

## Byzantina Symmeikta

Vol 22 (2012)

BYZANTINA SYMMEIKTA 22



### The Notion of *δημος* and its Role in Byzantium during the Last Centuries (13th-15th c.)

Anastasia KONTOGIANNOPOULOU

doi: [10.12681/byzsym.1054](https://doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.1054)

Copyright © 2014, Anastasia KONTOGIANNOPOULOU



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

#### To cite this article:

KONTOGIANNOPOULOU, A. (2012). The Notion of *δημος* and its Role in Byzantium during the Last Centuries (13th-15th c.). *Byzantina Symmeikta*, 22, 101-124. <https://doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.1054>

ANASTASIA KONTOGIANNOPOULOU

THE NOTION OF ΔΗΜΟΣ AND ITS ROLE IN BYZANTIUM  
DURING THE LAST CENTURIES (13TH-15TH C.)\*

The notion of *δημος/δημοι* (people/circus factions) has been a favorite subject in modern research and various opinions have been formulated regarding its organization and the role it played in political developments, especially during the early Byzantine period (4th-6th c.)<sup>1</sup>. It is generally accepted in modern bibliography that the *demos* of Constantinople, successor of the *populus romanus*, the people of Rome, was organized at the space of Hippodrome, which was at the centre of the political and administrative life of the city<sup>2</sup>. The *δημοι*, that is, the factions formed in the Hippodrome of Constantinople, the most important of which were the Greens and the Blues, had organically integrated members and many supporters. The *δημαρχοι* were at the head of *δημοι*<sup>3</sup>. The leaders of the *δημοι* could come from the senatorial aristocracy, from wealthy representatives of the middle

---

\*An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 22th International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Sofia 22-27 August 2011.

1. See G. DAGRON, *Naissance d'une capitale. Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451*, Paris 1974, 299, n. 3, where the earlier bibliography is found; A. CAMERON, *Circus Factions, Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium*, Oxford, 1976; J. GASCOU, Les institutions de l'hippodrome en Égypte byzantine, *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale* 76 (1976), 185-212; C. ZUCKERMAN, Le cirque, l'argent et le peuple. À propos d'une inscription du Bas-empire, *REB* 58 (2000), 69-96.

2. DAGRON, *Naissance*, 317.

3. About the «*δημαρχοι*» who are also referred as «*δημοκράται*» and their subordinates see N. OIKONOMIDÈS, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IX et X siècles*, Paris, 1972, 326-327. Cf. K.-P. MATSCHKE, *Das spätbyzantinische Konstantinopel. Alte und neue Beiträge zur Stadtgeschichte zwischen 1261 und 1453*, Hamburg 2008, 156.

social stratum and state officials, while their members could belong to the palace personnel or be small merchants, artisans and laborers. The *δῆμοι* were primarily in charge of the conduct of horse racing or other games in the capital or other provincial cities. On extraordinary occasions they took on other duties, such as the guarding of the walls. Also, they participated in imperial ceremonial, particularly in the *proclamation* of the new emperor and gradually emerged into a major political force<sup>4</sup>.

After the suppression of the Nika revolt in 532, when the factions received a serious blow, their involvement in political life was gradually reduced. In the years that followed the *δῆμοι* seem mainly to participate in court ceremonies, expressing in general terms the official political ideology<sup>5</sup>.

The perception of *δῆμος* in the early centuries as described above was disputed by a new interpretation of the sources material, according to which the *δῆμος* and the *δημόται* were not connected exclusively to the Hippodrome and they comprised a distinct social stratum, probably the middle social stratum. This citizen body was defined by the entitlement to free daily rations of bread and eventually of other products and probably undertook various municipal responsibilities<sup>6</sup>. From the 11th century the *δῆμοι* are rarely found in the sources<sup>7</sup>, while

4. See DAGRON, *Naissance*, 319 ff. and 358 for the existence of hippodromes and *δῆμοι* in other cities except Constantinople. Cf. I. ΚΑΡΑΓΙΑΝΝΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, *Το βυζαντινὸ κράτος*, Athens, 1983, 29, 31-32; A. ΧΡΙΣΤΟΦΙΛΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, *Τὸ πολίτευμα καὶ οἱ θεσμοὶ τῆς βυζαντινῆς αὐτοκρατορίας 324-1204*, Athens, 2004, 39-41; CAMERON, *Circus Factions*, 24-44, 309-310.

5. ΧΡΙΣΤΟΦΙΛΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, *Πολίτευμα*, 44, 212-213; R. GUILLAND, *Étude sur l'Hippodrome de Byzance*, *BSI* 27 (1966) 296, 299, 300; S. IVANOV, *Slavic Jesters and the Byzantine Hippodrome*, *DOP* 46 (1992) 129-132, here p.131-132.

6. GASCOU, *Institutions*, 200-212; ZUCKERMAN, *Cirque*, 78-94.

7. See *Théophylacte d'Achrida Lettres*, ed. P. GAUTIER, [CFHB 16/2], Thessalonica, 1986, n. 127) «Εἰ τοίνυν μέλει σοι καὶ ἀρματαηλάτην τοῦτον ἰδεῖν δοκιμώτατον καὶ τοῖς τῶν χροιάτων ἐπινύμοις δῆμοις περιμάχητον θέαμα καὶ πᾶσι φιλίπποις εὐφρημιον λάλημα, μηκέτι τοιαύτην ἄγχε φύσιν ἐν τῇ τῆς ἐχούσης ἡμᾶς Μακεδονίας στενοχωρία, ἀλλὰ λύσον ἐπὶ τὴν Λάρισσαν». Cf. ΧΡΙΣΤΟΦΙΛΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, *Πολίτευμα*, 360-361. According to S. VRYONIS, “the guilds of eleventh-century Constantinople exercised some of the political functions of the old demes and circus factions” as they were at the heart of the rebellions which broke out in the capital particularly in the second half of the century. See S. VRYONIS, *Byzantine δημοκρατία and the Guilds in the Eleventh Century*, *DOP* 17 (1963) 287-314 (=

it has been argued that the δῆμος denotes all the citizens without any clear social distinction<sup>8</sup>.

In modern bibliography referred to the period with which we are concerned (13th-15th c.) the term δῆμος denotes generally the lower strata of the urban population, that is, small merchants, artisans and various laborers<sup>9</sup>. However, through the systematic study of that period's sources certain nuances can be detected in the meaning of the term δῆμος, which, apart from the lower social stratum, also seems to include the middle social class and moreover to denote a larger group that contains both the lower and the middle social stratum. This paper intends to examine the concept of demos and similar expressions, the social composition of this body and its role in the political life of the era, based on the sources of the late Byzantine period (13th-15th c.).

The sources' material for the definition of the urban population and its action is fragmentary and comes mainly from Byzantine historians and chroniclers of that period, who are not very consistent when they refer to social stratification. Moreover, the differences in the socio-political views and the style of the authors of the 13th, 14th and 15th century, as

---

Idem, *Byzantium: its Internal History and Relations with the Muslim World*, London, 1971, no III), here 309-314. See opposite CAMERON, *Circus Factions*, 310-311.

8. See *Michaelis Attaliatae Historia*, ed. E. TSOLAKES, [CFHB 50], Athens, 2011, 46, 55, 58; *Annae Comnenae. Alexias*, ed. D. R. REINSCH - A. KAMBYLIS, [CFHB 40], Berlin, 2001, 15, 167; *Nicetae Choniatae historia*, ed. J. A. VAN DIETEN, [CFHB 11/1], Berlin, 1975, 235, 270. Cf. CHRISTOFILOPOULOU, *Πολίτευμα*, 360-363; MATSCHKE, *Konstantinopel*, 157. Other terms, however, such as the δημοτικοί, το δημοτικόν, the αστικοί, οί τῆς ἀγορᾶς denoted, according to N. SVORONOS, the members of a still indefinite middle class, which had arisen thanks to the growth of trade and handicraft from the end of the 10th century. See N. SVORONOS, Société et organisation intérieure dans l'empire byzantin au XI siècle: les principaux problèmes, in: *Proceedings of the Thirteenth International Congress of Byzantine Studies. Main Papers XII*, Oxford 1966, 371-389 (= Idem, *Etudes sur l'organisation intérieure, la société et l'économie de l'Empire Byzantin*, London, 1973, no. IX), 8-10.

9. G. WEISS, *Joannes Kantakuzenos-Aristokrat, Staatsmann, Kaiser und Mönch-in der Gesellschaftsentwicklung von Byzanz im 14. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden 1969, 70-72; K. P. MATSCHKE - F. TINNEFELD, *Die Gesellschaft im späten Byzanz*, Wien 2001, 62-82; P. CHARANIS, A Note on the Population and Cities of the Byzantine Empire in the Thirteenth Century, in: *The Joshua Starr Memorial Volume*, New York 1953, 135-148; Idem, The Role of the People in the Political Life of the Byzantine Empire: The Period of the Comneni and the Palaeologi, *ByzSt* 5/ 1-2 (1978) 69-79, mainly p. 70.



δημος and its action<sup>12</sup>. Finally, references to the δημος are also found in the 15th century authors, although they are quite rare<sup>13</sup>. The references to the δημος concern primarily the imperial capital<sup>14</sup> and some provincial cities, such as Thessalonica<sup>15</sup>, Adrianople<sup>16</sup>, Didymoteichon<sup>17</sup>, Gallipoli<sup>18</sup>, Heracleia Pontica<sup>19</sup>, Bizye<sup>20</sup>, Berroia<sup>21</sup> and Edessa in Macedonia<sup>22</sup>, and Arta<sup>23</sup>.

