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The Electronic Database «Βυζαντινῶν μέτρον τύχης» and the First Research Results[1]

(Paper delivered at the workshop *"Social" Profiles and "Social" Groups: Perceptions of Social Position in Byzantium*, IHR/NHRF, 19th December 2014)

The electronic database «*Βυζαντινῶν μέτρον τύχης*» is the outcome of the three year old research titled "*Electronic database on the Social History of Byzantium, 6th-12th c.: Sources, Problems and Approaches*". The research project is being conducted at the Institute of Historical Research, Section of Byzantine Studies of the National Hellenic Research Foundation since April 2012, after it won an international contest run by the Greek Ministry of Education in the end of 2010. The scholarships are funded exclusively by the European Social Fund. When the project was qualified for funding, it was placed in the program "*Everyday and social life in Byzantium*", directed by the senior researcher Ilias Anagnostakis, and under the supervision of the senior researcher Maria Leontsini. I thank both Ilias Anagnostakis and Maria Leontsini for their acceptance and for their collaboration. I would also like to thank sincerely the directors of the Institute Kriton Chrysochoides and prof. Taxiarchis Kolias for their aid and understanding particularly in confronting sometimes complicated problems regarding research implementation.

The research idea concerned the exploration of the byzantine society with a view to two particular problems: a) the parameters that constituted in Byzantium what we call today "social position", and b) the byzantine perception of social position and the behavior of separate social groups to each other, which in the modern sociological approach is a large part of what we call today "social mobility". The decision to turn this idea into an open access electronic database led to the result, that information is

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split into pieces in the database. For this reason, to facilitate scientific research and the search of the visitors of the webpage, the material was divided into two main parts, one holding the information collected from the sources (source entries, «*κοινωνικές κατηγορίες*»), divided into periods, and one that contains texts and analysis of particular topics (documentation, «*τεκμηρίωση*»).

At the time of implementation the web developer and the collaborators at the National Documentation Center provided their expertise for overcoming problems of electronic nature. The database acquired its own site with an easy to access URL address (http://byzmettyhes.gr), which contains the name of the database abbreviated. After my own directions, the entries were made to hold the source text and commentary. However, the first entries of that type showed that each text (source or commentary) contained data that were not strictly "social", that would have to be explained for the visitor of the database, since we targeted not only at the scientific but also at the wider audience. Thus a third section of the database was created, the data section (*δεδομένα κειμένου*), that can be accessed separately, but that, in order to be linked to the source entries, had to be uploaded first. The data part contains information on termini technici, prosopographical notes with a view to underlying social issues, etc.

The four sources that I selected for beginning the research, namely, the Chronography of Michael Psellos, the Secret history of Procopius, the text On Powers by John Lydus, and the Novels of the Macedonian emperors on land ownership, are known for their particular social content. The terms relating to the perception of society collected from these texts were more than one hundred. The Byzantines used many synonyms to designate the same social category. For this reason similar terms were grouped in one and the same category in the database, each term sometimes, but not always, carrying with it particular connotations, for example the poor, who are designated in the sources as *ἄποροι, πένητες, πτωχοί*, but also as *ἀφανεῖς, ἄσημοι, ἄχρηστοι, ἀνώνυμοι, ἀγενεῖς, ἀργοί*, etc. For some terms it became necessary to create a category of opposites, because the byzantine quill loved contrasts in texts (i.e. *δόξα, glory*, is not comprehended without the lack of it, *ἀδοξία*, in a social context). I admit that, considering that there was no legal definition of social position in Byzantium, the terms are fluid, and the classification I have made may still change. The social categories catalogue so far contains more than 80 categories. The list comprises not only social groups, but also social terms and concepts that are important for the social description of a person or of a group, such as *τιμή* (honor), *τάξις* (order), *δυναστεία* (oppression), *ἐλευθερία* (freedom), *εὐπορία*

(prosperity), etc.

