and propriety rights (Magdalino,1984b:102). As such emperor Andronikos I (r. 1183-1185) visited his father's monastery, Kosmosoteira, in 1183 to pay his respect, and in a sense to proclaim his victory and vengeance over those who deprived his father

Isaakios Komnenos of his throne (he had made his bid for throne for many times but his dream came true when his son Andronikos managed to usurp the throne in 1183) and banished him to the countryside (Ševčenko,2000:783). Thus monastery of Kosmosoteira can be taken as a case study for the establishment of an aristocratic monastery in countryside. Isaakios Komnenos built the monastery and donated virtually all his resources – moveable and immoveable – for his spiritual salvation (Ševčenko,2000:800). It possessed vast properties and with the administration system taken into consideration it seems that the monastery also acted like a private company that derived profit for its good management. Isaakios Komnenos wrote that all the properties he donated originated from family inheritance through imperial donations and decrees and they included several villages (with the *paroikoi* living there) and farms, rights over the tradefair that took place in the village Neokastron, rights of fishing in the rivers Samia and Maritza, twelve ships with tax exemptions (Ševčenko,2000:828-829). For the proper administration of these properties he stipulates that a steward be chosen by vote from among the eminent monks in addition to three treasurers: First will be responsible for sacred liturgical vessels, second will deal with the management of money and take register of all the income and expenses, and the third one will see to the distribution of necessary clothing to the brothers (Ševčenko,2000:817). There is also "a special reserve treasury to be used in the events of certain calamities" (Ševčenko,2000:840).

Main physical composition of the monastery complex is as follows: Inside the enclosure of double-wall (Ševčenko,2000:799) there is the great church of the monastery, which is still intact, with "two large bells that [were] hung up in the tower" (Ševčenko,2000:804), and houses for the monks who are seventy four in all

(Ševčenko,2000:800). A bathhouse reserved for the use of the monks, wine cellars and granaries (Ševčenko,2000:799), a refectory and a cistern near to it for the need of ample water. Cistern was fed by aqueduct and water pipes (Ševčenko,2000:833). Inside the walls there is also house reserved to Isaakios's private secretary Michael (Ševčenko,2000:844). A doctor will also be hired by the superior of the monastery for the treatment of the sick in the old-age infirmary (there is also a small church near to this building for the spiritual benefit of the sick who were unable to attend the services at the main church) and the doctor shall remain in the monastery all the time (Ševčenko,2000:830-831).

Site of the monastic enclosure seems to have been chosen in purpose because it was situated in a very pleasant place. According to the *typikon* "charms of the monastery … will draw men. [there are] River Ainos, pasturage and grazing land of evergreen meadows to nourish horses and cattle. Fine temperature of the currents of air [is pleasing]." There is also a grove that bears "bunches of grapes" and there is "water gushes forth wonderfully and beautifully" (Ševčenko,2000:833). There is also a highway which passes close to the monastery (Ševčenko,2000:848).

Outside the enclosure there is cemetery for the monks. It is situated by the stream and there is a small chapel in the middle of it (Ševčenko,2000:849). There is also another bathhouse by the river, close to the cemetery, with houses as a place for rest. This bath will be leased out for profit (Ševčenko,2000:841). Dwelling of Isaakios Komnenos is also situated outside the enclosure (Ševčenko,2000:848).There are donkey-driven mills specifically reserved for the use of the monks and it is forbidden any other laymen to use it (Ševčenko,2000:836). Interesting to note that the monastery also had a fortress nearby which was occupied by special guards

(Ševčenko,2000:846). All these features point to the fact that the monastery was a world of its own. It enjoyed (at least for a certain period) an autonomous management, and the tax privileges that were given to the properties. There are many villages and farms whose *paroikoi* worked for the development of the monastery. That twelve ships were donated to the monastery could hint that the surplus agricultural goods and wine could be transported to the markets. Double walls and the fortress nearby would ensure a good protection in that in1341 "the then rebel and future emperor John VI Kantakouzenos (1347-1354) found the monastery defended by its monks and a group of peasants" (Ševčenko,2000:783).

