



Summary :

The institutions of power at Constantinople and the political conflicts among them is a subject that runs through the whole Byzantine history. With a wide range as regards their composition and aims, depending on the socio-political evolution, the institutions that more or less competed for power in the capital were the Church, the Senate, the Constantinopolitan aristocracy, the “mesoi” (middle class) and the populace.

Date

4th-15th century

Geographical Location

Constantinople

1. Some introductory remarks

The participation in, or even the monopoly of, power at Constantinople, the center where the decisions were taken for the Byzantine Empire, constituted the apple of discord for many institutions and social groups. The institutions of power in the capital did not remain unchanged within the course of history that lasted for more than a thousand years, and the evolution of a society that had few in common under [Justinian](#) and under the [Palaiologoi](#), for example. Nonetheless, it is possible for some institutions, groups or “parties” to be spotted,¹ which, no matter how much their composition or their particular characteristics were changing, traditionally pursued their participation in the making of decisions, promoting their own interests. And because the interests of a group were usually not identical with those of another one, the conflicts were unavoidable. The longest-lived institutions of power, the composition of which should be understood in its great variety because of the socio-political fermentations, were the [Church of Constantinople](#), the [Senate](#), the Constantinopolitan [aristocracy](#), the “mesoi” (middle class) and the [populace](#). However, these institutions were not at all impervious. It was a common thing, for example, a member of the senatorial aristocracy to become patriarch, or a *mesos* from the ranks of the merchants to overleap to the ranks of aristocracy. It is, thus, important that these institutions of power interacted and occasionally sought the alliance from one another.

2. The Church

The [Church of Constantinople](#) (a term by which we mean not only the patriarchate and its organization, but the ecclesiastical institutions as well, the dignitaries, the clergymen, the monks, the various religious foundations, even the learned men that supported the patriarchate), perhaps constituted the most stable institution of power in the capital, after the [imperial institution](#). It is characteristic that in the Fourth Ecumenical Council (Chalcedon, 451) the dignities of the Church of Constantinople are presented as institutions which organize the patriarchate according to the prototype of the imperial palace.² After the adherence of the senatorial aristocracy to the Orthodoxy, established by the Council of Chalcedon, the episcopal clergy is incorporated into the ruling class.³ During the same period, the Church of Constantinople was transformed into a financial power, by becoming wealthier and by possessing the ability to turn its wealth into a profitable property, through a taxation status and a managing system that offers protection from any state intervention.⁴

The almighty Church of Constantinople had a leading place not only in the religious life of the Empire, but in the civil life as well, by interfering in the socio-political events, of which very often the Church came out to be a regulator. Naturally, it is impossible to recite here the history of the Church of Constantinople and its relation with the state leadership. Some enlightening examples are enough, however, to take a glimpse of the power that this institution was exercising or was laying claim to.

During the two turbulent reigns of Justinian II (685-695, 705-711), who had turned against the secular as well as the ecclesiastical aristocracy, the [monasteries of Constantinople](#) had supported the aristocrats, counter-claimers to the throne, by playing a catalytic role in his overthrow. The period 695-715 was marked by the political activity of certain Constantinopolitan monasteries that, in



cooperation with the aristocracy and the clergy of the capital, twice overthrew Justinian II.⁵

In the [11th century](#) the independence of the Patriarchate from the state became evident to all through the rupture between the emperor [Isaac I Komnenos](#) (1057-1059) and the patriarch Michael I Keroularios (1043-1058), an aristocrat that originated from the senatorial state officials and as a patriarch played a leading role in the Schism of the Churches (1054). The attempt of reformations from the part of the emperor stood against the initiatives of the patriarch, about whom is very enlightening the fact that he wore the purple imperial sandals and believed to be the creator of emperors. The conflict was unavoidable and in 1058 Isaac I removed the patriarch from the capital as well as from his seat. In 1059 patriarch became another noble senatorial, Constantine III Leichoudes (1059-1063), a fact that points out the influence of this particular group, which finally led Isaac I to his resignation.⁶