Indexing the four sources mentioned, also revealed the name that we decided to give to the database: *μέτρον τύχης* (measure of fortune), is an expression used only once in the byzantine sources, specifically in a Novel of emperor Romanus Lecapenus, to designate the highest social level that one can achieve in his lifetime[2]. *Tyche* is a well known concept in antiquity and has many similarities to the roman Fortuna. In Byzantium its role is to explain the developments and the sudden changes of fortune. When it relates to people it is used to explain the lack of complicity of the human will[3]. As such, the byzantine writers use the notion of *tyche* to denote those elements of social distinction that are not controlled, e.g. lineage and family, nationality, legal situation (free/captive/slave), the existence of a title or an office, or the lack of it. According to these perceptions, we find in the sources lots of types of "*tyche*": *τύχη ἐλάσσων* (humble fortune), *τύχη ὀνόματος* (fortune of name, but also of "title"), *τύχη ὑψηλοτέρα* (higher fortune: noble), etc. It is worth noting that normally –but not always- fortune is not associated to wealth, because wealth alone does not lead to social distinction in Byzantium. Only once the personal fortune of the emperor Justinian I is associated to the Hellenistic idea of *νόμος ἔμψυχος* (living law), and is considered as enhancing the legislative authority of the emperor[4]. The roman legislation preserved the *tyche* as criterion for sentencing a convict (in the Codex Justinianus and in the Basilica): punishment is imposed after one's own fortune (*κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν τύχην*)[5].

I have already passed to the scientific part of the presentation, but before I dive

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[2] N. Svoronos, Les novelles des empereurs Macédoniennes concernant la terre et les stratiotes, éd. posthume P. Gounaridis, Athènes 1994, no 3.112-113·

[3] ODB, 2131· C. Cupane, «Fortuna rota volvitur». Moira e Tyche nel carme nr. I, di Eugenio da Palermo, in: Χρόνος συνήγορος, Mélanges Andre Guillou, ed. Lisa Benou – Cristina Rognoni, Νέα Ρώμη 8, 2011, (Roma 2012), 137-152, 137-152·

[4] Corpus Iuris Civilis vol. III: Novellae, ed. R. Schöll-G. Kroll, Berlin 1904, repr. Germany 1972, 507.8-10: Πάντων δὲ δὴ τῶν εἰρημένων ἡμῖν ἡ βασιλέως ἐξηρήσθω τύχη, ᾗ γε καὶ αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς τοὺς νόμους ὑπέθηκε νόμον αὐτὴν ἔμψυχον καταπέμψας ἀνθρώποις· Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy. Origins and Background, Washington, DC, 1966, 240-241, 272, 594-603, 716-723; H. Hunger, Prooimion. Elemente der byzantinischen Kaiseridee in den Arengen der Urkunden, WBS 1, Wien 1964, 117-119.

[5] Basilica, I.1.4.3-7· The law concerns heretics; specifically mentioned are the clerics and those under strateia –both groups are expelled from the bodies to which they belonged as a punishment.

deeper into it, I need to point out that, when searching for social terms in Byzantium, the obvious ones, *κοινωνία* (society) and *τάξις* (order), are not really those we are looking for: the first carries with it significant legal connotations and denotes in reality the binding participation in something[6]; the latter is understood in Byzantium as a quality that defines the function of the state (of the polity, *πολιτεία*), that is, it is perceived more as a philosophic (actually Aristotelian and neo-platonic) principle and less as a social term[7]; however, the most common use of *taxis* in Byzantium appears to relate to the Roman *ordo*, a term that denoted the separate social, political and

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[6] Meaning relations of various types, the term κοινωνία was not rare in antiquity; its derivation from the verb "κοινωνῶ" meant the binding, responsible and accountable participation in something. However, κοινωνία was assigned a theological connotation particularly by St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. John Chrystostom (it is found rarely in St. Basil and St. Athanasius); it was taken over by the neo-platonist Proclus and his student Pseudo-Dionysius, whereby it was combined with the notion of τάξις (on which see below). In the Novels of emperor Justinian I the term is used to describe sharing in something (in a crime or in a procedure, see CIC III, 101.29, 611.6). All through the early byzantine times it is used for those joining in a heresy, a meaning which is found again especially in Theodore Studites: ὀρθόδοξος κοινωνία, κοινωνία αἰρετικῶν/εἰκονομάχων/ἐτεροδόξων, see Theodori Studitae Epistulae, ed. G. Fatouros, CFHB 31, Berlin 1991, no 13.42, 48.247, 479.46, 539.27.