Let us first see what the social composition of the δημος was. Generally, the δημος is distinguished from the senate and the nobility, the clergy and the army<sup>24</sup>. According to our literary sources the term denotes above all the

12. *Nicephori Gregorae, Byzantina Historia*, 3 vols., ed. L. SCHOPEN, [CSHB 19], Bonn 1829-1855, I, 252 «τῆς λέξεως ὑπὸ τοῦ δήμου διαφθαρείσης», 397, 429 «δημος Ἡρακλειώτης», 500, 531, II, 791, 977; *Ioannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris Historiarum libri IV: graece et latine*, ed. L. SCHOPEN, [CSHB 20], Bonn 1828-1832, I, 274, 518 «ἀφ' ἧς αὐτοῖ τε οἱ δυνατοὶ εἶχετε πολλὰς προσόδους καὶ ὁ δημος ἀφθόνων ἀπέλαυε τῶν ἐπιτηδείων»; Idem II, 297, 491, 579; Idem III, 120, 235 «καὶ ὁ δημος ἐπιέζετο ἐνδεῖα πολλῇ τοῦ σίτου», 278 «Καλλιόπολις ... πέπτωκε μὲν καὶ αὐτὴ τῶν ἄλλων μᾶλλον, ὁ δημος δὲ ἅπασ διεσώθη ἐν τοῖς πλοίοις, ἃ ἦσαν ἐκεῖ πολλά».

13. *Laonici Chalcocandylae Historiarum demonstrationes*, 2 vols., ed. E. DARKÓ, Budapest 1922-1927, I, 178, 182; Idem II, 39, 40, 93; *Doukas. Istoría Turco-Bizantinā (1341-1462)*, ed. V. GRECU, Bucharest 1958, 69, 83, 111.

14. See mainly George Pachymeres, III, 221-223; Nicephorus Gregoras I, 531; John Cantacuzenus II, 297; Doukas, 83.

15. See mainly Nicephorus Gregoras I, 500; John Cantacuzenus I, 271.

16. See mainly John Cantacuzenus II, 176, 179.

17. John Cantacuzenus II, 287.

18. John Cantacuzenus III, 278.

19. Nicephorus Gregoras I, 429.

20. John Cantacuzenus II, 491.

21. John Cantacuzenus II, 351-353.

22. John Cantacuzenus I, 274.

23. John Cantacuzenus I, 518. According to the evidence of the sources similar references also concern other provincial cities such as Serres, Melnik, Philippopolis, Patra, the island of Tenedos (see below notes 68-73).

24. Nicephorus Gregoras I, 68 «καὶ πάντα ραδίως ἐφείλκετο, ταξιάρχους, λοχαγούς, στρατὸν, στρατηγούς, τοὺς ὅσοι τοῦ δήμου, καὶ ὅσοι τῆς συγκλήτου», 191, 397; Idem II, 634 «ὑποπεύθησαν δ' οἱ περὶ αὐτὸν ἅπαντες στρατιῶται, καὶ ὅσον τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης τὸ ἔκκριτον, καὶ κινεῖται κατ' αὐτῶν ὁ δημος ῥαγδαίως», 846 (Sometimes the δημος denotes one part of the soldiers, see Nicephorus Gregoras I, 65 «ὅσοι τῶν ἐν ἀξιωματί καὶ ὅσοι τοῦ δήμου τοῦ στρατιωτικοῦ»); John Cantacuzenus II, 297 «καθάπαξ γὰρ εἰς δύο διαιρεθεῖσαι, στρατιὰ μὲν καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ἄριστοι τῶν πολιτῶν τὰ Καντακουζηνοῦ τοῦ βασιλέως ἠροῦντο, ἐκείνον οἰόμενοι δυνησέσθαι τὰς κατασχούσας στήσιν συμφοράς

citizens of the middle social stratum, who were distinguished socially and economically.

In the 14th century Nicephorus Gregoras distinguishes a category of citizens as «τινὲς ἐκ τοῦ δήμου παιδείας εὖ ἔχοντες» (those from the people who were well educated)<sup>25</sup>, «ὅσοι τοῦ δήμου τῶν Βυζαντίων ἐτύγχανον ἔκκριτοι» (those from the people of Constantinople who were prominent)<sup>26</sup>, «ὅσοι τοῦ Βυζαντίων δήμου συνετώτεροι εἶναι ἐδόκουν» (those from the people of Constantinople who were the wisest)<sup>27</sup>. These were representatives of the people, who thanks to their education and their socio-economic position participated in political affairs. In the first case they were delegates of the people who participated in an embassy sent by Andronicus II Palaeologus (1282-1328) to his grandson Andronicus during the first civil conflict of the 14th century. In the second case these were representatives of the δῆμος of Constantinople who took part in a trial in 1339, while in the third case they were the representatives of the people of the capital who participated in an assembly called in 1348 by the Empress Irene.

This category of citizens must be identical to the «κρείττους ἄλλως τῶν οἰκητόρων» (those who were in a better position than the others) of George Akropolites<sup>28</sup>, to the «τῆς πολιτείας ὅσον ἦν περιφανές<sup>29</sup>, ὅσον

---

οἱ δῆμοι δὲ, τῶν στασιαστῶν ἐναγόντων ... »; Doukas, 83. See also *Georgios Sphrantzes. Memorii 1401-1477*, ed. V. GRECU, Bucharest 1966, 536, where the δῆμος is discriminated from the nobles.

25. Nicephorus Gregoras I, 397 «κἀκεῖθεν πρεσβεύεται πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα καὶ πάππον δυοῖν ζητημάτων ὁπότερον συγχωρῆσαι οἱ, ἢ τὴν πρὸς τὸ Βυζάντιον ὑπόσπονδον εἶσονδον, ἢ τῶν ἐκ Βυζαντίου τινῶν εἰς ἐκεῖνον ἄφιξιν ἐκ τε τῶν τῆς συγκλήτου ἐκ τε τῶν τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἀρχόντων, καὶ εἴ τινες ἐκ τοῦ δήμου παιδείας εὖ ἔχοντες εἶεν, οἵτινες ἱκανοὶ ἔσσονται τὰ ὑπ' ἐκεῖνου λεχθησόμενα ἀπαγγεῖλαι τῷ τε βασιλεῖ καὶ ὄλω τῷ Βυζαντίῳ». These are mentioned below (p. 398) as «τέτταρας τῶν τοῦ δήμου προκρίτων».

26. Nicephorus Gregoras I, 531 «μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα συνηθροικῶς πᾶσάν τε τὴν σύγκλητον καὶ τοὺς ἐν Βυζαντίῳ τηλικαῦτα ἐπιδημοῦντας ἐπισκόπους σὺν γε τῷ πατριάρχῃ, καὶ ὅσοι τοῦ δήμου τῶν Βυζαντίων ἐτύγχανον ἔκκριτοι, εἰς μέσον ἤνεγκε τους τε στασιαστάς τοὺς τε στασιώτας, καὶ ὅσοι ἐτύγχανον μάρτυρες».

27. Nicephorus Gregoras II, 846.

28. *Georgii Acropolitae Opera*, ed. A. HEISENBERG, Leipzig 1903 (Stuttgart 1978), 77 «καὶ οἱ μετ' οὐ πολὺ ὁμοθυμαδὸν πάντες συνειλεγμένοι, ὅσοι τε τῶν προυχόντων, ὅσοι τῶν ἐν στρατείᾳ κατειλεγμένων καὶ ὅσοι κρείττους ἄλλως τῶν οἰκητόρων, πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα ἀφίκοντο».

29. George Pachymeres II, 341; Idem III, 211.

ἦν τῆς πολιτείας καθαρὸν τε καὶ ἔκκριτον» (the most prominent of the citizens) of George Pachymeres<sup>30</sup> and to the «ἐν λόγῳ τῶν πολιτῶν» (the prominent among the citizens) of John Cantacuzenus<sup>31</sup>. Similar might be the expression «τῆς πολιτείας ἄρχοντες» or «πολιτικοὶ ἄρχοντες», which is found mainly in documentary sources of the 14th and 15th centuries<sup>32</sup>. These citizens and archontes were also distinguished from the senate and the nobles and represented the people in various collective bodies (provincial

30. George Pachymeres IV, 401, 445. Also see George Pachymeres IV, 561 «τῶν τῆς πολιτείας χρησίμων», 597 «τὸ πρωτεύον τῆς πολιτείας». Moreover, in the 15th century, Gennadios Scholarios called at the palace an assembly of the three orders of citizens, the senate, the church and the πολιτεία for discussing the issue of the Churches' union. See *Oeuvres complètes de Gennade Scholarios*, vol. 3, ed. L. PETIT – X. SIDÉRIDÈS – M. JUGIE, Paris 1930, 169. Cf. T. ΚΙΟΥΣΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, *Emperor or Manager. Power and Political Ideology in Byzantium before 1453*, Geneva 2011 p. 93-94.

31. John Cantacuzenus II, 573 «καὶ αὐτὸς ἐκκλησίαν φανερώως συναγαγὼν ἔκ τε τῶν ἀρίστων καὶ τῆς στρατιᾶς καὶ τῶν ἄλλων πολιτῶν τῶν μάλιστα ἐν λόγῳ».