In the 15th century the dignitaries of the patriarchate and the secular notables constituted the main social groups that formed the civil life, the foreign affairs, as well as the Church-State relations. Since their interests and their expectations were not identical, these two groups were conflicting. The notables had turned towards the West, because of their economical contacts with the Italian cities and their hope that the Turkish menace could be kept away with the help of the West, by promoting the idea of a “national” state. The Patriarchate, on the contrary, the period when the Turks were expanding and the Catholic Church was penetrating to the areas of its jurisdiction, preferred the unity of its dominion due to ideological and economical reasons, and propagated the restoration of the empire. The Church appeared as the only political perspective, even after the [Fall](#). The issue of the [Union of the Churches](#) became the field upon which a large part of the conflict took place. The [Palaiologoi](#) supported the union of the Catholic and the Orthodox Church, aiming to a helping mission from the West for the driving back of the Turks. The dignitaries of the patriarchate, however, were mainly against the Union, cultivating their influence upon the populace of the city, by using the argument that the Union would accelerate the looming catastrophe that appeared as punishment for the violation of the faith.⁷ If someone will take into consideration that the [Patriarchate](#) survived after the Fall, then the patriarchal group was victorious out of the political conflicts over the rest of the institutions.

3. The Senate and the aristocracy

The Senate⁸ made up one of the three political forces (along with the populace and the [army](#)), by whose approval they were ratifying the legitimacy of an emperor, at least theoretically speaking.⁹ The Byzantine Senate was mainly formed by the highest state officials on active service and by the highest dignitaries of the court, to which they were added all those personally appointed by the emperor himself. The self-confidence of the Senate stemmed at a high degree from the fact that a change on the throne very often entailed the appointment in high places of those that had helped the new emperor prevailing.¹⁰ The [senators](#) were mainly big landowners and represented the financially powerful aristocracy of the land that exercised huge influence on the sociopolitical life.

Although in the 7th century the senate played an essential role in governing the Empire, the early Byzantine aristocracy of the senatorial class was inflicted by decisive blows during the reigns of Phocas (602-610) and especially of Justinian II (685-695, 705-711) and declined.¹¹ In the 9th and the 10th century the highest officialdom of the Capital shaped the ruling class of the Byzantine Empire.¹²

In the 11th century the state, being in need of ceaselessly more and more dedicated officials, gave a new vigour to the institution of the Constantinopolitan Senate, which for at least three centuries had been at a high degree inactive, and allowed to the state officials to enter the senate, without always being demanded to be high-ranking officials. This measure had as a consequence the increase of the senators' number to plenty of thousands, whereas the state sponsored the senator's dignity from the public treasury, rewarding and securing by that way the senators' support.¹³ The upgrading of the senatorial class was characterized by an upward mobility and enclosed newly rich merchants and craftsmen. Nevertheless, in the 11th century the high aristocracy was divided into two groups, based on the criterion of the duties, military or civil ones, which each of the group was charged with.¹⁴

Under the [Komnenian](#) (especially between 1081-1180), by the predominance of the military aristocracy of the landowners, the



Constantinopolitan aristocracy of the senators, the highest part of the civil aristocracy, that preserved close ties with the commercial circles and the Church and essentially exercised the power in the 11th century, started to be considered socially inferior and to be confined to secondary places within the state administration.¹⁵ However, with [Andronikos I Komnenos](#) (1183-1185) and the [Angelid dynasty](#) (1185-1204), their influence was once more reinforced, as a reaction to the centrifugal tendency of the aristocracy in the country.¹⁶

In the 14th and especially the 15th century, as we will see in the next chapter, the aristocracy of the capital invested with success in [trade](#) activities, due to the loss of its lands because of the expansion of the Turks. The pitiful financial situation of the aristocracy searched for the financial support of these aristocrats, an event that indicates the importance of the influence they exercised.

4. The “mesoi” (middle class)

The Byzantine historians and orators were used to divide the society into categories with the distinction between the strong and the poor being the most usual and simplest one of them. The group of the strong was formed by those that were members of the predominant social stratum, including the highest clergymen, and had access to the political power,¹⁷ whereas in a very general way we could say that the poor were composed by the taxpayers. Nevertheless, from the 11th century, this bipartite distinction of the society started to be insufficient, since a middle class, the *mesoi*, had already made its appearance perceptible. Those men were for the most part merchants and craftsmen, who were mainly visible at Constantinople, where the commercial activity and the activity of the handicraft were gathered.¹⁸ It is notable that in the 12th century the archbishop of Thessalonica Eustathios, when making mention about the population of Constantinople, reported: the *megaloi* (the grands), the *mikroi* (the lesser), the *mesoi*.¹⁹

