Chapter 1 – Latins, Greeks and Syrians: the Élites of Fifteenth-Century Cyprus

An analysis of Cypriot social élites at the end of the Middle Ages must necessarily start with a discussion of the structures and hierarchies of Cypriot high society during this period. Which groups belonged to the upper classes? What were their characteristics, and how were they differentiated from each other? Cypriot élite society developed in a specific way from the installation of Lusignan rule at the end of the twelfth century until the period that is under consideration here. I will therefore begin this chapter with a short overview of the social structures that the crusaders brought with them when they settled on the island, and the mechanisms of society that evolved from the occupation (ch. 1.1). I will then examine the élites of the fifteenth century in detail. Considering first the perspective of the contemporaries themselves on their society (ch. 1.2), I shall investigate which social groups would have numbered among the élite (and the nobility) in contemporary Cypriot opinion, and how they regarded ascending elements of society. I will then present the modern scholarly approach taken by this study (ch. 1.3). The peculiarities of Cypriot society cannot be understood in a clear and comprehensive manner without considering the context provided by other, related, societies. I therefore generally consider the structures of the Cypriot élite within their European context, and end the chapter with a comparison of Cypriot society with élites in Western European countries and the Byzantine Empire (ch. 1.4).

1.1 Cypriot Society in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries

When the Lusignans and their followers settled in Cyprus, they brought with them notions of rule and society that had developed in Western Europe in the preceding centuries and had undergone some changes during the crusader occupation of the Levant[243].

Traditionally, the defining features of Western Europe's upper classes in this period were the possession of large estates and the vassal ties that bound them to their superiors. Land and social status were usually passed from one generation to the next[244]. In the High Middle Ages, however, knighthood appeared as another element that characterised the élite: originating from the Peace of God movement in France, and fuelled by the crusades, knighthood became an important social marker for nobility and resulted in the merging of various social groups into a heterogeneous class of noble knights[245].

With the establishment of the Crusader states, this knightly class introduced its Western European ideas of social order into the Levant, creating fiefs and a new nobility[246]. However, the Holy Land added its own characteristics to the social system. The heterogeneous population, which consisted in Muslims and Oriental Christians as well as Latin immigrants, called for new forms of social regulation. Thus, the crusader states developed a system which was based on

---

243 Cf. Edbury, Franks 65-66. 77.
244 Werner, s. v. Adel 121; Oexle, Aspekte 27; Contamine, Noblesse 21-45. The literature on the nobility in Medieval Western Europe and its development is vast. I shall therefore indicate only a selection of titles focusing on the Late Medieval period that were mostly published from the 1980s until the present. As the subject concerns a geographically very broad field, most studies have a regional focus. For France, see the classic work by Marc Bloch cited in the introduction, p. 18 (Bloch, Féodalité), as well as Contamine, Noblesse; Caron, Noblesse; Flori, Chevalerie; Aurell, Famille provençale; Courts, Weaving Legitimacy. For England, Scotland and Ireland, see McFarlane, Nobility; Carpenter, Locality and Polity; Doran/Lyttleton, Lordship in Medieval Ireland (collective volume); Grant, Extinction; Johnston, Romance and the Gentry; Mercer, Medieval Gentry; Tscherpel, The Importance of Being Noble. For the regions of the German and Habsburg empire, see Dannenberg/von Richthofen, Adel in der Oberlausitz; Hechberger, Adel; Heimann, Adelige Welt (collective volume); Morsel, Die Erfindung des Adels; Niederhäuser, Adel und Habsburg; Nolte, Familie, Hof und Herrschaft; Paravicini, Besonders adlig; Paravicini et al., Noblesse (collective volume); Pope, Nuremberg's Noble Servant; Rogge, Herrschaftsweitergabe; Spieß, Familie und Verwandtschaft; Stephan, Der märkische Adel; Vogtherr, Adel und Herrschaft; Zmora, State and Nobility in Germany. For the Low Countries, see Buylaert, Crisis of the Nobility; Buylaert/Dumolyn, Nobility and Prosopography; Damen, Knighthood in Brussels; Damen, Nobility in Brabant; Janse, Ridderschap in Holland: Janssens, De la noblesse médiévale; Van Steensel, Edelen in Zeeland. For Italy, see Carocci, La nobiltà romana (collective volume); Keller, Adel in den italienischen Kom-

