



Summary :

The Amytzantarioi were probably an aristocratic “family” of Trebizond or a social group of possibly common descent. They activated in the 14th century and were closely connected with the civil conflicts that broke out in the Empire of Trebizond in that period.

Other Names

Amitzantarantai, Amyrtzantarioi

Date and Place of Birth

before the 14th c., eastern Pontos

Date and Place of Death

14th c., Empire of Trebizond

Main Role

aristocratic family (most likely) or social group

1. Identity: Descent - Name

The involvement of the Amytzantarioi in the political life of the [Empire of Trebizond](#) in the 14th century has been widely researched. A. Savvides (Α. Σαββίδης) and Th. Georgiades (Θ. Γεωργιάδης)¹ as well as the compilers of the *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit*² argue that the Amytzantarioi was one of the most influential aristocratic families of Trebizond in that period. A different view was expressed by A. Bryer,³ who does not consider them members of a family, but believes that the term “Amytzantarantes” denotes individuals or families of possibly common descent or, most likely, a mixture of people living in the eastern Pontos, whose roots could be traced in Georgia, Armenia, Lazika, Greece and possibly Turkey.

Regarding the origin of the name of the “family” or the “social group”, it is possibly related to the military rank of amyrtzantarios, which indicates the respective title of [protospatharios](#) and derives from the Turkish emir cadar. The metropolitan of Trebizond [John-Joseph Lazaropoulos](#) refers to them as “Amitzantarantas”, while the list of Pseudo-Kodinos reports that the amy(r)tzantarios was an official.⁴ However, Trebizond officials holding the same title are reported in other sources as well. For example, the chronicler of the empire of the Grand Komnenoi, [Michael Panaretos](#), reports Michael Meizomates as an amy(r)tzantarios in 1344.⁵

2. The activity of the Amytzantarioi

2.1. During the reign of Eirene Palaiologina (1340-41)

The first reference to this “family” / “social group” occurred during the reign of [Eirene Palaiologina](#) (1340-1341), the first wife of Emperor [Basil Grand Komnenos](#) (1332-1340), yet it continued playing a leading role in the political affairs of the empire during the reign of [Anna Anachoutlou](#) (1341-1342), Basil’s sister, who successfully claimed the throne over Basil’s widow. More specifically, Anna’s activities were closely connected with the [civil conflicts](#) that broke out in the Empire of Trebizond during the reign of Eirene Palaiologina (1340-1341) and carried on afflicting and dividing the state until the early years of the reign of [Alexios III Grand Komnenos](#) (1349-1390).

The indigenous Amytzantarioi, who belonged to the anti-Constantinopolitan party of aristocracy, represented along with the [Scholarios Family](#) the two main conflicting groups of Trebizond aristocracy during the reign of Eirene Palaiologina. The



Constantinopolitan view of power the Scholarioi had adopted was contrasting with their political views and beliefs,⁶ thus causing frequent conflicts between the two sides.

On the occasion of the power vacuum created after the death of Basil Grand Komnenos, Eirene Palaiologina's husband, and the absence of an heir to the throne as well as due to the inability of the empress to assert her authority, the two sides conflicted bitterly as they each intended to impose its sociopolitical beliefs.⁷ Therefore, when the Scholarios Family, supported by the Meizomates, [Doranitai](#), [Kabasitai](#) and Kamachenos families, turned against the empress, the Amyzantarioi took sides with Eirene and helped her gain control over the situation. The Scholarios and other Trebizond families barricaded themselves, under [sebastos](#) and [megas stratopedarches](#) Tzanichites, at the [monastery of St Eugenios](#), while the empress joined by the Amyzantarioi controlled the harbour and the castle.⁸ The rebellion ended when the [megas doux](#), the eunuch John, arrived from Constantinople to reinforce the empress. The Amyzantarios forces joined John's troops and attacked the monastery of St Eugenios, which was set afire.

2.2. In the years of Anna Anachoutlou (1341-1342)

After Empress Eirene abdicated the throne⁹ and Anna Anachoutlou assumed power (1341-1342), the Amyzantarioi took sides with the new empress and supported her during the conspiracies organised by the Scholarios Family. The prevalence of the indigenous Amyzantarioi after Anna's ascension to the throne had provoked continuous attempts by the opposing Scholarios Family to overthrow her with the support of other noble families. When [John III Grand Komnenos](#) (1342-1344), the son of [Michael Grand Komnenos](#) (1341, 1344-1349), ascended the throne, after the rebellion organised by the Scholarios Family under the subsequent emperor in order to overthrow Anna Anachoutlou (1341-1342), the Amyzantarioi lost their political power.

3. The end of the Amyzantarioi

Taking advantage of the power they assumed after the ascension of John III (1342-1344), the Scholarios Family turned against the Amyzantarios Family and carried out massacres, while Empress Anna Anachoutlou (1341-1342) was strangled. The victory of the Scholarios Family and the massacre of the Amyzantarioi was also a victory of the pro-Constantinopolitan party of Trebizond over any anti-Constantinopolitan policy.¹⁰ There is no information about any subsequent activities of the "family" / "social group".