32. For Constantinople see mainly *Das Register des Patriarchats von Konstantinopel*, vol. 2, ed. Herbert HUNGER – Otto KRESTEN – Ewald KISLINGER, Carolina CUPANE, [CFHB 19/2], Wien 1995, no. 111 (1337-1338); *Acta et Diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*, eds. FRANCISCUS MIKLOSICH – IOSEPHUS MÜLLER, vols. 1-6, Bonn 1860-1890, here v.2, 472, 493, 495; *Critobuli Imbriotae historiae*, ed. D. R. REINSCH, [CFHB 22], Berlin 1983, 41 «τιμᾶται παρὰ τε τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ τῶν ἐν τέλει καὶ τῆς πολιτείας». For Thessalonica see *Actes de Vatopédi I. Des origines à 1329*, ed. J. BOMPAIRE – J. LEFORT – V. KRAVARI, C. GIROS, Paris 2001, no. 48 (1313) «τῶν ἐκκρίτων τῆς αὐτόθι θεοσωστού πόλεως, τῶν τε δηλονότι ἐκκλησιαστικῶν καὶ τῶν τῆς πολιτείας», no. 49 (1317), where they are referred as «τῆς πολιτείας ἀρχόντων», among whom is found the προκαθήμενος and the καστροφύλαξ of Thessalonica and also other ἄρχοντες without offices and titles, who obviously belong to the social category, about which we are talking; *Actes de Vatopédi II*, no. 144 (1375). For Serres see Lisa BÉNOU, *Le codex B du monastère Saint-Jean-Prodrome (Serrès)*, τ. 1 (XIII-XV siècles), Paris 1998, no. 23, no. 127. Cf. A. ΚΟΝΤΟΓΙΑΝΝΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, Αστικά συμβούλια στο Βυζάντιο. Συμβολή στη μελέτη της συλλογικότητας κατά τους τελευταίους βυζαντινούς αιώνες (13ος-15ος αι.), *Μεσαιωνικά και Νέα Ελληνικά* 10 (in press, 16-18). For the notion of politeia, which is traditionally related to the participation of the δῆμος in the public life (see for example in the 10th century *Leonis Diaconi Historiae*, ed. C. B. HASE [CSHB 11], Bonn 1828, 100, where the senate is distinguished by the prominent of the citizens; in the 11th century see Michael Attaliates, 244), in the 15th century see mainly ΚΙΟΥΣΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, *Emperor or Manager*, 91-95; see also H.-G. BECK, *Konstantinopel. Zur Socialgeschichte einer früh-mittelalterlichen Hauptstadt*, *BZ* 58 (1965) 11-45.

councils, synods, assemblies, trials) as well as in the entrance of the emperor in the capital<sup>33</sup>.

But who belonged to this category of citizens? According to the aforementioned sources they were educated people of a prominent social and economic status. Apparently they did not belong to the high aristocracy of the state, they did not hold an honorific title or office, but most probably came from the upper class of the middle social stratum<sup>34</sup>. G. Weiss has suggested that the representatives of the *δήμος*, who participated in a synod against Palamas in the 14th century, were the *δήμαρχοι* of Constantinople<sup>35</sup>. The *δήμαρχοι*, who along with the *δήμος* had gradually lost their power during the middle Byzantine period, appear to have specific duties in the Palaeologan period<sup>36</sup>. According to their appointments' letter, the *δήμαρχοι* were responsible for the security and maintenance of the urban fortification in their region and also for the keeping of order<sup>37</sup>. In the early 14th century

33. See the notes above and also KONTOGIANNOPOULOU, Αστικά συμβούλια, 17-18, 25-26.

34. The middle social stratum was a broad social category, which included heterogeneous elements, i.e both wealthy merchants and professionals, also owners of large urban and rural property and of medium-size holdings. See mainly G. LITAVRIN, *Sovety Irasskazy Kekavmena*, Moskau 1972, 332; H. BECK, *Das byzantinische Jahrtausend*, München 1978, 253; E. DE VRIES – VAN DER VELDEN, *L'élite byzantine devant l'avance turque à l'époque de la guerre civile de 1341 à 1354*, Amsterdam 1987, 58; P. SCHREINER, *Byzanz* [Oldenbourg Grundriss der Geschichte 22], München<sup>2</sup> 1994, 38; MATSCHKE – TINNEFELD, *Gesellschaft*, 100.

35. WEISS, *Kantakuzenus*, 135-136.

36. MATSCHKE, *Konstantinopel*, 157-158, where all the former bibliography about the *δήμαρχοι* is listed.

37. K. SATHAS, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη*, vol. 6, Venice – Paris, 1877, 643-4. Cf. K.-P. MATSCHKE, Bemerkungen zu den Mikro- und Makrostrukturen der spätbyzantinischen Gesellschaft, in: *Acts XVIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, Selected Papers, Main and Communications, Moscow 1991, I, History, ed. I. ŠEVČENKO – G. G. LITAVRIN – W. K. HANAK, Shepherdstown 1996, 394-424, here 411ff.; MATSCHKE – TINNEFELD, *Gesellschaft*, 74; A. KONTOGIANNOPOULOU, *Η εσωτερική πολιτική του Ανδρονίκου Β' Παλαιολόγου (1282-1328). Διοίκηση - Οικονομία* [Βυζαντινά Κείμενα και Μελέται 36], Thessalonica 2004, 130. During the siege of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 the emperor Constantine XI (1449-1453) ordered the *δήμαρχοι* to register how many forces each one could line up at the castle. See George Sphrantzes, 386. About the mayors see also *Démétrius Cydonès, Correspondance*, vol. 2, ed. R.-J. LOENERTZ, Vatican 1960, no. 268; Nicephorus Gregoras II, 608, 982 «ἀλλ' ἄγε δὴ, μεταπεμπόμενος πάντα ἀγορανόμους ὁμοῦ καὶ δημάρχους, κέλευε μαστιγίας ἐκείνους ἅπαντας ἀποδείξαι ταχέως».

two of them had been chosen to assist with the control of Constantinople's provision in cereals<sup>38</sup>. It is possible that the most prominent of the *δήμαρχοι* could participate in public affairs, although our knowledge about their social position does not allow us to place them with certainty in the middle social stratum<sup>39</sup>.

Other prominent members of the organizations who were active in the city's districts under the leadership of the *δήμαρχοι* could probably participate in the public affairs. Demetrius Cydonēs in his correspondence mentions the social rise of a man who was a servant and gradually acquired wealth and rose to the middle social stratum. Furthermore, the *δήμαρχος* of his district praised him for his participation in the public affairs<sup>40</sup>.

This category may also have included wealthy merchants and bankers<sup>41</sup>, educated officials<sup>42</sup>, who were participated in the civic councils and also representatives of the professional societies and associations and ship-owners<sup>43</sup>.

38. See A. M. MAFFRY TALBOT, *The Correspondence of Athanasius I Patriarch of Constantinople* [CFHB 7], Washington 1975, no. 100. Cf. KONTOGIANNOPOULOU, *Ανδρόνικος*, 130-131; MATSCHKE, *Konstantinopel*, 176-177.

39. For example we know nothing about the social position of the two *δήμαρχοι* (Antiocheites and Ploumes) of the early 14th c. mentioned above (n. 37). See also MATSCHKE, *Konstantinopel*, 158ff.

40. Démétrius Cydonès, n. 268 (1380). Cf. MATSCHKE – TINNEFELD, *Gesellschaft*, 74.

41. *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*, ed. F. MIKLOSICH – I. MÜLLER, v. 2 Vindobonae 1862, p. 472, 493, 495 (15<sup>th</sup> c.). Cf. KIOUSOPOULOU, *Emperor or Manager*, 91-92.

42. S. KUGÉAS, Notizbuch eines Beamten der Metropolis in Thessalonike aus dem Anfang des XV. Jahrhunderts, *BZ* 23 (1914-19) 148-150. Cf. KONTOGIANNOPOULOU, *Αστικά συμβούλια*, 18.

43. John Cantacuzenus II, 334 «ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ χειροτέχνη καὶ ἄλλοι, ὅσοις ὁ βίος ἦν ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν, πονοῦντες καὶ ἐργαζόμενοι, διεζῶν τῶν ἀναγκαίων εὐποροῦντες. Οἱ μέσοι δὲ τῶν πολιτῶν πάνν κραταιῶς ἐπιέζοντο ὑπὸ ἐνδείας μηδεμίαν οὐδαμῶθεν εὐπορίαν ἔχοντες», 544-545, 575; Idem III, 34 «κοινήν ἐκκλησίαν ἐκ πάσης ιδέας βίου συναθροίσας ἐκ τῶν Βυζαντιῶν πολιτῶν οὔτε γὰρ ἔμπορος ὑπελείπετο, οὔτε στρατιώτης, ἀλλὰ καὶ χειροτέχνη παρήσαν, καὶ τοῦ δήμου οὐκ ὀλίγοι καὶ τῶν ἱερῶν φροντιστηρίων οἱ ἐξηγούμενοι καὶ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν οἱ προστάται». See also Alexios Makrembolites (I. ŠEVCENKO, Alexios Makrembolites and his 'Dialogue between the Rich and the Poor', *ZRVI* 6 (1960) 187-228 [= Idem, *Society and Intellectual Life in Late Byzantium*, London 1981, no VII]), 207 «ἢ γὰρ ἐξ ἐπιστήμης ἐπλούτησέ τις ἢ ἐξ ἐμπορίας, ἄλλοι δ' ἐξ ἐγκρατείας καὶ ἐξ ἀρπαγμάτων ἕτεροι, καὶ ἐκ δυναστείας πολλοί, ἢ καὶ ἐκ πατρῶου κλήρου καὶ

In the sources of the period with which we are concerned the middle social grouping is also denoted by other expressions, which identify more precisely this social category. John Cantacuzenus in the 14th century mentions the *μέσοι* of citizens, who are distinguished from the *ἄριστοι* (aristocracy) and the *δημος*, which denotes here the lower strata of the urban population<sup>44</sup>. Other sources mention the *μεσότης*<sup>45</sup>, the *second* and *μέση μοῖρα*<sup>46</sup>, terms which also denote the middle social class<sup>47</sup>. It is possible that the use of these terms is connected with the growth of commercial and banking activities in Byzantium, especially in the 14th century, which made the middle social stratum more distinct in certain authors of that period<sup>48</sup>.