3.2 Byzantine Peasants and Their Work

Rural settlement can be said to have been divided between two contradictory or complementary entities: village communities which consisted of small peasant holdings and great estates. Textual and archaeological evidence, however, are not enough, for the time, to elucidate the exact percentage of those two types. Regional peculiarities doubtlessly played an important role in shaping the settlement pattern in the countryside (Lefort, 1993:106). Oikonomides has posited that it was the tenth century, especially after the disastrous winter of 927/928, that saw the acceleration of the socio-economical transformation of the people who occupied the countryside. Lay and ecclesiastical, especially monastic, wealth started increasing by way of acquisitions of the domains of small landowners who had little or no means to defend their socio-economic status and resorted to sell their land and became *paroikoi*. They might have chosen to remain at their former place and continued to work on field that had been included into the domain of the big landowners (Oikonomides, 1996b:105).

Lemerle has argued, making deductions from documentary evidence, that free peasantry of modest standing did not cease to exist; although their status seems to have been threatened, in the epoch of great estates[58] (Lemerle, 1979:202). On one example, Michael Choniates, Metropolitan of Athens, reported to the emperor that townsmen of Athens were endeavouring to take hold of (*katechein*) the holdings (*staseis*) of the peasants (*choritai*) and the villages (*choria*) of Athens with every possible means. Lemerle concludes that since the property of *paroikoi* would have been better protected by the owner of the estate, because the estate owner was always a member of the *dynatoi*, the *choritai* in question must have consisted of free peasantry who had little means to defend their property[59] (Lemerle, 1979:207). Ambiguity of the terms related to the peasants often blurs our understanding about the difference of peasant categories. Lemerle recounts an incident in 1193 whereby the monastery of Patmos could no longer take 700 *modioi* of grain it used to have from the imperial domains in Crete because the land in question was given over to the local inhabitants (*entopioi*) in return for a rent in cash payment. These inhabitants, as Lemerle suggests, might well have been free peasants in that they pay rent directly to the state, unlike *pronoia* holders and *paroikoi*, and they were not called *paroikoi*[60] (Lemerle, 1979:206). Nevertheless, that somebody was not called

[58] McGeer has also stated that from the tenth century onwards many villagers of small-holdings left their lands and took refuge to the great estate owners. This was partly because the heavy tax burden and other secondary duties imposed upon them, (estate owners and monastic estates were generally exempt of duties other than basic land tax, *telos, demosion*) and partly owing to natural disasters like famines, and even by the mid-tenth century "tenant farmers and peasants in various categories of dependence (*paroikoi*) outnumbered free smallholders". Nevertheless free villagers and village communities did not wholly disappear and they survived in provinces "where imperial authority was strongest and where village society was firmly entrenched" (McGeer,2000:14).

[59] Lefort also agrees on this and asserts that since the state was distant and it was likely to prove ineffective in times of danger, "the protection of a powerful landowner could be useful rather than inconvenient" (Lefort, 2002:237).

[60] Usage of the term *paroikos* became more and more common, beginning from the eleventh century. This, on the one hand, might be taken as an indication that a type of feudalism was also

paroikos might not necessarily indicate that the person was a free peasant: Emperor Alexios I gave a whole village (*chorion*) including the inhabitants (*epoikoi*, *choritai*, *proskathemenoi*)[61] and the fiscal income thereof to a man called Leo Kephalas, with a condition that the villagers may not be dislodged from their dwellings and farms. Villagers were called by many terms but we are unable to grasp the exact legal status of them, or the evolution of the meanings of these terms. In this case Lemerle concludes that the inhabitants may have been *demosiarioi paroikoi*, and not free peasants, although the terms *demosiarioi* or *paroikoi* were not employed in the documents (Lemerle, 1979:208).