Since the first half of the 11th century, the *mesoi* had succeeded in acquiring access to the power, within the framework of the conflict between the emperor and the strong. The emperors Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-1055) and [Constantine X Doukas](#) (1059-1067), had bestowed honorary titles to men of the market, since they thought their support as necessary for the consolidation of the imperial power. They had understood that the control of Constantinople was closely connected to the support of the circles of the merchants and the craftsmen, which represented the new wealth in the capital.²⁰

None the less, the accession of Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118) to the throne, by which the aristocracy of the landowners reasserted themselves, interrupted abruptly the influence of the *mesoi*. The ideological stance of Alexios I (and of the [military aristocracy](#) of the landowners) towards the urban environment and especially the classes of the merchants and the craftsmen was disdainful. During the period 1081-1180 the senate, the [guilds](#) and the masses of people played simply a ceremonial role and were under strict surveillance. A little after the end of this period, however, these groups regained, in a greater or lesser degree, the roles they possessed before 1081.²¹

In the 14th century they started to realize once more their difference from the aristocrats and often enough were badly disposed towards them. Notably, the civil war (1341-1347) between John VI Kantakouzenos (1347-1354) and the regency guarding the under aged emperor John V Palaiologos (1341-1391), took the form of a conflict between the aristocrats (whose most potent representative was Kantakouzenos) and the μέσους (who the regents of John V had won over).²²

From the second half of the 14th century the term *mesoi* (middle class) does not appear anymore in the texts. The main reason was that those who belonged to the classes of the old aristocracy had started to occupy themselves with the commercial transactions, due to a lack of land (because of the expansion of the Turks), and by that way they stopped being a clearly distinguished social class from the *mesoi*.²³ Thus, in the 15th century the predominant social stratum in the Byzantine society was formed not only by old aristocrats, but by rich people as well, occupied with the trade or with business activities in general. Their main pursuit was their participation in power, which was accelerated through the imperial favor.²⁴

5. The populace of Constantinople



The populace of Constantinople (*populus*, *demos* and later circus factions – two terms identical according to A. Cameron)²⁵ was one of the most basic institutions of the state, whose role, however, was very often limited to a ceremonial approval of the accession of a new emperor to the throne.²⁶ The populace of the capital could freely assemble, mainly at the [Hippodrome](#), which formed the symbol of the relationship between emperor and people, whereas the right of the populace to freely express its opinion at the Hippodrome in front of the officials had been bestowed on them by [Constantine the Great](#) (324-337) in 331, a right respected by the authorities.²⁷

The influence that exercised the [circus factions](#), the rival organizations mainly of the Greens and the Blues (Venetoi), in the civil life of Constantinople during the early Byzantine period is widely known. The circus factions went back to the Roman hippodrome, but at Byzantium they acquired a special character with a political function, surpassing the limits of the Hippodrome.²⁸

The event with which the circus factions of Constantinople are coherently connected is the [Nika Riot](#) (532) that stirred up the capital and nearly overthrew Justinian I (527-565). The most important element of the Riot, caused by the injustices and the suppression, was the union and the reconciliation of the circus factions,²⁹ thanks to which the popular uprising prevailed for a few days in the capital and tried to enthrone another emperor, Hypatios. At the end, after intensive movements behind the scenes, the [generals](#) Belisarios, Narses and Moundos intruded by surprise into the Hippodrome, where the populace had gathered to crown Hypatios, and they slaughtered around 35.000 men.³⁰

The circus factions did survive, and later they played an important role, as for example, in 602 at the overthrow of [Maurice](#) (582-602) by Phocas, and in 610 at the overthrow of Phocas by [Herakleios](#) (610-641). However, they were never able to recover from the blow inflicted on them by Justinian, resulting very often in having a simply decorative role at the official ceremonies.³¹ From around the 10th century and thereafter the circus factions seems to be identified with the guilds.³²

In 1042 a tremendous uprising of the Constantinopolitan populace burst out against [Michael V](#) (1041-1042), because of the *enkleismos* (enclosurement and seclusion) of the popular empress Zoe inside a monastery. The populace, on the instigation of the patriarch Alexios Stoudites (1025-1043), whom Michael V wanted to unseat, easily overthrew the emperor.³³ Through his fall, the populace of the capital became again a countable political force, maintaining its influence until the end of the 11th century. It is not coincidental that the emperors of that period at certain occasions addressed both to the populace and the senate.³⁴ Nevertheless, the rise of Alexios I Komnenos to the power in 1081 reversed this dynamic, since the founder of the Komnenoi dynasty imposed his influence on Constantinople and succeeded in mastering its populace.³⁵