The fact that the term *μέσοι* is not found in the sources in the 15th century has led to the theory that the middle social stratum disappears from the sources because it coincides with the aristocracy<sup>49</sup>. The present analysis,

---

*τῶν τοιούτων*»; George Sphrantzes, 536-538, where among the *δημος* of Monembasia are mentioned persons «*ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ μὲν ἰκανόπλοιοί τε καὶ θαλαττουργοί, καὶ νῆας ἐμπορικὰς πλείστας ἔχοντες*». Cf. CHARANIS, *People*, 70, 76-78. About the economic activities of the middle social class see N. ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΗΣ, *Hommes d'affaires grecs et Latins à Constantinople (XIII-XV siècle)*, Paris 1979, 53 ff. For those who were occupied with maritime professions see also below n. 54. For the late Byzantine professional societies see G. ΜΑΝΙΑΤΙΣ, *The Domain of Private Guilds in the Byzantine Economy, Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries*, *DOP* 55 (2001) 339-369.

44. John Cantacuzenus II, 177-179 «*οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἄριστοι ἀντίκα διεφθείροντο... οἱ μέσοι δὲ τῶν πολιτῶν, ἢ ὅτι οὐ συνηγωνίζοντο τοῖς στασιάζουσιν, ἢ φθόνῳ τοῦ περιεῖναι*», 351, 393 «*Γαβρᾶν δε τινα ἐκ τῶν μέσων πολιτῶν τὰ ὄντα πρότερον ἐκτεμόντες (οἱ Ζηλωτές)*», 490. Cf. P. CHARANIS, *On the Social Structure and Economic Organization of the Byzantine Empire in the Thirteenth Century and Later*, *BSI* 12-13 (1951-53) 94-153 (= *Idem*, *Social, Economic and Political Life in the Byzantine Empire*, London 1973, no IV), here 148.

45. Alexios Makrembolites, 210.

46. Φιλοθέου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως του Κοκκίνου Αγιολογικά Έργα vol. 1, ed. D. ΤΣΑΜΕΣ, Thessalonica 1979, 164 «*οὐδὲ τῆς βουλῆς ταῦτα καὶ τῶν ἀρίστων, οὐδέ γε τῆς δευτέρας καὶ μέσης, ὡς ἂν εἴποι τις, μοίρας, ἀλλὰ τοῦ πολλοῦ καὶ συρφετώδους ἀνθρώπου*».

47. MATSCHKE – TINNEFELD, *Gesellschaft*, 99.

48. For the growth of commercial and banking activities in the 14th century see mainly ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΗΣ, *Hommes d'affaires*, 53 ff.; A. LAIOU, *The Byzantine economy in the mediterranean trade system; thirteenth-fifteenth centuries*, *DOP* 34-45 (1980-1981) 177-222 (= *Idem*, *Gender, Society and Economic Life in Byzantium*, Hampshire 1992, no. VII), mainly pages 190-210.

49. ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΗΣ, *Hommes d'affaires*, 115-123.

however, makes it clear that the middle social stratum does not disappear in the 15th century, but as in the 13th, the 14th and the 15th century one part of it is determined with expressions such as «ἐκκληριοὶ τοῦ δήμου» and «τῆς πολιτείας» mentioned above. These representatives of the popular classes could participate in the provincial council of the archontes, in assemblies, in trials and embassies and claim, through their involvement in public affairs, a share in power<sup>50</sup>.

Another notion of the δῆμος in the period under study is that of the lower social stratum of the urban populations. Alexios Makrembolites in his “Dialogue between the rich and the poor” includes in the category of the poor (πένητες), «τοὺς τὴν γῆν ἐργαζομένους, τοὺς τὰς οἰκίας, τοὺς τὰς ὀλκάδας, τοὺς χειρεπιστήμονας, δι’ ὧν αἱ πόλεις πᾶσαι συνίστανται»<sup>51</sup>. Also, John Cantacuzenus in his work denotes with the term “demos” the lower stratum of the urban populations, which is distinguished from the nobles and the middle stratum of citizens (μέσους)<sup>52</sup> and elsewhere from the merchants, the soldiers, the artisans and the clergymen<sup>53</sup>. John Cantacuzenus mentions that at the beginning of the great civil conflict in 1347 one of the instigators of the revolt against him in Adrianople was «Βράνος τις τοῦνομα τοῦ δήμου εἷς, σκαπάνη προσέχων καὶ χερσὶ καὶ γλίσχρως ἐκ τούτων ποριζόμενος τὸν βίον»<sup>54</sup>. It is obvious that according to Cantacuzenus the δῆμος had included the economically and socially lower members of the merchants and the artisans, who did not belong to the middle class. The same historian, however, mentions the «ναυτικόν» as part of the δῆμος,

---

50. ΚΟΝΤΟΓΙΑΝΝΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, *Αστικά συμβούλια*, 17-18, 25-26.

51. Alexios Makrembolites, 210.

52. John Cantacuzenus II, 177-179, 352, 490.

53. John Cantacuzenus III, 34, 227. Also the «δημώδης ὄχλος» (III, 120) is distinguished from the soldiers and the senators.

54. John Cantacuzenus II, 176. However, as Michael Angold has pointed out, Cantacuzenus wanted to underestimate his opponents and Branos probably belonged to a higher social grouping than the emperor was willing to describe. He possessed a house and was still prominent in the city’s affairs even after it had returned to the Cantacuzenus allegiance. See John Cantacuzenus II, 485, 557. Cf. M. ANGOLD, *Archons and dynasts: Local aristocracies and the cities of the later byzantine empire*, in: *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*, ed. M. ANGOLD, Oxford 1984, 236-253, here p. 248.

that is seamen in general, who could come from both the middle and the lower social stratum<sup>55</sup>.

The historians of the period, representatives of the upper social class<sup>56</sup>, often use negative characterizations for the common people. In the historical work of George Pachymeres the *δήμος* is equated to the vulgar mob which, according to the author, demanded the creation of a fleet and for that reason in 1305 erupted in bloody riots against the Catalans and the Genoese in Constantinople, despite the intervention of the patriarch<sup>57</sup>. In addition, Nicephorus Gregoras quite often identifies the mob with the *δήμος*, for whom he usually employs negative characterizations<sup>58</sup>. Also, John Cantacuzenus uses negative expressions for the *δήμος*, which is motivated by irrational impulse<sup>59</sup>, is at archontes' and demagogues' beck and call<sup>60</sup>, while for the rebels of the great civil conflict of the 14th century he mentions that «ἐπιπολὺ τῶν ἀπορωτάτων καὶ λωποδυτῶν καὶ τοιχωρῦχων ὄντες, αὐτοὶ τε ὑπὸ τῆς πενίας ἀναγκαζόμενοι οὐδὲν εἶασαν ἀτόλμητον, καὶ τοὺς δῆμους ἐνήγον πρὸς τὰ ἴσα, τὴν πρὸς βασιλέα τὸν Παλαιολόγον εὐνοίαν ὑποκρινόμενοι, διὸ καὶ πιστοτάτους ἑαυτοὺς προσηγορεύκασιν»<sup>61</sup>.

55. John Cantacuzenus II, 544-545 «ἐς τὴν ὑστεραίαν γὰρ Τζεφραίτις ἐκ τῶν οἰκετῶν μεγάλου δουκός ... ὑπὲρ τοῦ δεσπότη ἀμυνόμενος, τὸν δῆμον ἐκίνει, καὶ μάλιστα τὸ ναυτικόν, εὐνοίαν πρὸς ἐκεῖνον κεκτημένον οὐ μικρὰν, οἷα δὴ περὶ αὐτοὺς ἀεὶ ἠσχολημένον». According to him the «ναυτικόν» in Thessalonica had its own organization, which was different from that of «τῆς ἄλλης πόλεως», see John Cantacuzenus II, 575. Cf. MANIATIS, Guilds, 355, where the author remarks that it was about an association of seamen independently of their social and economic status, like ship-owners, skippers, common seamen and longshoremen.

56. For the social position of the late Byzantine historians see H. HUNGER, *Βυζαντινὴ Λογοτεχνία*, vol. 2, Athens 1992, p. 282ff.