Agricultural production in the twelfth century was based on private property; peasants, be they the real owner of the land or tenants, and on private enterprise, rather than communal activities. Kazhdan proposes that the idea of privacy was widespread in Byzantine society while accepting the realities that included different implementations of communal and customary practices. These practices, which did not hinder the actual production process, included that peasants were sometimes forced to pay taxes for the lands which were deserted by their neighbours or villagers can go into their neighbours' fields to collect wood and pick up fruits. He observes, nevertheless, a continuation in Byzantium of the general acceptance of private property which, he thought, the Romans obtained and which was inherited by

taking shape in Byzantium through which once free farmers were being rendered dependent peasants, much in parallel with the serf of Western Europe. The word *paroikos*, on the other hand, has other connotations as well: They had, first of all "juridical freedom" and as Lefort suggests, their obligations might have mainly been fiscal which did not prevent their mobility; for many *paroikoi* actually owned land in some place while they were residing in another village (Lefort, 1993:110 and Lefort, 2002: 239). In addition *paroikos* was also used for reference to certain landowners who paid their taxes not to the fisc but to another person or an institution (Lefort, 2002:238). Therefore their status was determined not by their relation to the land but by their interaction with a third person to whom they gave their taxes (rents).

[61] *Choritai* simply means village dwellers without reference to their legal status. Similarly *epoikoi* or *enoikoi,* and *proskathemenoi* means inhabitants.

Byzantine law. He goes on to say that Byzantine farms and gardens which constituted "fixed parcels" were surrounded by fences and ditches, which implies an individualistic attitude rather than communal production and increased horticulture and viticulture which require ample manual work also require individual undertaking. He concludes that since the plough driven by a pair of oxen was employed by Byzantine farmers in contrast to the heavy plough, which was used in western and northern European soil, presupposes usage of up to eight oxen, a communal cooperation was not so much needed within the Byzantine agricultural population (Kazhdan, 1993: 84, 86).

Regardless of the type of the socio-economic organization of the countryside (i.e. village and estate) and regardless of the names utilized to denote those who actually tilled the earth, the majority of the arable land in Byzantium in the twelfth century was, thus, cultivated by way of peasant households (i.e. indirectly in the case of an estate type organization) who held the plots as tenant farmers, along with a hereditary right in most circumstances (i.e. legal right to pass the rented farmland to the offspring and the guarantee of the continuation of the rent in the next generation) or who owned the land in the case of a village community, although its importance and effectiveness was diminishing rapidly. Not all the surviving children were to stay at home and continue cultivating their lands; some had to leave home and sought for new employments such as a new farm to start a family or ended up in soldiering, or girls were to marry or were to choose being a recluse in a monastery. Because the means and outcome of agricultural production was more or less the same in pre-capitalistic societies, barring a catastrophe, more members in the peasant family which possessed the same measurement of land and the same means of production

would only cause poverty (Lefort, 2002:244). This, as a matter of fact, was not to disrupt Byzantine socio-economic life in the twelfth century; on the contrary the population rise[62] was absorbed and channelled productively by means of estate economies and by other possibilities such as foot or mounted soldier hiring, or the expansion of monasteries which were to need more monks and nuns in the epoch of Komnenians.

Available archival documents coming mainly from monasteries show that an average peasant household possessed a single ox for tilling the earth. In the village of Radolibos in Macedonia in the twelfth century, for example, farmer families owned an average of 0,8 ox; out of 126 households 39 had a single ox (*boidatoi*), 32 had a plough team (two oxen - *zeugaratoi*), 38 were without draft animals (*aktemones*) and lastly there were 17 families who only possessed donkeys (*onikatoi*) who apparently engaged not in farming but transporting the necessary equipment and the harvest.[63] A similar situation can be observed in the estate of Baris in Miletos at the end of the eleventh century, where 51 peasant families owned 44 oxen; average being 0,9 ox per family. Those who did not have draft animals could hire those belonging to the estate owner. As the Farmer's Law suggests and fiscal documents show, animal keeping was a major contribution to the peasant family; almost every household owned a cow, a pig, several sheep or goats apart from poultry which was not registered in the documents, although this information comes from the beginning of the fourteenth century from Iviron and Lavra monasteries. In addition beekeeping

[62] See Laiou and Morrisson, 2007 pp. 92-96

[63] See Actes d'Iviron 2:51, pp. 204 and 207. This document enumerates the peasants of Radolibos one by one, including their wives and children and their fiscal status. For example an entry #49 (*stichos*) reads as follows: *Theodoros tou papa Eustathiou, echei gynaika Meran, huious Nikolaon kai Tzervev, zeugaratos*.

was also practised in mainly small farms, since honey was a significant source of sugar and wax was an essential source of candle making (Lefort, 2002:245-246).