In the 15th century it seems that the role of the *demos* is reinforced again and there are frequently allusions in the sources of that period about “assemblies” of the inhabitants of Constantinople, during which important decisions were taken, even about actions towards the conclusion of a treaty with the Turks. The exact composition of these assemblies is not known to us, neither if a system of “representation” ever existed. It is considered as probable, however, that in the assemblies were participating, besides the senators, the wealthiest of the rest of the populace, that had their own authority,³⁶ an evolution that is connected with the establishment of the social stratum of the *mesoi* as well, as it has been described in the previous chapter.

1. The term “party” is mentioned here the same way it is used by Beck H.-G., *Das byzantinische Jartausend* (München 1978), p. 243: Unterstellt man also als Minimum einer solchen Parteienbildung neben dem Programm die gesuchte politische Verwicklungung, dann läßt sich, wenigstens behelfsmäßig, den Begriff Partei vielleicht auch auf Byzanz anwenden... [If we accept, thus, as the least of all requirements for the formation of a party, besides that of the program, the quest of its political materialization, then maybe we can roughly apply the meaning of “political party” to Byzantium as well...]

2. Dagron, G., *Η γέννηση μιας πρωτεύουσας. Η Κωνσταντινούπολη και οι θεσμοί της από το 330 ως το 451*, trans. Μ. Λουκάκη (Athens 2000), p. 562.