57. George Pachymeres IV, 581 «τοῦτο γνοὺς ὁ πατριάρχης, ἀπάρας ὡς εἶχε τῆς κατοικίας ἧ που κατόκει, ἔργον ἔχων τὸ σπουδαιότατον περὶ τὸν δῆμον σπουδαιοτριβεῖν ... καὶ ξυγκαλεῖ τοὺς ξύγκλυδας καὶ οἷς συνήθης ὁ θόρυβος ... ὁ ξύγκλυς δ' ὄχλος εἰς ταῦτὸν γεγονότες ... ἔγνωσαν τοῖς ἐντὸς τῆς πόλεως Κατελάνοις ἐπιχειρεῖν».

58. Nicephorus Gregoras I, 127 «δήμος ὄντες καὶ ἀγοραῖος ὄχλος», 171 «δήμος γὰρ ὄντες τὸ πλεῖστον ἀγοραῖος καὶ ἀνώματος», 567; Idem II, 608 «ἀνασεῖσαι τὸν ὄχλον διὰ τῶν δημάρχων». Cf. HUNGER, *Βυζαντινὴ λογοτεχνία*, 306; MATSCHKE – TINNEFELD, *Gesellschaft*, 64, 66.

59. John Cantacuzenus III, 290 «ὁ δῆμος αὐθις ἀλόγῳ φερόμενος ὀρμηῇ», 304.

60. John Cantacuzenus I, 274; Idem II, 177; Idem III, 304.

61. John Cantacuzenus II, 177-178, 298.

Moreover, Doukas identifies the demos with the vulgar people<sup>62</sup>, while he also refers to the rabble<sup>63</sup>. The fact that references to δῆμος appear with greater frequency in the work of John Cantacuzenus than in the work of George Pachymeres and Nicephorus Gregoras is explained by the emphasis given by the emperor-author on the description of the social conflicts of his time<sup>64</sup>.

In the period with which we are concerned the δῆμος also denotes a wide social group, usually distinguished by the aristocracy, the army and the clergy, which obviously included the middle and lower strata of the urban population without clear social distinction. The δῆμος in this wider sense participates in various court ceremonies, such as imperial investiture<sup>65</sup> and the entrance of the emperor in the city<sup>66</sup> and in many cases, especially during the turbulent period of civil wars, it undertakes political action<sup>67</sup>. In those cases, when the δῆμος is not distinguished from other social groups,

62. Doukas, 83 «... ὁρῶν τὸν δῆμον ἐν διχοστασίαις ... ὁρῶν τὸν χυδαῖον λαόν».

63. Doukas, 43 «καὶ γὰρ τὸ πλεῖστον τῆς πόλεως μέρος, ὅσον τῆς γερουσίας ὅσον τὸ συρφετόν, ἐσέβετο Καντακουζηνόν».

64. HUNGER, *Βυζαντινὴ Λογοτεχνία*, 321.

65. Doukas, 111. See also George Pachymeres III, 221 (the promotion of Andronicus II son, John to *despote*).

66. George Pachymeres IV, 321 «καὶ ὁ δῆμος ἅπας διημερεύσας ἐπὶ πολὺ, ὅσος τε Ῥωμαϊκὸς καὶ ὅσος ἄλλος ἐξ ἄλλων γενῶν τε καὶ γλωσσῶν, καὶ μᾶλλον Ἰταλικός, σὺν τῷ περιφανεῖ μέρει τῆς πόλεως καὶ κλήρῳ παντὶ καὶ ἀρχιερεῦσι, μετέωρος ἴστατο ὅσον οὐπὼ τοὺς βασιλεῖς φιλοτίμως ὑποδεξόμενος»; John Cantacuzenus II, 297, 491; *Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, ed. S. LAMBROS, vol. 1, Athens 1912, 250. Cf. ΚΙΟΥΣΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, *Emperor or Manager*, 112.

67. Nicephorus Gregoras I, 169 «καὶ ἔσται κατὰ τῶν δοκούντων ἀδικεῖν ἐκ τοῦ δήμου λοιδορία μακρὰ, νῦν μὲν ὑπ' ὀδόντα ψιθυριζομένη, μετὰ δὲ κύκλους ἔστιν οὕς ἐνιαυτῶν ἀνακαλυμμένη καὶ ὑπαιθρος», 319 «ἤεσαν ἐπὶ τὴν βασιλεύουσαν, ὡς αὐτίκα αἰρήσοντες στασιάζουσάν τε καὶ ἐκπεπολεωμένην πρὸς ἑαυτὴν ταῖς τοῦ δήμου γνώμαις ἐλπιδὶ λημιμάτων, ὅποια ταῖς ἀδίκαις χερσὶν ἐκπορίζουσιν αἱ τοιαῦται τῶν πραγμάτων καινοτομίαι», 501 «ἀπεσταλμένοι παρὰ τοῦ Πάππα (1334-5), διαλεξόμενοι περὶ τῆς εἰρήνης καὶ ὁμονοίας τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν. καὶ ἦν εὐθὺς ἰδεῖν πολλοὺς τῶν τοῦ δήμου ζῆλον μὲν λαμβάνοντας, οὐ κατ' ἐπίγνωσιν δὲ, καὶ πρόχειρόν τινα καὶ ἀταμίευτον προτείνοντας γλώσσαν καὶ πρὸς γε ἔτι συνωθοῦντας καὶ αὐτόν γε τὸν πατριάρχην ἐς διαλέξεις»; Idem II, 682 «ἐπειδὴ τὴν σφῶν ἀυθάδειαν ὅ,τε δῆμος ἐμίσει καὶ το σφίσις ἀντικείμενον τῶν ἀπολωλότων μέρος εἰς τὸ δύνασθαι ἤδη προῦχώρει, τὴν τοῦ δήμου πρὸς ἐκείνου ἀπέχθειαν ἔχον»; Laonikos Chalkokondyles I, 57; Doukas, 83 «δημηγορήσας κατενώπιον πάντων τῶν ἀρίστων καὶ τῶν τοῦ δήμου».

it is possible that it indicates the entire urban population<sup>68</sup>, although, in our opinion, the term in its wide sense addresses mainly the middle and lower strata of the urban population.

The notion of *δήμος* as defined in the afore-mentioned categories is also expressed by other terms used in this period, such as «*λαός*»<sup>69</sup>, «*οικήτορες*»<sup>70</sup>, «*πολίται*»<sup>71</sup>,

68. See for example, John Cantacuzenus III, 278 «*Καλλιούπολις ... πέπτωκε μὲν καὶ αὐτὴ τῶν ἄλλων μᾶλλον, ὁ δῆμος δὲ ἅπας διεσώθη ἐν τοῖς πλοίοις, ἃ ἦσαν ἐκεῖ πολλά*».

69. George Akropolites, 6; George Pachymeres III, 97 «*λαὸς ἅπας τῆς πολιτείας*»; Idem IV, 321; Nicephorus Gregoras I, 252, 319; Doukas, 83 «*τὸν χυδαῖον λαὸν*» and 317 «*ὁ χυδαῖος οὖν καὶ ἀγοραῖος λαὸς*»; George Sphrantzes, 204, 292, where are mentioned the «*ἔγκριτοι*» of the fortress of Patra who along with the people yielded the city to Thomas Palaeologus (around 1429).

70. George Akropolites, 6-8, 10, 12 «*ἢ καὶ παρὰ τῶν οἰκητόρων μετακληθέντες εἰς τὴν τῆς χώρας δεφένδουσιν*», 22, 40 «*ἀπατηλοῖς δὲ λόγοις τοὺς οἰκήτορας ὑπελθών, ὡς πλουτίσειε τούτους ἄκρως καὶ τῶν ἄλλων Ῥωμαίων ὑπερυνώσειεν*», 77 «*ὅσοι τε τῶν προυχόντων, ὅσοι τῶν ἐν στρατείᾳ κατειλεγμένων καὶ ὅσοι κρείττους ἄλλως τῶν οἰκητόρων*»; Nicephorus Gregoras I, 457 «*ὁ βασιλεὺς ἱκανὸν ἐπέθετο τοῖς περὶ τὸν Αἴμον πολιχνίοις καὶ εἶλε μικροῦ πάντα ἀπονητὶ, τῶν οἰκητόρων προσεῤῥηκτότων ἐκόντων*»; Idem II, 676 «*οἰκητόρων στάσιν*»; Idem III, 150 «*καὶ ἅμα οἱ τῶν Θρακικῶν οἰκήτορες πόλεων Παλαιολόγῳ τῷ βασιλεῖ προσεχώρουν ἐθελονταῖ*»; Critoboulos, 33 «*τότε μὲν γὰρ αὕτη συνετωτέροις τε καὶ στρατηγικωτέροις, προσέτι δὲ καὶ τῶν πραγμάτων ἐμπειροτέροις ἐκέχρητο τῷ τε βασιλεῖ καὶ τοῖς ἄρχουσιν οἰκήτορσί τε πλείοσιν ἐφρουρεῖτο*». According to Konstantinos Armenopoulos, a man who had lived in a city for ten years was concerned as its habitant: «*Ὁ ποιήσας ἐν πόλει δέκα ἔτη δοκεῖ τὴν οἴκησιν ἐκεῖ ἔχει*». See Konstantinos Harmenopoulos, *Hexabiblos*, ed. K. PITSAKIS, Athens 1971, p. 377. Cf. E. PATLAGEAN, L'immunité des Thessaloniciens, in: *Εὐψυχία, Mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler*, v. II, Paris 1998, 591-601, here p. 597.