It is difficult and maybe futile to estimate an average size of peasant farms, because it differs from place to place for many obvious reasons: Household members and their agricultural tools (especially ox and plough), the quality of the arable land, population density, provincial security (throughout the twelfth century domestic affairs of Byzantium can be said to have been secure enough to have allowed a sustainable growth), other activities beside agriculture, the attitude of the fisc, that of the landowners and state officials (such as governors and tax collectors) towards the peasants, and maritime trade opportunities; they all affected the agricultural work, its nature and density in the countryside.

In the village of Radolibos in Macedonia at the beginning of the twelfth century, *boidatoi* possessed 28 *modioi* of arable land reserved for cereal production, *zeugaratoi* 44 *modioi*, *aktemones* 19 *modioi*, and *onikatoi* had 8 *modioi*.[64] At the end of the eleventh century, each of the nine peasants (*proskathemenoi*) who lived in western Chalkidike, on an estate belonging to the Xenophon monastery of Mount Athos possessed 33 *modioi* of land (they might have been *boidatoi*) for agricultural work. However, most probably because of the population density and the availability of the arable land, *zeugaratoi* on the island of Leros had 35 to 40 *modioi* farms in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. On the other hand, in the environs of Strumica in the mid twelfth century *zeugaratoi* exploited 83 *modioi* of land. Lefort suggests that, the

[64] Actes d'Iviron 2, pp. 290-291: Although the avarage *modios* of land that each *zeugaratos* possessed was 44 *modioi*, it differed from one family to another. For example a certain Zakchaios had 76 *modioi*, whereas Petros of papa Ioannou only had 31 *modioi* of land, and both were *zeugaratoi*.

fact that peasants held smaller or even tiny arable lands might indicate that, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, in some regions at least, agricultural work was either "more diverse or productive than previously supposed" (Lefort, 2002:247-248).

As to what the Byzantine peasant cultivated, it is often referred to as being polyculture. They did whatever possible so long as the climate allowed they produced cereals, grew trees, engaged in stock raising and beekeeping, made wine and olive oil. Growing fruit trees was a significant source of additional income to the peasant family; they used fruits and wood for their own consumption, and it paid well in the nearby town markets. In fourteenth-century Macedonia ten different kinds of fruit trees were mentioned in the textual sources: almond, cherry, quince, fig, pomegranate, walnut, peach, pear, apple and plum trees. The Aegean islands, Crete and Cyprus were noted for having orchards. Along the sea coast were olive trees; the Aegean coast of Anatolia, Bithynia, the Aegean islands and the Peloponnese were the main source of olive trees and olive oil. As the Mediterranean climate permitted and where its influence was felt, grapevines were cultivated extensively; both as a means of cash and personal enjoyment (Hendy, 2008:139-141, Harvey, 2002:148). Ptochoprodromos, in one of his poems, named the origins of the wine consumed in Constantinople: Varna (sea coast of Bulgaria), Ganos (Marmara shore of Thrace), and the Aegean islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos and Crete. Michael Choniates also mentioned Euboea, Chios and Rhodes as the sources of good wine. Mulberry trees were grown especially in order to feed the silkworms. Anatolia, the islands of the Aegean Sea and the southern Balkans are known as the provinces where silk production took place from the seventh century. Silk production was attested in Central Greece in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and in Thessaly in the twelfth