[7] The notion of τάξις as an inherent and indispensable component of a harmonious polity was developed by Aristotle. Aristotle, Politica, 1278b.8-11: ἔστι δὲ πολιτεία πόλεως τάξις τῶν τε ἄλλων ἀρχῶν καὶ μάλιστα τῆς κυρίας πάντων. Κύριον μὲν γὰρ πανταχοῦ τὸ πολίτευμα τῆς πόλεως, πολίτευμα δ᾽ ἐστίν ἡ πολιτεία. Proclus applied this idea to the heavenly world and claimed that the earthly world is unable to preserve the order. W. Kroll, Procli Diadochi in Platonis rem publicam commentarii, Leipzig 1891, repr. Amsterdam 1965, v. I, 146.23-147.1: προσήκει δέ που τάξις μὲν τοῖς οὐρανίοις καὶ αὐτοπραγία … ἀλλοτριοπραγία δὲ καὶ ἀταξία προσήκει τοῖς ἐπιγείοις· τὰ γὰρ γήινα οὐ πράττει τὰ ἑαυτῶν οὐδὲ τὴν τάξιν καθ᾽ αὐτὴν διασώζει τὴν πρὸς ἑαυτά. This thought was thereafter taken over by pseudo-Dionysius, who perceived the τάξις as inherent of ἱεραρχία and hierarchy as a method of return towards God. G. Heil –A. M. Ritter, Corpus Dionysiacum, II. Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, De coelesti hierarchia, De ecclesiastica hierarchia, De mystica theologia, Epistulae, Patristische Texte und Studien 67, Berlin, 17.3-11: ἔστι μὲν ἱεραρχία… τάξις ἱερὰ καὶ ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἐνέργεια πρὸς τὸ θεοειδὲς… ἀφομοιουμένη καὶ πρὸς τὰς… αὐτῇ θεόθεν ἐλλάμψεις ἀναλόγως ἐπὶ τὸ θεομίμητον ἀναγομένη… Σκοπὸς οὖν ἱεραρχίας ἐστίν ἡ πρὸς θεὸν ὡς ἐφικτὸν ἀφομοίωσίς τε καὶ ἕνωσις…

religious groups of the Roman empire[8]. Thus we know, for example, of the *τάξις εὐνούχων*, *τάξις τοῦ βαθμοῦ*, etc.[9]. But the best known expression of *taxis* in Byzantium is undoubtedly that which is found in the prooimion of *De Cerimoniis*; there the emperor Constantine VII Porfyrogennitus states that imperial authority is ruled by *taxis* (*διὰ τῆς ἐπαινετῆς τάξεως*) because thus it is *ordered* (*δεικνυμένης κοσμιωτέρας*) and for this it is admired[10]. The emperor then makes an interesting remark, as he compares a royal polity (*βασιλικοῦ πολιτεύματος*) without *taxis*, with private and unfree life (*ἰδιωτικῆς καὶ ἀνελευθέρου διαγωγῆς*)[11], to conclude that when the imperial authority (*βασιλείου κράτους*) is ruled by rhythm and *taxis* in reality it replicates the harmony and motion of the Creator (*τοῦ δημιουργοῦ τὴν ἁρμονίαν καὶ κίνησιν*)[12]. Constantine VII here frames a basic Aristotelian idea in a neo-platonic context but takes it even further: freedom is the principle that underlies participation in authority, and the *polity* is a community of free people[13], therefore for someone not participating in the *polity* means not only that one chooses private life[14], but that his life is not free. This is the byzantine version of the ancient principle that set freedom (a legal condition) as fundamental prerequisite for political participation –involvement in the affairs of a city. In the idea conveyed by Constantine VII hides an important implication: people not participating in government belonged to the *ἰδιῶται*, the "unfree". This note of Constantine VII has served byzantinists for maintaining that *taxis* in the byzantine perception run all through the byzantine society, but this is not

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[8] This term appears also to have meant "class" in Roman times, when census was implied, e.g. the "ordo senatorius". It is doubtful that it was ever used for the stratification of the lower social strata.

[9] N. Oikonomidès, Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles, Paris 1972, 125.13, 141.29, cf 137.6-7: Δευτέρα τάξις.

[10] Constantini Porphyrogeniti Imperatoris, De Cerimoniis Aulae Byzantinae, ed. J.-J. Reiske, CSHB, Bonn 1830, 3.4-4.2.

[11] De Cerimoniis, 4.10-12.

[12] De Cerimoniis, 5.6-8. The "Creator" (Δημιουργός) is par excellence an idea that was elaborated by Proclus.