3. Λουγγής, Τ.Κ., *Επισκόπηση βυζαντινής ιστορίας Α' (324-1204)* (Athens² 1998), p. 162.
4. Dagron, G., *Η γέννηση μιας πρωτεύουσας. Η Κωνσταντινούπολη και οι θεσμοί της από το 330 ως το 451*, trans. Μ. Λουκάκη (Athens 2000), p. 564.
5. Κουντούρα-Γαλάκη, Ε., *Ο βυζαντινός κλήρος και η κοινωνία των «σκοτεινών αιώνων»* (Athens 1996), p. 75, 105.
6. Angold, M., *Η Βυζαντινή αυτοκρατορία από το 1025 έως το 1204. Μία πολιτική ιστορία*, trans. Ε. Καργιανιώτη, supervised by Π.Α. Αγαπητός (Athens² 1997), pp. 128-135; Λουγγής, Τ.Κ., *Επισκόπηση βυζαντινής ιστορίας Α' (324-1204)* (Athens² 1998), pp. 282-284.
7. Κιουσοπούλου, Τ., *Βασιλεύς ή Οικονόμος. Πολιτική εξουσία και ιδεολογία πριν την Άλωση* (Athens 2007), pp. 58-77, 235-244.
8. About the Byzantine senate see Χριστοφιλοπούλου, Αι., *Ἡ σύγκλητος εἰς τὸ βυζαντινὸν κράτος* (Athens 1949); Beck, H.-G., "Senat und Volk von Konstantinopel. Probleme der byzantinischen Verfassungsgeschichte", *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse*, 1966, 6 (München 1966); Dagron, G., *Η γέννηση μιας πρωτεύουσας. Η Κωνσταντινούπολη και οι θεσμοί της από το 330 ως το 451*, trans. Μ. Λουκάκη (Athens 2000), pp. 137-240.
9. Καραγιαννόπουλος, Ι.Ε., *Η πολιτική θεωρία των Βυζαντινών* (Thessaloniki 1992), p. 47; Beck, H.-G., *Das byzantinische Jartausend* (München 1978), p. 52.
10. Beck, H.-G., *Das byzantinische Jartausend* (München 1978), p. 53.
11. Λουγγής, Τ.Κ., "Δοκίμιο για την κοινωνική εξέλιξη στη διάρκεια των λεγόμενων «σκοτεινών αιώνων»", *Σύμμεικτα* 6 (1985), p. 145.
12. Kazhdan, A.P., Epstein, A.W., *Change in Byzantine culture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries* (Berkeley - Los Angeles - London 1985), p. 22.
13. Λουγγής, Τ.Κ., *Επισκόπηση βυζαντινής ιστορίας Α' (324-1204)* (Athens² 1998), p. 272.
14. Kazhdan, A.P., Epstein, A.W., *Change in Byzantine culture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries* (Berkeley - Los Angeles - London 1985), p. 63. At this point some clarification has to be made: H.-G. Beck, when mentioning the "military party" and the "bureaucratic party" of the 11th century, points out that it was not necessary for every military man to belong to the ranks of the "military party", neither for every holder of political offices to the ranks of the "bureaucratic party". In addition, the mobility from one party to the other was not unusual, since the political practicality and the self-interest played an important role (*Das byzantinische Jartausend* (München 1978), p. 247). It has to be noted that especially the conclusions of J.Cl. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)* (Byzantina Sorbonensia 9, Paris 1990), p. 191-198, have become a hallmark in the critic against the bipolarity of bureaucratic – military "party". See also, Kaegi, W.E., "The Controversy about Bureaucratic and Military Factions", *Byzantinische Forschungen* 19 (1993), p. 25-33.
15. Kazhdan, A., "Κεντρομόλες και κεντρόφυγες τάσεις στο βυζαντινό κόσμο (1081-1261). Η δομή της βυζαντινής κοινωνίας", trans. Τ.Κ. Λουγγής, *Βυζαντιακά* 3 (1983), p. 103.
16. Kazhdan, A., "Κεντρομόλες και κεντρόφυγες τάσεις στο βυζαντινό κόσμο (1081-1261). Η δομή της βυζαντινής κοινωνίας", trans. Τ.Κ. Λουγγής, *Βυζαντιακά* 3 (1983), pp.104-105.
17. Cf. Novel 2b of Romanos I, Comnstantine and Christopher, where it is clarified that the term *δυνατός* is the equivalent of a large content: *ἐ καὶ νοι δὲ νοεῖσθωσαν δυνατοί, οἱ τινες καὶ ν μὴ δι' ἐ αὐτῶν, ἀλλ' οὖν ν διὰ τῆς ἐ τέρων δυναστείας, πρὸς οὐς πεπαρῶ ῥησιασμένως ὠ κείωνται, ἰ κανοί εἰ σιν ἐ κροβῆσαι τοῦς ἐ κποιού ντας, ἢ πρὸς εὐ εργεσίας ὑ πόσχεσιν τῆ ν πληροφορίαν αὐ τοῖς παρασχεῖ ν* (I. and Π. Ζέπος, *Jus Graecoromanum A': Νεαραῖ και χρυσόβουλλα των μετὰ τον Ιουστινιανόν Βυζαντινών αυτοκρατόρων* [Athens 1931], p. 203).
18. Angold, M., *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081-1261* (Cambridge 1995), p. 385.
19. Ευστάθιος Θεσσαλονίκης, *Συγγραφή τῆς εἰς θεὸν στέρας κατ' αὐτὴν ἀλώσεως*, ed. S. Kyriakidis, Italian trans. V. Rotolo, *Eustazio di Tessalonica, La espugnazione di Tessalonica* (Testi e Monumenti, Testi 5, Palermo 1961), p. 32.8.