century[65]. Cereals were the main source of alimentation of the peasants and cultivated extensively. Wheat and barley constituted the bulk of them, although some other cereals were also introduced in the Byzantine agricultural practice. This is regarded as a sign that "Byzantine agriculture was not as static as previously asserted". Ottoman tax registers show that in the mid-fifteenth century certain villages in the Strymon and in Chalkidike divided their farms as follows: half was reserved for wheat, one third for barley and the rest for oats, millet and rye. In the thirteenth century, Theodore Skaranos cultivated all the crops with a comparable proportions mentioned above with the exception of oats. Nevertheless in the Baris estate in the eleventh century only wheat and barley seem to have been cultivated. Wheat was either planted in winter (winter wheat) or in spring (spring wheat). Spring wheat was a kind of insurance if case severe winter conditions damaged the winter wheat. Provinces close to the sea were the main places of wheat production: Among them were the Aegean coast of Anatolia, Thrace, Macedonia and Thessaly. For the provisioning of Constantinople, state held imperial granaries to ensure proper storage and transportation of the wheat which were produced in crown lands. In the tenth and eleventh centuries these granaries included Amastris (Amasya), many in Bithynia, Herakleia (Ereğli) in Thrace, Philippopolis (Filibe) in Bulgaria, Smyrna (İzmir) and Paphos (Baf) in Cyprus (Lefort, 2002:250-251).

Barley which is another source of bread is a much tougher cereal; therefore it was cultivated nearly everywhere. Millet was also produced to some extent although it was not valued much by the Byzantines. Rye which was used to make

[65] See Jacoby, 1992:454 ff. Jacoby has pointed that Peloponnese was the only Byzantine province that evidence for the early phases of sericulture can be found (p.454). From early twelfth century onwards however evidence of silk production becomes more abundant (p.460). Jews are also known to have worked in the silk business in the twelfth century (p.461).

bread was not known to the people of Ancient Greece and it was introduced to the Byzantine agricultural production by the thirteenth century, especially in Chalkidike. Oats were cultivated in order to feed the horses; mainly those belong to the army. Legumes which were often cultivated in the gardens or for some types in the fields included lentils, peas, broad beans, chick peas and yellow lentils and they certainly contributed to the daily ration of the Byzantine peasant along with other vegetables which were also grown in the gardens. Vegetables were extensively cultivated[66] in everywhere in small gardens, especially near to towns and in the countryside just beside the peasant houses, since the gardens needed constant work and manure. In addition since houses were mainly built near a water source, gardens also benefited from that source of water. While, in the countryside, peasant households owned their own vegetable gardens, *dynatoi* usually held the gardens which were just outside the towns, divided them up into small plots, and rented them out to *paroikoi*. Monastery of Iveron held such a garden which was called *ta Keporeia* (Garden place), constituted 6 *modioi*, which contained two water wells and two cisterns west of Thessalonike, and it was cultivated by the beginning of the twelfth century.[67] In the gardens near the towns all the vegetables were grown in their respective plots, however in the countryside vegetables were cultivated along with grapevines and fruit trees, (it was a common practice to raise grapevines which were buttressed by the fruit trees); hence these gardens might sometimes be referred to as *kepampelon* (vineyard garden), *ampeloperibolia* (vineyard enclosure), or *kepoperibolion* (garden enclosure) . Vineyards were usually small gardens, around 1 *modios* and they were often owned and cultivated by the peasants. While some of them which belong to the

[66] There were nearly one hundred kinds of different vegetables that were cultivated in Byzantium (Lefort, 2002:252).
[67] See Actes d'Iviron 2:52, pp. 216 and 235.

landowner of the estate were directly exploited, some were rented out to *paroikoi*. Lefort suggests that a peasant family who owned a vineyard of around 2 *modioi* could have produced more than enough for its own consumption; although this, obviously, depended on how much they might have drunk. Olive groves were, similarly, exploited directly on the estates. Hundreds of olive trees were cultivated on the southern banks of Mount Athos. (Lefort, 2002:251-254, 256). From the twelfth century onwards surnames pertaining to shoemaking and weaving businesses can allude to the existence of craftsmanship tradition in the villages (Lefort, 2002:266). Nevertheless during the tenth and the eleventh centuries rural crafts seem to have poorly developed. Lefort has studied the condition of Macedonia and has concluded that by the time of the twelfth century only less than four percent of the *paroikoi* seem to have engaged in crafts since they bore surnames that might indicate that they were masons and blacksmiths. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, *paroikoi* that had surnames of trades rose to ten percent (Lefort, 2002:308-309).