1. See Γεωργιάδης, Θ. (ed.), *Εγκυκλοπαίδεια του Ποντιακού Ελληνισμού. Ο Πόντος: Ιστορία, Λαογραφία και Πολιτισμός* 1 (Θεσσαλονίκη 1991), p. 181.
2. See Trapp, E. – Beyer, H. – Leontiades, I. (ed.), *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit* 1 (Wien 1976), see entry "Αμυτζανταράνται", p. 80, no. 8301.
3. See Bryer, A.A.M., "The Faithless Kabazitai and Scholarioi", in Moffatt, A. (ed.), *Maistor. Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning* [Byzantina Australiensia 5, Canberra 1984, repr. in Bryer, A.A.M., *People and Settlement in Anatolia and the Caucasus, 800-1900* (Variorum Reprints Collected Studies, London 1988)], p. 312. See also Λυμπερόπουλος, Β., *Ο Βυζαντινός Πόντος. Η αυτοκρατορία της Τραπεζούντας* (Αθήνα 1999), pp. 151-152.
4. See Παπαδόπουλος-Κεραμεύς, Α. (ed.), "Ιωσήφ Λαζαρόπουλος, Έτι σύνοψις των αγίου θαυμάτων μερική εκ των πλείστων", in Papadopoulos-Kerameus, A. (ed.), *Fontes Historiae Imperii Trapezontini* I (Petropoli 1897, reprint. Amsterdam 1965), p. 134, and Verpeaux, J. (ed.), *Pseudo-Kodinos, Traité des Offices* (Paris 1966), pp. 341-342, 438.
5. See Λαμψίδης, Ο. (ed.), "Μιχαήλ του Παναρέτου περί των Μεγάλων Κομνηνών", *Αρχείον Πόντου* 22 (1958), pp. 1-124, esp. 68.
6. See Λυμπερόπουλος, Β., *Ο Βυζαντινός Πόντος. Η αυτοκρατορία της Τραπεζούντας* (Αθήνα 1999), p. 138.
7. See Λυμπερόπουλος, Β., *Ο Βυζαντινός Πόντος. Η αυτοκρατορία της Τραπεζούντας* (Αθήνα 1999), p. 150.
8. Lymberopoulos (Λυμπερόπουλος) supports that the empress had been arrested by the Amyzantarioi and was detained in the castle despite her



will. See Λυμπερόπουλος, Β., *Ο Βυζαντινός Πόντος. Η αυτοκρατορία της Τραπεζούντας* (Αθήνα 1999), p. 174.

9. The resistance Anna had mounted in Lazika against the empress together with the public fury due to the arson of Trebizond after the attack of the Türkmens of Amid on July 4, 1341, made Eirene Palaiologina abdicate the throne. See Ahrweiler, E., "Η αυτοκρατορία της Τραπεζούντας", in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους, Θ': Υστεροβυζαντινοί χρόνοι (1204-1453)* (Αθήνα 1980), pp. 325-334, esp. 333.





10. See Ahrweiler, E., "Η αυτοκρατορία της Τραπεζούντας", in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους, Θ': Υστεροβυζαντινοί χρόνοι (1204-1453)* (Αθήνα 1980), pp. 325-334, esp. 328.

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Glossary :

	megas doukas
The commander of the Byzantine fleet (from 1092 onwards). In the Late Byzantine period, the title of the <i>megas doukas</i> was assigned to the highest officials of the imperial administration/army.	
	megas stratopedarches
Superior officer responsible for the provision of equipment and supplies for the military forces of the byzantine empire of Nicaea.	
	protospatharios
The first spatharios. A higher byzantine official of the imperial hierarchy which usually permitted participation in the senate. It was awarded even to eunuchs. After the 11th century, it gradually lost its importance. It was also an honorary title.	
	sebastos
("venerable") Title of honour created by Constantine IX the Monomachos in the middle of the 11th century. Originated from the translation of the imperial adjective <i>augustus</i> . This title was given successively to the two mistresses of the emperor.	

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Auxiliary Catalogs

List of Trebizond emperors:

Alexios I Grand Komnenos (1204-1222)

Andronikos I Grand Komnenos/Gidon (1222-1235)

John I Grand Komnenos/Axouch (1235-1238)

Manuel I Grand Komnenos (1238-1263)

Andronikos II Grand Komnenos (1263-1266)

George Grand Komnenos/Planos (1266-1280)

John II Grand Komnenos (1280-1285, 1287-1297)

Theodora Grand Komnene (1285-1287)

Alexios II Grand Komnenos (1297-1330)

Andronikos III Grand Komnenos (1330-1332)

Manuel II Grand Komnenos (1332)

Basil Grand Komnenos (1332-1340)



Eirene Grand Komnene (1340-1341)

Anna Grand Komnene/Anachoutlou (1341-1342)

John III Grand Komnenos (1342-1344)

Michael Grand Komnenos (1344-1349)

Alexios III Grand Komnenos (1349-1390)

Manuel III Grand Komnenos (1390-1417)

Alexios IV Grand Komnenos (1417-1429)

John IV Grand Komnenos (1429-1458)

David Grand Komnenos (1458-1461)