20. Angold, M., *Η Βυζαντινή αυτοκρατορία από το 1025 έως το 1204. Μία πολιτική ιστορία*, trans. E. Καργιανιώτη, supervised by Π.Α. Αγαπητός (Athens² 1997), p. 165. See also, Dagron, G., "The Urban Economy, Seventh - Twelfth centuries", in A.E. Laiou (editor-in-chief), *The Economic History of Byzantium, Seventh to Fifteenth century* (Washington D.C. 2002), p. 415; Papagianni, E., "Byzantine Legislation on Economic Activity Relative to Social Class", in Laiou (editor-in-chief), *The Economic History of Byzantium*, p. 1092.
21. Hendy, M. F., *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy, c. 300-1450* (Cambridge 1985), p. 586.
22. Κιουσοπούλου, Τ., *Βασιλεύς ή Οικονόμος. Πολιτική εξουσία και ιδεολογία πριν την Άλωση* (Athens 2007), pp. 47-48.
23. Oikonomidès, N., *Hommes d'affaires grecs et latins à Constantinople (XIIIe-XVe siècles)* (Montréal - Paris 1979), pp. 119-123.
24. Κιουσοπούλου, Τ., *Βασιλεύς ή Οικονόμος. Πολιτική εξουσία και ιδεολογία πριν την Άλωση* (Athens 2007), pp. 49-50, 57.
25. Cameron, A., "Demes and Factions", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 67 (1974), pp. 90-91.
26. Καραγιαννόπουλος, Ι.Ε., *Η πολιτική θεωρία των Βυζαντινών* (Thessaloniki 1992), pp. 47, 51, 55-59.
27. Λουγγής, Τ., *Ιουστινιανός Πέτρος Σαββάτιος. Κοινωνία, πολιτική και ιδεολογία τον 6ο μ.Χ. αιώνα* (Thessaloniki 2005), pp. 144-146.
28. Dagron, G., *Η γέννηση μιας πρωτεύουσας. Η Κωνσταντινούπολη και οι θεσμοί της από το 330 ως το 451*, trans. Μ. Λουκάκη (Athens 2000), p. 337.
29. Προκόπιος, Ὑπὲρ τῶν πολέμων, I.24.17, ed. J. Haury, G. Wirth, *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia I: De bellis libri I-IV* (Lipsiae 1962), p. 126.17-23.
30. About the events of the Nika Riot see Χριστοφιλοπούλου, Αι., *Βυζαντινή Ιστορία Α' 324-610* (Thessaloniki² 1996), pp. 266-271; Λουγγής, Τ., *Ιουστινιανός Πέτρος Σαββάτιος. Κοινωνία, πολιτική και ιδεολογία τον 6ο μ.Χ. αιώνα* (Thessaloniki 2005), pp. 146-161.
31. Καραγιαννόπουλος, Ι.Ε., *Η πολιτική θεωρία των Βυζαντινών* (Thessaloniki 1992), p. 53.
32. Beck, H.-G., *Das byzantinische Jartausend* (München 1978), p. 57; Vryonis, Sp., "Byzantine Δημοκρατία and the Guilds in the Eleventh Century", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963), p. 314.
33. Angold, M., *Η Βυζαντινή αυτοκρατορία από το 1025 έως το 1204. Μία πολιτική ιστορία*, trans. E. Καργιανιώτη, supervised by Π.Α. Αγαπητός (Athens² 1997), pp. 106-107; Λουγγής, Τ.Κ., *Επισκόπηση βυζαντινής ιστορίας Α' (324-1204)* (Μελέτες ΚΜΕ, Athens² 1998), p. 281.
34. Cf. Vryonis, Sp., "Byzantine Δημοκρατία and the Guilds in the Eleventh Century", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963), p. 309 f.
35. Angold, M., *Η Βυζαντινή αυτοκρατορία από το 1025 έως το 1204. Μία πολιτική ιστορία*, trans. E. Καργιανιώτη, supervised by Π.Α. Αγαπητός (Athens² 1997), pp. 107, 241. Generally about the political power of the masses of people in Constantinople during the late Byzantine period, see Charanis, P., "The Role of the People in the Political Life of the Byzantine Empire: The Period of the Comneni and the Palaeologi", *Byzantine Studies / Études Byzantines* 5/1-2 (1978), pp. 69-79; Garland, L., "Political Power and the Populace in Byzantium Prior to the Fourth Crusade", *Byzantinoslavica* 53 (1992), pp. 17-52.
36. Κιουσοπούλου, Τ., *Βασιλεύς ή Οικονόμος. Πολιτική εξουσία και ιδεολογία πριν την Άλωση* (Athens 2007), pp. 159-163.

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Glossary :

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| | senator, the (1. Roman, 2. Byzantine) 1. A Roman body of men that originally advised the king and then the consuls; Heredity was not the only means of joining the senate and "new men" or <i>novi homines</i> could become part of it; Augustus revised the senate and left the body with less power and bolstered hereditary claims as a means to enter the senate; it continued to make laws and conferred powers on new emperors. 2. Member of the senate. The senate, a roman institution transferred from Rome to Constantinople by Constantine I during the Byzantine period was an advisory body whose rights and responsibilities were not clearly defined. It was consisted of imperial officers coming from the upper and were ranked according to hierarchical levels: <i>virii illustri</i> (perfectus praetoriae and the magister), <i>virii spectabiles</i> (proconsul, vicarius and the comes), <i>virii clarissimi</i> (consul praetoriae) and <i>virii perfectissimi</i> (praeses and duces). Since the 6th c. AD a new title was established for the upper officers (<i>virii gloriosi</i>). The years that followed officials were entitled to officers regardless their position as senators or if they were about to be admitted to this body. |
| | strategos ("general") During the Roman period his duties were mainly political. Office of the Byzantine state's provincial administration. At first the title was given to the military and political administrator of the themes, namely of the big geographic and administrative unities of the Byzantine empire. Gradually the title lost its power and, already in the 11th century, strategoi were turned to simple commanders of military units, responsible for the defence of a region. |