[13] The polis is a community of free people, but the fact that slavery was a part of everyday life conduced to the fact that the philosophers did not equate private life with the lack of freedom. By definition, for slaves, Greeks from other cities (metoikoi) and for foreigners it was impossible to participate in the polity. See Aristotle, Politica, 1277b.7-16, 1277b33-1278a.2.

[14] Aristotle Politica, 1273b.27-29: …ἔνιοι μὲν οὐκ ἐκοινώνησαν πράξεων πολιτικῶν οὐδ' ὡντινωνοῦν, ἀλλὰ διετέλεσαν ἰδιωτεύοντες τὸν βίον…

the case[15]. But how is it, finally, that the Byzantines themselves perceived of social position?

If participation is recognized as the most important factor for position, then "position" derives from the role of a group or a person within the frame of the *polity*, but roles tended to adjust. The perception of "social class/position" on the other hand is an entirely different issue, as perceptions are influenced by qualities: those assumed by the groups in their effort to assert themselves, those assigned to them by other groups in a context of social, economic or political collaboration or opposition, or those adopted by the state in its effort to overpower social and political agitations. On account of shortness of time in this presentation, I can only make a few general remarks about how the state itself divided its subjects into categories.

Byzantium inherited the basic social distinction of the *honestiores* and *humiliores* from the Roman empire, a distinction so general that had little practical use. The early legislation preserves a number of laws that contain many distinctions for the upper social strata; on the contrary, the lower social strata are simply divided in slaves, *coloni* and "kinds of people" (*servos et colonos… generibus hominum*)[16]. The laws relating to judicial processes have been pointed out as those establishing a social division based on descent and wealth. In general it is true that these laws recommend that position should be taken into consideration when examining the

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[15] Oikonomides, Listes, 22-23; L. Bréhier, Le monde byzantin II : Les institutions de l'empire byzantin, Paris 1949, 67-68; J. B. Bury, The Imperial Administrative System in the Ninth Century, with a Revised Text of the Kletorologion of Philotheos, New York 1925, 118; I. Καραγιαννόπουλος, Ιστορία του Βυζαντινού Κράτους τ. Α΄: Ιστορία πρωίμου βυζαντινής περιόδου (324-565), Θεσσαλονίκη 1995, 46-47; P. Magdalino, Court Society and Aristocracy, in: The Social History of Byzantium, ed. J. Haldon, Oxford 2009, 212-213, 216; A. Kazhdan – McCormick, The Social World of the Byzantine Court, in: Byzantine Court Culture from 829-1204, ed. H. Maguire, Washington, DC, 1997, 173-185.

[16] Theodosiani Libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis ed. Th. Mommsen, repr. Germany 1971, 16.5.54.3, 4, 7, 8. The laws are dated to 414 and 412. the first category of the private persons and dignitaries (personis singulis et dignitatibus) concerns the proconsulares, the vicarii and the comites primi ordinis; the second, generally called in the text as honoratos reliquos relates to senatores, the decemprimi curiales and the rest of the decuriones of cities. The lower staff of the judges, called officiales in the text, also belonged to the lower social strata; the priests were counted in the second category with the civic dignitaries. A similar law of 412 (C. Th., 16.5.52) given at Ravenna distinguishes among illustres, spectabiles and clarissimi, and still counted priests and clerics above the civic decurions.

facts of litigation[17]. For example, an early law preserved in the *Digesta* of Justinian I contains pairs of social opposites: decurions-plebeians, honorable-dishonorable, rich and poor. The legislator in this law was much more concerned with someone's position and way of life (the *condicio:* legal status) rather than with a particular social standing[18]. The general distinction between decurions and plebeians is often found in the Codex of Theodosius, but the distinction between rich and poor is not common – more often than not poverty appears in the legislation as source of unlawfulness, not of social status.