3.3 Military Lands and *Pronoia*

Byzantine army in the tenth century was predominantly composed of two main groups: imperial military units, *tagmata*, with its paid soldiers, *scholarioi*, stationed in and around Constantinople, and provincial military elements, *themata*, which were much more extensive and were based in the provinces (themes – *themata*) each of which was governed by a general, *strategos*.[68] Although the theme

[68] Oikonomides points out that "the *strategos* was quite an important lord inside his territories, with a retinue more important than that of other aristocrats, who all seem to have been surrounded by

soldiers, *stratiotai*, were sometimes paid in cash or in kind, they essentially made their living with the produce of the agricultural lands (so called military lands), *stratiotika ktemata*, they were granted. (Toynbee, 1973:136-137) Soldiers "could either live *on* the land" by actively cultivating the farms (certainly with the help of household members, paid labourers, and maybe slaves) or "they could live *off* the land" by exacting tax and dues and certain forms of service form the peasants who lived on the military lands. The period from the tenth to the twelfth centuries witnessed a transition from the first kind of soldier support to the second kind (Magdalino, 1997: 167).

Hendy argues that from the seventh century two important developments took place in the countryside. While great landowning did exist in early Byzantium they had neither civil nor military connection to the imperial administration. From the seventh century nevertheless soldiers who settled in lands, especially within *themes* in Anatolia, created an "amalgam of landowning and militarization". Subsequently landholders of mainly military origin began to provide personnel for both provincial civil and military administration. Therefore, unlike the early centuries of Justinian (527 – 565) during which civil and military conduct were kept apart, this newly emerged group asserted itself at the expense of the central government (Hendy, 1989: 6).

Theme soldiers would supply themselves with the necessary military equipment with the revenue of their land, and they would actively take part in military service, *strateia*, or they could equip another soldier whom they sent to

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"their men"" (Oikonomides, 1997:205). *Timarion* also includes a description of the imaginary governor of Thessaloniki. The grandiose surrounding the governor (he was attached to Dukas family by marriage) must have been true (Baldwin, 1984: 45-49).

battle in their stead. Alternatively, already evident by the mid-tenth century, military service, *strateia*, could be substituted by a cash payment[69] through which a professional standing army operating full time could be formed or foreign mercenaries could be hired. As cash payment option came to be a more favoured practice in the eleventh century, thematic soldiers and military lands, *stratiotika ktemata*, to which they were attached steadily died out. McGeer suggests that another reason of the disappearance of military lands and theme armies was that once Byzantine empire took hold of Bulgaria and Northern Syria in the early eleventh century, further territorial expansion ended and empire entered into a somewhat peaceful era, without, seemingly, a military threat from the outside; therefore military units stationed in the themes of inner Anatolia must have seemed unnecessary (McGeer,2000:15-20).

Pronoia was one of the modes of land tenure especially in the twelfth century. It was basically an assignment of the revenues gathered from land to individuals in return for military and sometimes civil service. This assignment consisted only of fiscal revenues and did not include the whole proprietary and jurisdictional rights. Since it was not so widespread an organization of land, its impact on the rural life remained limited (Harvey, 1989: 6-7). The system might have cost the treasury quite a sum of money, however for the want of evidence it is not possible at this stage to determine its ubiquity. Hendy indicates that since *pronioa* was established basically as an alternative means of paying the army, if military service rendered by *pronoia*-holders was satisfactory then it compensated the

[69] A Novel of Constantine VII can be said to have paved way to fiscalisation of the military holdings "by attaching the burden of military service, *strateia*, to land rather than to families who owned it" (Magdalino, 2007:171).

cessation of tax by the government. It was also devoid of any adverse economic and social consequences since *pronoia* grants were given for lifetime only and it was not hereditary and it remained under the firm control of the state (Hendy, 1989, pp. II 37-38). Kazhdan, on the other hand assets that, initially there was "cooperation between the state and the bearer of the *pronoia* right, neither of which obtained the full mastery of the thing". When the system was extended however, *pronoia* bearers gained "judicial and administrative rights over the population under his dominion" (Kazhdan, 1993: 91).