71. George Sphrantzes, 196. See also George Akropolites, 7; Nicephorus Gregoras I, 101 «*ἐκόντων τῶν πολιτῶν*»; Idem II, 673 «*στασιάζειν λαμπρῶς τοῖς πολίταις*»; John Cantacuzenus I, 104 «*οἱ τ' ἐφεστηκότερες ταῖς πόλεσιν ἠγεμόνες, ὑπὸ τε τῶν ἰδίων ἕκαστος πολιτῶν ἐκβιαζόμενος*»; Idem II, 477 «*πέμψας τε ὁ βασιλεὺς προσηγόρευε τοὺς πολίτας καὶ παρήνει προσχωρεῖν*», 573 «*καὶ αὐτὸς ἐκκλησίαν φανερώς συναγαγὼν ἐκ τε τῶν ἀρίστων καὶ τῆς στρατιᾶς καὶ τῶν ἄλλων πολιτῶν τῶν μάλιστα ἐν λόγῳ*»; Idem III, 125 «*ὁ βασιλεὺς δὲ ἐπεὶ ἦσθετο ἤδη κατὰ κράτος τὴν πόλιν ἐχομένην, ἦ καὶ αὐτὸς πρὸς τὴν ἀκρόπολιν εὐφημούμενος ὑπὸ τῶν πολιτῶν*», 244 «*ἐν Ἀδριανοῦ ... πέμψας παρήνει τοὺς πολίτας προσχωρεῖν αὐτῷ καὶ τὴν πόλιν παραδιδόναι*», 276 «*γενόμενος ἐν τῇ Τενέδῳ, ἔπεισε καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους πολίτας ἀποστῆναι τοῦ νέου βασιλέως*»; Doukas, 63 «*τοὺς δὲ πολίτας φιλοτησίαις καὶ γέρα πλεῖστα δωρήσας*». The same term is also employed for the inhabitants of Constantinople, see «*Πολίταις*», Theodore Skoutariotes, 216 «*καὶ τῆς τοῦ βασιλέως Μανουὴλ παρὰ τοῖς Πολίταις ἀναγορευέσεως*»; Doukas, 57; 73; Idem 83; Idem

«πολιτεία»<sup>72</sup>, «ἔποικοι»<sup>73</sup>. It is significant that in the 13th century George Akropolites, who does not use the term δῆμος as already mentioned, refers «τοὺς τῆς Ἀδριανοῦ οἰκήτορας» (the inhabitants of Adrianople), while John Cantacuzenus in the next century mentions «τὸν Ἀδριανουπολιτῶν δῆμον» (Adrianople's demos)<sup>74</sup>. Sometimes these terms are used alternatively with δῆμος. For example, George Pachymeres in a passage of his history writes that «δῆμος ἅπας ... ὅσος τε Ῥωμαϊκὸς καὶ ὅσος ἄλλος ἐξ ἄλλων γενῶν τε καὶ γλωσσῶν, καὶ μᾶλλον Ἰταλικός» along with members of the upper social class and the clergy were about to welcome the kings, while elsewhere he mentions that «ἅμα δὲ καὶ λαός, ὅσοι τῶν Γραικῶν καὶ ὅσοι τῶν Ἰταλῶν» were participating in a church ceremony<sup>75</sup>. Moreover, George Akropolites mentions that the οἰκήτορες of Philippopolis refused to welcome Alexius III (1195-1203) in 1203<sup>76</sup>, George Pachymeres in 1268 mentions that the ἔποικοι of Mesembria and Anchialos did not accept that these cities were to be yielded to the king of Bulgaria Constantine Tich (1257-1277)<sup>77</sup>, while George Sphrantzes in the early 15th century mentions the denial of the δῆμος of Sparta to welcome the *despote* Theodore I<sup>78</sup>.

According to the above it is evident that the δῆμος in that period denotes a broad social body, which includes both members of the middle and lower strata of the population. Contemporary sources do not provide much information about the organization of the δῆμος. It is known that there was a kind of organization in the districts of Constantinople under

91. A similar meaning seem to have the expression «οἱ δὲ τῆς πόλεως», Doukas, 51 and «οἱ τῆς Κωνσταντίνου», idem, 139.

72. George Pachymeres II, 341; Idem III, 211, IV, 401, 445, 561 «τῶν τῆς πολιτείας χρησίμων», 597 «τὸ πρωτεύον τῆς πολιτείας»; Critoboulos, 41; Gennadios Scholarios, 169.

73. George Akropolites, 75 «ἐπεὶ δὲ φθάσοι ἐς Μελένικον, πάντα προὔπτα τοῖς ἐποίκοις ποιεῖται καὶ σφᾶς αὐτοὺς διεγείρει προδοῦναι τὸ ἄστυ τῷ βασιλεῖ». These terms, however, could also denote all the urban population, as is shown in the footnotes referred to them. Especially the ἔποικοι and οἰκήτορες, who are usually found in the sources next to the archontes and the clergy, seems that they were denoting the organized people and they were receiving privileges from the byzantine emperors. See PATLAGEAN, L'immunité, 596-597.

74. George Akropolites, 21-22; John Cantacuzenus III, 243-244.

75. George Pachymeres IV, 321 and III, 31 respectively.

76. George Akropolites, 8.

77. George Pachymeres II, 443.

78. George Sphrantzes, 204 «οὐκ ἤθελον δεχθῆναι αὐτὸν ὁ δῆμος ἀλλὰ μάλιστα καὶ ὕβρεσιν ἐνέπλυνον».

the supervision of the «δήμαρχοι»<sup>79</sup>. This organization was formed after the recapture of Constantinople in 1261 and was based on the form that existed before the conquest of the city by the crusaders in 1204. As for the leader of the δῆμος in each district it seems that he used the old name of the circus-factions' leader. As we have already mentioned the δῆμαρχοι were responsible for the security and maintenance of order in the city<sup>80</sup>. According to Pseudo-Kodinos, in court ceremonies the flag of the δῆμαρχοι followed that of the despotes and the archontes<sup>81</sup>. Doukas, also, mentions the «δημοκρατοῦντας» as leaders of the δῆμος. Specifically, when the Ottoman sultan Bayezid (1389-1402) asked from the emperor John V (1341-1391) to pay taxes and send one hundred soldiers under the leadership of John's son, the emperor «μὴ ἔχων βοήθειαν ἐκ τινος τῶν ῥηγάδων ἢ τῶν ἀριστοκρατούντων ἢ τῶν δημοκρατούντων, εἰς τοῦτο κατένευσεν»<sup>82</sup>. It is possible that there was a similar organization in the «γειτονίαι» (districts) of provincial cities<sup>83</sup>.

In the sources of the 14th and 15th century the «τῆς πολιτείας ἄρχοντες» or «πολιτικοὶ ἄρχοντες» are found, as we have already mentioned, in Constantinople, Thessalonica and Serres. They were mainly members of the middle social grouping who participated in the public affairs as representatives of the people so in Constantinople as in Thessalonica and Serres and were usually distinguished by the senate or the «συγκλητικὸς ἄρχοντες»<sup>84</sup>. It is possible that these archontes, along with the δῆμαρχοι,

79. Nicephorus Gregoras II, 608; George Sphrantzes, 386.

80. See above n. 36.

81. Pseudo-Kodinos. *Traité des offices*, ed. J. VERPEAUX, Paris 1966, 196 «Ὅπισθεν δὲ τῶν τοιούτων βασιλικῶν φλαμούλων ἴστανται τὰ τῶν δεσποτῶν καὶ τῶν ἀρχόντων, οὐ μὴν καὶ κατὰ τάξιν τούτων δ' αὖ ὀπισθεν τὰ τῶν δημάρχων».

82. Doukas, 75.

83. See for example, A. GUILLOU, *Les archives de Saint-Jean-Prodrôme sur le mont Ménécée*, Paris 1955, no. 9 (1321) «γειτονίαν τὴν λεγομένην τοῦ ἁγίου Βασιλείου» (in Serres); *Actes de Vatopédi II. De 1330 à 1376*, ed. J. LEFORT – V. KRAVARI – C. GIROS – K. SMYRLIS, Paris 2006, no. 85 «γειτονία τοῦ Ἁγίου Μηνᾶ» (in Thessalonica). Cf. John Cantacuzenus II, 287 «Ὁ δὲ ἐπὶ τῆς ἔξω Διδυμοτείχου συνοικίας δῆμος οὐ πολλῶ ὕστερον οὐκ ἀνεκτὸν ἠγούμενοι» (in Didymoteicho).

84. For Constantinople see mainly *Das Register des Patriarchats von Konstantinopel*, vol. 2, ed. HERBERT HUNGER – OTTO KRESTEN – EWALD KISLINGER – CAROLINA CUPANE, [CFHB 19/2], Wien 1995, no. 111 (1337-1338); *Acta et Diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*, eds. FRANCISCUS MIKLOSICH – IOSEPHUS MÜLLER, vols. 1-6, Bonn 1860-1890, here v.2, 472, 493,

participated in the demos' organization as its representatives in the council of archontes in the provincial cities, like Thessalonica and Serres, or in assemblies, synods, trials and other public events so in the capital as in other cities<sup>85</sup>. The process of selecting the representatives of the people and the function of its organization it is not known. The evidence of the sources permit us to suggest that the δῆμος or its representatives did not act as an independent political authority, except perhaps from the period of civil conflicts, but participated in the exercise of power mainly through the institutional collective bodies, such as the council of archontes in the provincial cities and assemblies<sup>86</sup>.