Justinian's important *Novel* 90 On witnesses maintains that trustworthy witnesses are those who have a position in state service and those who are known for their wealth and for their profession (*διὰ τὸ τῆς ἀξίας ἢ στρατείας ἢ εὐπορίας ἢ ἐπιτηδεύσεως ἀναμφισβήτητον*); the circus people, the "lowly" and the unknown are not eligible for testifying at court (*μή τινας ἐπιδιφρίους μηδὲ χαμερπεῖς μηδὲ παντοίως ἀσήμους… Εἰ δὲ ἄγνωστοί τινες εἶεν καὶ πανταχόθεν ἀφανεῖς…*)[19]. The circus/hippodrome people in the Roman empire were branded with permanent *infamia*, which was not a result of their economic situation, but of their profession. The main consideration of the law of Justinian was the ability of the witnesses to prove that they were reliable persons (*εὐυπολήπτους δεῖν εἶναι τοὺς μάρτυρας*), leading a respectable life, even through the testimony of others, which was proof of honesty (*ὑφ' ἑτέρων γοῦν ὅτι καθεστᾶσιν*

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[17] Digesta, 22.5.2.2: In testimoniis autem dignitas fides mores gravitas examinanda est: et ideo testes, qui adversus fidem suae testationes vacillant, audienti non sunt.

[18] Digesta, 22.5.3: Testium fides… in persona eorum exploranda… in primis condicio cuiusque utrum quis decurio an plebeius sit… an honestae et inculpatae vitae … an vero notatus quis et reprehensibilis… an locuples vel egens sit, ut lucri causa quid facile admittat. (The rank, the integrity, the manners, and the gravity of witnesses should be taken into consideration, and therefore those make contradictory statements, or who hesitate while giving their evidence, should not be heard).

[19] CIC III, no 90, 446. The Latin translation deviates even further from the typical Latin social distinctions: …per dignitatis aut militiae aut divitiarum aut officii causam, aut si non tales consistant, ex utroque tamen quia sunt fide digni testimonii perhibere, et non quosdam artifices ignobiles neque vilissimos nec nimis obscuros ad testimonium procedure, sed ut si qua de his dubitatio fuerit, posit facile demonstrari testium vita, quia inculpabilis atque moderata est. The deviation can be interpreted as pointing to a complete change in the perception of social distinctions between the 5th and the 6th c.

ἀξιόπιστοι μαρτυρούμενοι)[20]. It is worth noting that in the *Novel* of empress Irene there is no reference to the category of the "unknown"[21]. This category is the *ἀφανεῖς* or *ἄγνωστοι* of the Greek sources. Even though some historians have made an effort to equate this group to the *infames* or to the poor and thus sustain that there was in Byzantium a general social distinction based on wealth and poverty, the equation is hardly convincing. The Greek equivalent of the *infames* would be *ἄτιμοι* or *ἄσημοι* (which is actually mentioned in the Novel of Justinian in connection with the circus people), as opposed to *ἔντιμοι* or *ἐντιμότεροι*, which is the Greek translation of *honestiores*. The criterion for being degraded to the category of the *ἄγνωστοι* appears to be the lack of permanent residence, perhaps resulting from unemployment and other misfortunes. Employment would have effected the registration of a person in a catalogue of professional workers or farmers, dependent or independent, after which the person would be no longer "unknown". One wonders if the "unknown" are a forerunning distinction for the *ἄγνωστοι καὶ ἀνεπίγνωστοι τῷ δημοσίῳ*, found in documents after the 10th c. In my opinion they probably are, and the Novel of Justinian I distinctly differentiates the *infames* from the *ἄγνωστοι καὶ πανταχόθεν ἀφανεῖς*, we are therefore dealing with separate groups of Byzantine society, and not simply with "the poor".

The most elucidating text regarding the social divisions that the state recognized is a text that contains the penalties imposed on heretics, which was included in the Acts of the Lateran Council and dates from 649. There, the change affected in the Byzantine perception of "society" since the early 5th c. is most obvious, even though anticipated already in the Novels of Justinian I. Four large groups are mentioned along with the penalties that are deemed fitting for their status. The first is, as expected, the clergy of all grades, followed by the monks, a group that is normally held outside the Byzantine *polity* because of its members' deliberate retreat from the

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[20] The principle of respectability of witnesses remained basically unchanged in the Ecloga, which simply summarized the stipulations of Justinian I. See Ecloga. Das Gesetzbuch Leons III. Und Konstantinos' V., ed. L. Burgmann, FbRG 10, Frankfurt 1983, 14.1.