Magdalino notes that even prisoners of war, including Slavs and Turks, were granted *pronoia* lands in both Balkans and Asia Minor. In addition there were local people who received *pronoia*. He argues that " the *pronoia*-holding soldier represented a distinct improvement"; he stayed at his local stronghold and gathered tax directly from the producer without the involvement of central administration. He had also a vested interest in maintaining the security and productivity of his land (Magdalino, 1993:176).

That Byzantine army consisted of mainly mercenary units by the end of the eleventh century did not imply that native troops had been insufficient and incompetent but this transformation "was directly related to the emperor's inability to trust his leading military commanders". This attitude of the emperors might have been one of the reasons that gave birth to *pronoia*; Once provincial magnates were subdued and Macedonian emperors managed to transform extensive lands into public property, this resource pool was distributed, conditionally and according to the principle of limited tenure, among the people, military or civil, "whom the emperor needed to remunerate for service of any kind" (Magdalino, 2007:178-179, 184-188).

With the conditional and lifetime donation of land, Byzantine Empire both retained its centralized character and at the same time found a more appropriate system of remuneration for public services, especially in the face of shortage of precious metals which Oikonomides thought the empire was experiencing during and after the eleventh century (Oikonomides, 1997: 213-215). Hendy also points out that there was no real evidence that the mercenary soldiers were less effective and more ruinous than the local troops and *pronoia*, if it was only a form of salary, was more costly than the regular salary in cash (Hendy, 1970:37).

Bartusis has made a distinction between the technical and non-technical use of the word *pronoia*. It means, prior to twelfth century, in the Byzantine documents care, solicitude, reward, benefaction, maintenance (provisions), administration and management (Bartusis, 2013:14-31). During the twelfth century, however, the word assumed its technical sense. There are three examples that hint at the institutional meaning of *pronoia* emerged: Zavorda treatise writes that *pronoiatika* are "the [things] granted by the emperor for the lifetime of a man" (Bartusis, 2013, and Brand, 1969:60), typikon of Pantokrator monastery in 1136 lists the properties that were granted and among them was "the *pronoia* of the late Synadenos situated in Hexamilion in the market of Brachionion" (Jordan, 2000: 768), and testimony of the historian Choniates concerning "the so-called gifts of the *paroikoi*" also indicative of the grants of *pronoia* as an institution (Magoulias, 1984:118).

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

When we take the twelfth century as a point of reference and look back, it can be surmised that socio-economic developments, developments that were triggered foremost by a considerable rise of population during the tenth and eleventh centuries, manifested themselves and evolved through the centuries in the following ways:

a. Demographic increase was the only means of economic growth in an agricultural society before the industrialization; since so long as the technology remains the same people had to extend the area under cultivation in order to increase production. People started to create *agridia*, agricultural fields outside the village although they were regarded to belong to the same fiscal unit, as the village, *chorion*, became more crowded and there was not enough space for farms left .Therefore more people simply mean more agricultural fields and more agricultural produce. This is what happened during the tenth century and continued through the mid-thirteenth century.

b. Population growth did not happen in a mechanical way but in a social environment; therefore it was intermingled with an increasing web of socio-economic relations. Stratification of wealth and of social status started to be formed. Some of the farmers became richer than the others. Some others turned out to be landless and started to seek job as wage labourers. There were also slaves and war captives, and slaves that were

freed and settled on land as farmers or slaves that became wage labourers. This vivid interaction in the village level is documented in the Farmer's Law and in the Fiscal Treatise as well[70].