The members of the δῆμος acted collectively and participated in various public events, such as the entrance of the emperor in the capital or other cities<sup>87</sup> and in court ceremonies<sup>88</sup>. The demos, usually through its representatives, participated also in church synods, assemblies, trials and embassies<sup>89</sup>. In addition, it could display its discontent on several

495. For Thessalonica see Actes de Vatopédi II, no. 144 (1375). For Serres see LISA BÉNOU, *Le codex B du monastère Saint-Jean-Prodrome (Serrès), τ. 1 (XIII-XV siècles)*, Paris 1998, no. 23, no. 127. Cf. ΚΙΟΥΣΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, *Emperor or Manager*, 91-95; ΚΟΝΤΟΓΙΑΝΝΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, *Αστικά συμβούλια*, 16-18, 25-26.

85. See above n. 31, 32.

86. It seems that the distinction between the «συγκλητικοί» and «τῆς πολιτείας ἄρχοντες» was primarily social and denoted the members of the high aristocracy that participated along with the members of the middle social stratum in the council of archontes in the provincial cities or in various public affairs in the capital.

The people's organization in the Byzantine cities was never ceased to exist and the people undertook political action (see for example in the 10th century *Leonis Diaconi Historiae*, ed. C. B. Hase [CSHB 11], Bonn 1828, 100, where the senate is distinguished by the prominent citizens; in the 11th century see Michael Attaliates, 244). But its participation in decision-making passed normally through the official institutions of the state, as mentioned above. Only in the 15th century is the politeia treated in the sources as an independent political power, when asked its opinion in crucial matters, like the choice of an emperor (see below n. 93-95). But even then it does not seem to influence substantially political developments.

87. See John Cantacuzenus I, 426; Idem II, 491; Doukas, 139. See also George Pachymeres III, 97, 261; Idem IV, 321, 401, 413, 445.

88. George Pachymeres III, 221; Doukas, 111. See also George Akropolites, 6 (*βασιλεὺς παρὰ παντὸς ἀναγορεύεται τοῦ λαοῦ*).

89. George Pachymeres III, 103 (trial of Bekkos, «τῶν λαϊκῶν οἱ ἐλλόγιμοι»), 211 (trial of Strategopoulos in 1294 «τῶν τῆς πολιτείας ὄσον περιφανές τε καὶ ἔκκριτον»); Idem IV, 449 (trial of despote Michael Angelos in 1304 «τῶν τῆς πολιτείας»), 595-597 (harangue);

occasions<sup>90</sup> by taking part in uprisings<sup>91</sup> thus affecting in many cases political developments, especially during the civil wars of the 14th century<sup>92</sup>. Moreover, from the second half of the 14th century, when the Byzantine State became gradually tributary of the Ottoman sultan, it seems that the citizens were taken into account, at least formally, in decision making. Both Laonikos Chalkokondyles and George Sphrantzes mention the question addressed by Bayezid to the citizens of Constantinople (Βυζάντιοι), during the conflict between Manuel II (1391-1425) and Andronicus IV (1376-1379) for the occupation of the throne, about their preference for the succession of the byzantine throne<sup>93</sup>. The «πολιτεία»<sup>94</sup>, that is the representatives of the δῆμος, appears in this political context as a third pole of power next

---

Nicephorus Gregoras I, 70, 169-170 (trial of Bekkos, «ὄσοι τῶν ἐλλογίμων»), 395-398 (embassy), 531 (trial of conspirators in 1336), 557 (trial of Barlaam in 1341 «Ὅθεν ἐκυροῦτο συγκροτηθῆναι δικαστήριον ἐν τῷ μεγίστῳ νεῶ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ Σοφίας, παρόντος καὶ βασιλέως αὐτοῦ μετὰ τῶν τῆς συγκλήτου λογάδων, καὶ ὄσοι τῶν σοφωτέρων ἀνδρῶν»); Idem III, 538 «καὶ ἅμα ἔφ' τῇ ὑστεραίᾳ συνηθροικῶς ἱερέων ἐκκλησίαν καὶ ὄσοι τοῦ κλήρου καὶ ὄσον τοῦ δήμου πλησιόχωρόν τε καὶ πρόσσικον ὑπῆρχε τῷ περιωνύμῳ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ σοφίας νεῶ»; John Cantacuzenus I, 385-388 (assembly in Chios), 522 (assembly in Arta); Idem II, 217 (assembly), 351 (assembly), 420 (assembly), 490 (assembly); Laonikos Chalkokondyles I, 57; George Sphrantzes, 196.

90. Nicephorus Gregoras I, 169 «καὶ ἔσται κατὰ τῶν δοκούντων ἀδικεῖν ἐκ τοῦ δήμου λοιδωρία μακρὰ, νῦν μὲν ὑπ' ὀδόντα ψιθυριζομένη, μετὰ δὲ κύκλους ἔστιν οὔς ἐνιαυτῶν ἀνακεκαλυμμένη καὶ ὑπαιθρος».

91. HEISENBERG, Johannes Batatzes, 230 «ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς δῆμους ἐκάστης πόλεως τεταραγμένους ἰδὼν ἐν ἀλλήλοις καὶ στασιάζοντας ᾤκτειρε»; Nicephorus Gregoras I, 408 «τῶν τοῦ πολιτικοῦ δήμου στασιωτῶν», 413 «δεδιὼς τὴν τοῦ δήμου στάσιν», 426 «τοῦ δήμου τὴν φορὰν ἀνεχαίτισε»; Idem II, 180 «οἱ δῆμοι δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν στασιαστῶν ἀγόμενοι καὶ τῶν ἀπόρων, τὰ βασιλίδος ἤροῦντο μᾶλλον», 681 «στάσις ἐγγέγονε τοῦ δήμου» (in Trebizond); John Cantacuzenus II, 176-179, 287, 545.

92. Nicephorus Gregoras I, 501 (where many of the people prompted the patriarch to negotiations for the union with the Latin Church); John Cantacuzenus I, 104 «... οἱ τ' ἐφεστηκότες ταῖς πόλεσιν ἡγεμόνες, ὑπὸ τε τῶν ἰδίων ἕκαστος πολιτῶν ἐκβιαζόμενος καὶ τὴν ἀδηλίαν δεδοικότες τῆς τύχης, οὐκ εἰδότες πρὸς ὀπότερον τῶν βασιλέων τὸ κράτος χωρήσει, τῷ δυνατωτέρῳ τὸ νῦν ἔχον φαινομένῳ καὶ αὐτοῖς ἐπιχειμένῳ παραδώσουσι τὰς πόλεις». Also in 1347 the money-changers were strong enough to prevent the imposition of economic measures by John Cantacuzenus (III, 34-42). Cf. ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΗΣ, *Hommes d'affaires*, 64.

93. Laonikos Chalkokondyles I, 57. See also George Sphrantzes, 196.

94. Critoboulos, 41.

to the senate and the emperor, although they do not seem to substantially influence political developments<sup>95</sup>.

Through its collective action, *δημος* was trying to make its own demands, which were first of all the protection of the empire's territory and the reinforcement of its defense. When the ruler was indifferent or detrimental to the state's territorial integrity, the people of the cities took its fate in their own hands exercising in this way pressure on the governor for a more rational foreign policy. The sources give us many examples. George Pachymeres, for example, mentions the discontent of the people, because of the reduction of maritime forces by Andronicus II and the popular outburst against the Catalans and the Genoese of the capital in 1305 after the attack led by the first against the Byzantines<sup>96</sup>.

Also, in many cases the citizens of provincial cities decided whether to permit the entrance of a specific individual in their city<sup>97</sup> as well as to support one or another potential ruler<sup>98</sup>. We only mention the case of despote Theodore I of Peloponnese<sup>99</sup>, who between 1397 and 1404 had decided, before the Ottoman threat, to yield most of his territory to the Knights of St John of Rhodes. The inhabitants of Sparta, however, refused to welcome the Knights and «πολεμειν Ροδίους φανερώς ἤρξαντο, καὶ ψήφισμα γέγονε κοινόν, ὄρκους τὸ βέβαιον ἐσχηκός, ἢ τοὺς Φρερίους ἐξελάσαι τῆς αὐτῶν ἢ τεθνάναι»<sup>100</sup>. With the bishop of the city at their head, they rose in revolt<sup>101</sup>. The despote Theodore I regained his territory, and in 1404 the treaty of Vassilopotamos forced the Knights withdrawn from the towns they had seized<sup>102</sup>.

95. See also ΚΙΟΥΣΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, *Emperor or Manager*, 169-170.

96. George Pachymeres IV, 581 «καὶ θροῦς ἠγγείρετο παμπληθής... καὶ τὴν τῶν Ῥωμαϊκῶν νεῶν κατητιῶντο κατάλυσιν, ὡς οὐκ ἂν πάθοιεν τοιαῦτα, εἰ ὁ συνήθης στόλος περιῶν ἐξηρτύετο, καὶ πολλὰ καὶ παρὰ τὸ εἰκὸς διελάλουν» and 595. Cf. ΚΟΝΤΟΓΙΑΝΝΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, *Ανδρόνικος*, 55; MATSCHKE – TINNEFELD, *Gesellschaft*, 78-81.