[21] L. Burgmann, Die Novellen der Kaiserin Eirene, FM 4, 1981, 20.54-58: …μαρτύρων ἀξιοπίστων, ἱερέων, ἀρχόντων, στρατευομένων, πολιτευομένων, εὐπορίαν ἢ ἐπιτήδευμα ἐχόντων εὐσεβῶς δηλονότι καὶ ἐν εὐλαβείᾳ βιούντων... One cannot claim that the Novel of Irene is innovative, since it includes the πολιτευόμενοι, a term that refers to the city decurions. It is highly questionable that the city curiae still existed in the late 8th c.

world[22]. The second is the large group of state servants: *εἰ δὲ ἀξίαν ἢ ζώνην ἢ στρατείαν ἔχοιεν, γυμνωθήσονται τούτων (if they hold title, office or service, they shall be deprived of it)*. These terms denote the state dependent groups of dignitaries of any rank and those who provided their services either in the military or in the political and civil sector. The last group is the private persons, *ἰδιῶται*, who are divided into the *ἐπίσημοι* (*notables*) and the *ἀφανεῖς*. We understand that the *ἐπίσημοι* are private persons with assets; their wealth is confiscated in case they are found heretics. The *ἀφανεῖς*, as explained before, are the exact opposite. They are not marked for their wealth because they have no assets in the form of movable or immovable possessions, therefore they remain "unknown"; if they are found heretics, they simply have to suffer corporal punishment and exile. Of note is the fact that "nobility", *εὐγένεια*, has no place in these distinctions; and wealth, *πλοῦτος*, only serves the practical purpose of defining penalties. The real social section is found there, where a subject of the empire entered public service, or, to put it clearly, entered the state payroll or became eligible for some privilege in return for the provided service. This simplified distinction between state servants and private persons does not mean that separate social groups were reduced to nothingness. On the contrary, the byzantine "social" perception expanded to include everybody, notwithstanding wealth, position, nobility; persons of noble birth or not, rich or poor, large or medium landowners, dependent farmers or professionals without any land at all might be included in either category. The "leveling" of social distinctions among different social groups in the 6th-7th c. led to a redefinition of the separate groups' role in, and self-projection to, society. However, the most important consequence of this development is in my appreciation the claim the state laid to the lower social strata, whose protection was usurped from the aristocracy. This becomes amply clear in the proemium of the *Ecloga,* which brings two socially opposite groups into contrast in the same context, the *πένητες* (the poor) and the *δυνάσται* (the dynasts)[23]. The text that follows is to a

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[22] C. Rapp, City and Citizenship as Christian Concepts of Community in Late Antiquity, in: The City in the Classical and Post-Classical World. Changing Contexts of Power and Identity, ed. C. Rapp – H. Drake, Cambridge 2014, 163-164. Monastic life and monastic "polity" is a "particular kind of conduct". The author adds: "the monastic politeuma is purposefully set up in rejection of and distinction from the world".

[23] Ecloga, 164.52-60: Τοὺς δὲ μετιέναι τεταγμένους τὰ νόμιμα πάντων τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων παθῶν παραινοῦμεν ἅμα καὶ παρεγγυῶμεν ἀπέχεσθαι καὶ ἀπὸ ὑγιοῦς διανοίας προφέρειν τῆς ἀληθοῦς δικαιοσύνης τὰ κρίματα καὶ μήτε πένητος καταφρονεῖν μήτε δυνάστην ἀδικοῦντα ἐᾶν

point word by word copy from St. Basil, but the part on the poor and the dynasts is original[24]. Now, already in the Novels of Justinian a divergence from the traditional Latin social distinctions is noted. In the *Ecloga*, this divergence is even more clear, as the *πένητες* and the *δυνάσται* belong to the Hellenistic Greek language diversifications, even though *πένης* may be counted as a direct translation of the Latin *pauper*. But the Latin word for *dynast* is *potens,* in Greek *δυνατός*, and, as we know, the *potentes* or *potentiores* are a dominant group in the Roman legislation.

Now, until the 10th c., there was no real social definition about that group, which was rather recognized only though its wide social influence, achieved quite often through the exercise of violence (*vis*) against the weak (*inferiores*)[25]. This phenomenon is more or less what Justinian describes in his Novels relating to the administration of Lycaonia, Cappadocia, Paphlagonia and other Asian provinces[26]. But Justinian clearly separates the *δυνατοί* from the *ἄρχοντες*, the representatives of legal imperial authority in the provinces. The authority of the powerful is not vested with legality. It is quite the opposite with the term dynast: a dynast is always vested with legal authority over people; indeed, even kings are characterized *δυνάσται* and their rule *δυναστεία*. However, unlike *βασιλεία*, *δυναστεία* is normally, but not exclusively, negatively coloured. The sources until the 10th c. appear to prefer the term *δυνάστης* and *δυναστεία* to describe social and economic oppression, as, for example, in the Life of St. Symeon the Salos, St. Alypios, St. Philaretos, St. Anthony the Younger, St. Luke the Stylite. In the context of absolute power, the only dynast in the empire can be no other but the emperor. Leon VI spoke about the "power of authority" in his