c. Apart from simple villagers, big landownership started to emerge during the tenth century. Socio-economic results of the growing inequalities among the village communities, presence of *thematic* soldiers and their generals/governors, *strategoi*, in the provinces, actions of state officials (e.g. imperial stewards that oversaw the imperial estates and tax collectors) and the foundation of monasteries, manifested themselves from the tenth century onwards as a creation of a "landed [and] hereditary nobility" although the system "was never fully established; vertical mobility remained characteristic of Byzantine society through the eleventh century" (Kazhdan and Epstein, 1990:63). Nevertheless there was also an intact state authority that safeguarded its own fiscal revenues by issuing a series of land legislation that was aimed at protecting "the territorial integrity of peasant villages". Tenth century emperors "intended to prevent landowners, who did not already have land in any *chorion*, from buying their way into it and gradually coming to dominate the other smaller landowners in the *chorion*". This legislation also demonstrates that "the gulf between rich and poor peasants was becoming greater" (Harvey, 2002:35, 37).

[70] Harvey has advised that the two texts (The Farmer's Law and The Fiscal Treatise) that reflect "inequalities in wealth among the villagers … cannot be compared simply", because each of them were drafted for different purposes. The former was just a "practical handbook concerned with the petty misdemeanours in the village" and the later "is an informed description of the working of the taxation system". Therefore only with the help of other sources one can reach conclusions about the socio-economic movements in the tenth century (Harvey, 2002:35, footnote 1).

d. The catastrophic famine of 927-928 and destructive winter of 934 intensified the process whereby peasants who had little means deserted their farms and villages or sold them, and the powerful (*dynatoi*) took advantage of this by increasing their landed properties. Especially Anatolian magnates (they were residents in the pastoral areas of inner Anatolia such as in the *themes* of Anatolikon, Cappadocia, Paphlagonia, and Armeniakon) who were possibly generations of the *thematic* soldiers and *strategoi*, came to possess estates (*proasteia*), palaces and even fortresses, albeit small. Their power was augmented "by the exercise of patronage and the maintenance of private retinues. Some families obtained a firm control of the highest positions in the provincial administration and even in Constantinople over successive generations" (Harvey, 2002:40-41).

e. Nevertheless, in spite of their wealth and military strength, provincial magnates of Anatolian origin in the tenth and eleventh centuries can be said to have been "restricted in their independence; they were not autonomous barons but imperial functionaries who could be dismissed, exiled, or dispossessed at any [convenient] time"[71] (Kazhdan and Epstein, 1990:65).

f. When Alexios I Komnenos ascended to the throne, he was simply a usurper with no immediate legitimacy, he was obliged to win the support of the influential magnate families and powerful institutions. Fiscal concessions of his reign reflect a change of the early fiscal grants.

[71] For an illustrative example of this see Kazhdan and Epstein, 1990: 64.

Formerly the Byzantine state, mostly, "allowed landowners to install a fixed number of peasants (*paroikoi*) on their estates, provided that they [paroikoi] were not already recorded in the tax-registers as owing payments to the state". This means that the state did not give up collecting taxes from the tax payers, but it regulated, in a way, the employment of landless peasants. Alexios, however, started to distribute, albeit cautiously, the revenues that the fisc had been collecting. "They mostly date from the earlier years Alexios' reign and their issue was restricted to important supporters of his rule and to a few very influential monasteries like Patmos". Nevertheless he did not donate only state land; but to strike a balance between the state revenues that he needed for immediate expenses, especially for military expenditure, and his political attitude to gain the support of the powerful figures, he resorted confiscations from other landlords as well. In this vein the monastery of Iviron lost a great deal of its landed property; it was to be distributed among the family members of the Komnenians (Harvey, 1996:168-170).

g. Late eleventh and twelfth-century magnates, therefore, show a different pattern than those of the tenth and early eleventh centuries. "The highest military elite was consolidated in a closed body of powerful families connected by intermarriage and forming a "clan" around the ruling Comnenian dynasty. The higher military administrative functions were monopolized by the Comnenian clan" (Kazhdan and Epstein, 1990: 69). This pattern also gives a sign of their nature: Komnenian aristocracy was Constantinople based, given their proximity to the ruling family, and

these “Constantinopolitan landlords controlled an extremely high proportion of the empire’s top-quality arable land – land that was valuable not only because of its fertility, but because of its accessibility to maritime trade” (Magdalino, 1993: 166).

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