97. George Akropolites, 8, 10 (the citizens of Nicaea); Doukas, 89.

98. George Akropolites, 21 (the citizens of Adrianople), 75, 149, 172; George Pachymeres II, 443; Nicephorus Gregoras I, 16, 457; Doukas, 81-83; D. BALFOUR, *Politico-historical Works of Symeon archbishop of Thessalonica (1416/17 to 1429)* [WBS 13], Wien 1979, 57.

99. *PLP*, no. 21460.

100. *Παλαιολόγεια καὶ Πελοποννησιακά*, ed. S. LAMBROS, vol. 3, Athens 1926, 90.

101. George Sphrantzes, 204.

102. D. ΖΑΚΥΘΙΝΟΣ, *Le Despotat grec de Morée. Vie et institutions*, London 1975, 95. See also George Sphrantzes, 204, where the *δημος* of Sparta refused to welcome the despote Theodore I in the city.

Moreover, the people demanded that economic pressures and social injustices affecting mainly the middle and lower strata be reduced. According to Nicephorus Gregoras, Andronicus III gained the sympathy of the people of the Thrace and the capital in his fight against his grandfather Andronicus II, with promises for reduction of taxes and deliverance from the political inaction of the old emperor, which had enabled the state enemies to prey upon its lands and occupy its cities<sup>103</sup>. Also, in 1347 the money-changers of Constantinople put political pressure on John Cantacuzenus and thus prevented the imposition of economic measures by the emperor<sup>104</sup>. In addition, Symeon, archbishop of Thessalonica in the early 15th century, reproached, the archontes of the city because they perpetrated injustices<sup>105</sup>.

We also mention the protests of both the patriarch Athanasius and Nicolaus Cabasilas against the speculators<sup>106</sup> and the social contradictions highlighted by Alexios Makrembolites<sup>107</sup>. Especially during the second civil war of the 14th century the social rivalries, which were smoldering mainly in the urban centers, manifested in violence. The regime of Zealots in Thessalonica that prevailed for almost a decade was the culmination of those rivalries<sup>108</sup>.

The people also defended the preservation of the Orthodox doctrine and expressed their opposition to the Union with the Latin Church<sup>109</sup>, although

103. Nicephorus Gregoras I, 392, 397, 399.

104. John Cantacuzenus III, 34-42. Cf. ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΔΕΣ, *Hommes d'affaires*, 64.

105. BALFOUR, Symeon, 47 «Καὶ ἄρχοντες μὲν κατασπαταλῶσι, θησαυρίζουσι τε καὶ ὑπεραίρονται κατὰ τῶν ὑπὸ χεῖρα, πᾶν ἀδικίας ἔργον ἀνέδην διαπραττόμενοι, οὐ μόνον οὐδὲν ἀποδίδοντες Θεῷ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀφαρπάζοντες καὶ τοῦτο εἶναι ἀρχὴν ἡγούμενοι ἑαυτῶν καὶ τὸ τοὺς πενομένους καὶ ὑπ' αὐτοὺς μηδὲ φύσεως ἀνθρωπίνης σχεδὸν εἶναι νομίζειν».

106. George Pachymeres IV, 509; MAFFRY TALBOT, *Correspondence*, no. 106; R. GUILLAND, *Le traité inédit 'Sur l'usure' de Nicolas Cabasilas*, in: *Εἰς μνήμην Σπ. Λάμπρου*, Athens 1935, 269-277.

107. Alexios Makrembolites, 203-215.

108. See mainly Nicephorus Gregoras II, 674-675, 796; John Cantacuzenus II, 176-179, 233-235, 287, 568 ff.; Idem III, 108, 117. Cf. J. BARKER, *Late Byzantine Thessalonike: A Second City's Challenges and Responses*, *DOP* 57 (2003) 5-33, mainly p. 16-21.

109. Doukas, 317 «Ὁ χυδαῖος οὖν καὶ ἀγοραῖος λαὸς ἐξελθόντες ἐκ τῆς ἀλλῆς τοῦ μοναστηρίου, ἐν καπηλείοις κρατῶντες ἐν χερσὶ τὰς φιάλας πλήρεις ἀκράτου ἀναθεμάτιζον τοὺς ἐνωτικούς, πίνοντες εἰς πρεσβείαν τῆς εἰκόνης τῆς Θεομήτορος».

in some cases representatives of the people proposed the reconciliation of the two Churches<sup>110</sup>.

The expression of popular discontent in combination with the general weakening of the Byzantine State led the emperors to come into frequent contact with the *δήμος* or its representatives, through the convocation of assemblies or harangues<sup>111</sup> that they addressed to it in various circumstances so as to justify or impose their policy. We mention indicatively two cases where the emperors appealed to popular approval for economic or defence issues. First, the assembly called in 1347 by John Cantacuzenus for the ratification of tax measures<sup>112</sup>. Second, the assembly called in 1348 by the Empress Irene in order to respond appropriately to the embassy of the Genoese, who demanded the disarmament of the Byzantine fleet. The senators and «ὄσοι τοῦ Βυζαντίων δήμου συνετώτεροι εἶναι ἐδόκουν» attended this assembly and the Empress inquired «τὴν ἐκάστου γνώμην»<sup>113</sup>.

Moreover, the concession of privileges to the cities especially from the early 13th century onwards, as also the judicial reforms by the first Palaeologoi are illustrative examples of the emperors' efforts to fulfill the demands of the *δήμος*, in its wide sense<sup>114</sup>.

To summarize, the presence of the *δήμος* in the sources of the period under study is not simply a re-use of the classical term derived from ancient literature but is related to the reorganization of the capital after its recapture in 1261, and more precisely to the organization of the city's districts under the leadership of *δήμαρχοι*. The people in the provincial cities were also expressed in the sources after the reconquest of Constantinople with the term *δήμος*. The *δήμος* is also connected to the rise of the middle social class, which is subsumed in its notion. During these years the *δήμος* was a

110. Nicephorus Gregoras I, 501 «ἀπεσταλμένοι παρὰ τοῦ Πάππα (1334-5), διαλεξόμενοι περὶ τε εἰρήνης καὶ ὁμονοίας τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν. καὶ ἦν εὐθὺς ἰδεῖν πολλοὺς τῶν τοῦ δήμου ζῆλον μὲν λαμβάνοντας, οὐ κατ' ἐπίγνωσιν δὲ, καὶ πρόχειρόν τινα καὶ ἀταμίευτον προτείνοντας γλώσσαν καὶ πρὸς γε ἔτι συνωθοῦντας καὶ αὐτόν γε τὸν πατριάρχην ἐς διαλέξεις».

111. George Pachymeres IV, 569, 595; Nicephorus Gregoras I, 532.

112. John Cantacuzenus III, 34-39.

113. Nicephorus Gregoras II, 846.

114. See KONTOGIANNPOULOU, *Ανδρόνικος*, 125-127; PATLAGEAN, *L'immunité*, 591-601; D. KYRITSES, *The 'Common Chrysobulls' of Cities and the Notion of Property in Late Byzantium*, *Σύμμεικτα* 13 (1999) 229-245.

not homogeneous broad social body, which included members of both the middle and the lower social stratum. It is obvious that, while representing the *δημος* in collective bodies, the members of the middle social stratum were making their own demands. General terms such as *λαός*, *οϊκήτορες*, *πολίται*, *πολιτεία*, *ἔποικοι* seem to have in many cases a similar meaning to that of *δημος*. Until the fall of the empire the *δημος* did not seem to act as an independent political authority which was regularly taken into account in decision making. Nevertheless, the organization and political action of the *δημος* especially through assemblies and uprisings, related to the general political developments of the era, indicate that its role in decision-making policies was in certain cases decisive.

THE NOTION OF ΔΗΜΟΣ AND ITS ROLE IN BYZANTIUM  
DURING THE LAST CENTURIES (13TH-15TH C.)

The notion of *demos*/δημοι (people/circus factions) has been a favorite subject in modern research and various opinions have been formulated regarding to its organization and the role it played in political developments. In modern bibliography referred to the period with which we are concerned (13th-15th c.) the term *δημος* denotes generally the lower strata of the urban population, that is, small merchants, artisans and various laborers. However, through the systematic study of that period's sources certain nuances can be detected in the meaning of the term *δημος*, which, apart from the lower social stratum, also seems to include the middle social class and moreover denotes a larger group that contains both the lower and the middle social stratum. This paper examines the concept of *δημος* and similar expressions, the social composition of this body and its role in the political life of the era, based on the sources of the late Byzantine period (13th-15th c.).

The presence of the *δημος* in the sources of the period under study is not simply a re-use of the classical term derived from ancient literature but is related to the reorganization of the capital after its recapture in 1261, and more precisely to the organization of the city's districts under the leadership of *δήμαρχοι*. The people in the provincial cities were also expressed in the sources after the reconquest of Constantinople with the term *δημος*. The *δημος* is also connected to the rise of the middle social class, which is subsumed in its notion. During these years the *δημος* was a not homogeneous broad social body, which included members of both the middle and the lower social stratum. It is obvious that, while representing the *δημος* in the collective bodies, the members of the middle social stratum were making their own demands. General terms such as *λαός*, *οϊκήτορες*, *πολίται*, *πολιτεία*, *ἔποικοι* seem to have in many cases a similar meaning to that of *δημος*. Until the fall of the empire the *δημος* did not seem to act as an independent political authority which was regularly taken into account in decision making. Nevertheless, the organization and political action of

the *δημος* especially through assemblies and uprisings, which are related to the general political developments of the era, indicate that its role in the decision-making policies was in certain cases decisive.