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ἀνεξέλεγκτον, μήτε μὴν σχήματι μὲν καὶ λόγῳ τὴν δικαιοσύνην ὑπερθαυμάζειν καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα, ἔργῳ δὲ τὸ ἄδικον καὶ πλεονεκτικὸν προτιμᾶν ὡς ὠφέλιμον, ἀλλὰ δύο κρινομένων παρ' αὐτοῖς, τοῦ τε πλεονεκτοῦντος καὶ τοῦ τὸ ἔλαττον ἔχοντος, εἰς τὸ πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐπανισοῦν αὐτοὺς ἵστασθαι καὶ τοσοῦτον ἀφαιρεῖν τοῦ ὑπερέχοντος, ὅσον ἐλαττούμενον εὕρωσι τηνικαῦτα τὸν ἀδικούμενον·

[24] PG 31, Basilius Caesariensis, Homilia in principium proverbiorum, 405. St. Basil used in his speech the substantive participles πλεονεκτοῦντες (the greedy/avaricious), ὑπερέχοντες (the superior/the glorious) and ἀδικούμενον (the injured/the aggrieved), of which the first two seem to refer to the dynasts, and the third to the poor.

[25] M. Reasoner, The Strong and the Weak. Romans 14.1-15.13 in Context, Society for New Testament Studies, Monograph Series 103, Cambridge 1999, 45-63.

[26] CIC III, αρ. 29, 221.38-222.1, 30, 228.9-15, 230.30-32.

Tactica (*τῆς δυναστείας ἐξουσία*)[27]. The conclusion derives surprisingly without any effort from the analysis attempted here: the Novels of the 10th c. on land ownership contain a novel, and at the same time a conservative element: by using the Roman term *δυνατοί*, *potentes*, they follow the tradition of the Roman legislation. But by confining this group to the dignitaries of state and Church, the relation of the state with the nobility was driven to the edges. It is not by chance that Leo VI in his Tactica abstains from the text of Onasander, which he follows at that point, by maintaining that nobility is not a determining factor for the appointment of a *strategos*[28], or that Philotheos in the well known *Tacticon* of 899 claims that "*all magnificence in life or celebrated honour of titles is perceptible*" only when someone acquires the privilege of dining with the emperor[29].

In concluding this short presentation, I have to underline once more that social distinctions as seen and defined by the state do not exclude the existence of separate groups with their own identity, values and projection to society. It appears to me that the existence of a controlling central authority quite early suppressed all aspirations of persons and groups to autonomy and personal power, which is the real effect of the leveling of Roman social distinctions. This does not mean that imperial power did not respect nobility, or wealth. Indeed, reality, especially in the 10th c., was much different and it contrasts sharply with the ideological shell of the Macedonian dynasty. Nevertheless, proclamations like those of Philotheos and Constantine VII mean that all nobility, all wealth, that anybody might possess is of no importance for the imperial power, unless it lies at its service. And this, in my opinion, forms at least part of the background against which the collision between state and nobility took place in the second half of the 10th c.

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[27] Albeit in a different context. See The Tactica of Leo the VI, ed. G. Dennis, CFHB 49, Washington, DC, 2010, 2.7-8.

[28] Tactica of Leo the VI, 22, 24, 26.

[29] Oikonomidès, Listes, 83.18-21: Καὶ γὰρ πᾶσα περιφάνεια βίου ἢ ἔνδοξος ἀξιωμάτων ἀξία ἐν οὐδενὶ ἄλλῳ τοῖς ὁρῶσιν ἐνδείκνυται, ἀλλ' ἢ ἐν τῇ κλήσει τῆς πρωτοκαθεδρίας τῆς ἐν τῇ λαμπρᾷ τραπέζῃ καὶ περιποθήτῳ συνεστιάσει τῶν σοφωτάτων ἡμῶν βασιλέων (Because all magnificence in life or celebrated honour of titles is perceptible for the observers in none other than in the invitation by order of precedence to the grand table and to the banquets of our most wise emperors).