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Quotations

Procopios on the demoi being united in the Nika Riots (532)

Ἔως μὲν οὖν ὁ δῆμος ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐν τοῖς χρώμασιν ὀνομάτων τὸν πόλεμον πρὸς ἀλλήλους διέφερον, λόγος οὐδεὶς ἦν ὧν οὗτοι ἐς τὴν πολιτείαν ἡμάρτανον· ἐπεὶ δὲ ξυμφρονήσαντες, ὥσπερ ἐρορήθη, ἐς τὴν στάσιν κατέστησαν, ἐκ τε τοῦ ἐμφανοῦς ἀνὰ πᾶσαν τὴν πόλιν ἐς αὐτοὺς ὕβριζον καὶ περιμόντες ἐζήτουν ἐφ' ᾧ κτείνωσι.

J. Haury, G. Wirth (ed.), *Procopii Caesariensis opera omnia I: De bellis libri I-IV* (Lipsiae 1962), I.24.17, p. 126.17-23.

Michael Attaleiates mentions the great number of senators who were getting rents under Nikephoros III Botaneiates (1078-1081)

πᾶσα γὰρ ἡ σύγκλητος, ὑπὲρ μυριάδας ἀνδρῶν παραμετρομένη, κατ' ἀνδρα καὶ κεφαλὴν μεγάλων ἡξιούντο τιμῶν, τετραρίθμους καὶ πενταρίθμους βαθμοὺς ὑπερβαίνουσῶν, ὡς μὴδὲ αὐτὸν τὸν πρωτοβεστιάριον ἐκ τοῦ βασιλέως δύνασθαι παραλαμβάνειν τοὺς τιμωμένους καὶ τὰς ἀξίας ἐπιφωνεῖν, ἀλλὰ συναντᾶσθαι παρὰ τῶν τιμῶν συχνῶς καὶ ὑποστρέφειν ἐπὶ τὴν προβολὴν καὶ αὐθις ἀνθυποστρέφειν, ἢ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἰστάμενον ἄλλ' ἐπ' ἄλλοις καταλαμβάνοντας ἐπισπεύδειν αὐτ.. τὰς τιμωμένων ἐκφωνήσεις, καὶ μόχθον σχεῖν τηλικούτον ὅσος αὐτῶ καὶ τὴν φωνὴν περιέκοψεν.

W. Brunet de Presle, I. Bekker (ed.), *Michaelis Attaliotae, Historia* (Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae, Bonnae 1853), p. 275.12-22.

Part of the letter of George Scholarios, leader of the faction against the Union of the Churches and later Patriarch Gennadios II (1454-1456, 1463, 1464-1465)

«Ἄθλιοι Ῥωμαῖοι, εἰς τί ἐπλανήθητε καὶ ἀπεμακρύνετε ἐκ τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ἠλπίσατε εἰς τὴν δύναμιν τῶν Φράγγων καὶ σὺν τῇ Πόλει, ἐν ἣ μέλλει φθαρῆναι, ἐχάσατε καὶ τὴν εὐσέβειάν σας; Ἰλεῶς μοι, Κύριε· Μαρτύρομαι ἐνώπιόν σου, ὅτι ἀθῶος εἶμι τοῦ τοιοῦτου πταισματος. Γινώσκετε ἄθλιοι πολῖται, τί ποιεῖτε; Καὶ σὺν τῷ αἰχμαλωτισμῶ, ὃς μέλλει γενέσθαι εἰς ὑμᾶς, ἐχάσατε καὶ τὸ πατροπαράδοτον σέβας καὶ ὠμολογήσατε τὴν ἀσέβειαν· Οὐαὶ ὑμῖν ἐν τῷ κρῖνεσθαι» ...

V. Grecu, *Ducas, Istoria turco-bizantină* (1341-1462) (Scriptores Byzantini 1, București 1958), XXXVI.3, p. 317.3-9