munen; Padgett, Open Élite; Padgett/Ansell, Robust Action; Castelnuovo, Ufficiali (on Savoy). For the Iberian peninsula, see Branco, Nobility of Portugal; Devaney, Loyalty; Gerbet, Noblesses espagnoles; Gomes, Making of a Court Society; Leroy, Royaume de Navarre; Rodríguez-Velasco, Order and Chivalry; Rucquoi, Être noble en Espagne; Sánchez Saus, La nobleza andaluza. – For works on noble (court) culture in general, noble representation as well as noble warfare, see Auge, Ausdrucksformen adeliger Kultur; Keen, Chivalry; Keen, Origins of the English Gentleman; Andermann, Ritterliche Gewalt; Althoff, Nunc fiant; Barbero, La cavalleria medievale; Blockmans, Showing Status (collective volume); Boulton, Knights of the Crown; Bubenicek, Marquer la prééminence sociale; Flori, L'essor de la chevalerie; Frieling, Sehen und gesehen werden; Kaufmann, Fehde; Morsel, L'aristocratie médiévale; Oexle, Aspekte; Paravicini, Colonna und Orsini; Paravicini, Ritterlich-höfische Kultur; Paravicini/Babel, Grand Tour; Radulescu/Truelove, Gentry Culture; Ramírez, Solidaridades nobiliarias; Zotz, Adel und Innovation. – For social mobility in the upper classes, see Perroy, Social Mobility; Wood, Demographic Pressure; Autrand, Naissance; Gauvard, Les élites urbaines (collective volume); Aurell Cardona, Els mercaders catalans; Dutour, Société de l'honneur; Payling, Social Mobility; Schena, Social Mobility in Sardinia; Silvestri, Social Mobility in Sicily. For research surveys, see Aurell, Western Nobility; Reuter, Medieval Nobility, and for research on the upper classes in Byzantium, see below p. 35 n. 262.
245 Reuter, Medieval Nobility 192; Werner, s. v. Adel 122-123.
246 For older, classic works on the Crusader states and their social developments, see Prawer, Histoire du royaume Latin, esp. I 463-503; Prawer, Crusader Institutions 20-45; Prawer, Latin Kingdom 60-93; Prawer, Social Classes;

social as well as religious differences. The nobility in these Crusader states developed from the contingents of the First Crusade and other nobles who came to the East later[247]. It was a military élite, and soon the kingdoms and duchies in the Levant were divided into fiefs issued to the great lords' and to royal vassals that provided them with the means to supply military service. In contrast to the West, these fiefs were not always landed estates, but could also consist of money payments. This was a result of the urban character of the Levant – most knights lived in the towns and could therefore easily be payed a monthly rent instead of being awarded an estate[248].

From the reign of Amalric I (1163-1174) onwards, all vassals had the right to take part in the Haute Court, the High Court, which had a double function: it acted as royal council and as court for nobles at the same time. The nobles were thus judged by their own peers. This separated them from the rest of the population, who had their own courts[249]. An important prerequisite for becoming a knight was to belong to the Latin rite. Christians of other rites, or Muslims, could not attain this status. In this way the nobility was not only based on social, but also on religious difference. Latin knights ruled over a population of Muslims and Oriental Christians[250]. Thus, at the end of the twelfth century the Crusader states possessed a strong nobility which was legally separated from other groups of the population. Notions of knighthood were in full flower in this period. When Guy of Lusignan lost the support of the nobility in the Holy Land and bought Cyprus from Richard the Lionheart, he brought with him these Crusader notions of social order, as well as many of the barons who had supported him in the struggle for the throne of Jerusalem[251].

The medieval founding narratives of the Lusignan state describe these barons as part of the newly developing Cypriot ruling class; however, they also include other settlers into the core of the new nobility. According to Cypriot as well as Crusader narratives, at the beginning of his reign Guy of Lusignan invited settlers to the island to help him rule the land and provide a balance to the overwhelming majority of the indigenous population, who had already risen against the Templars a year earlier. William of Tyre's Continuators report that Guy sent messengers to all the Levantine Crusader states in order to encourage settlers to join him[252]. Machairas relates that the king sent messengers to France, England and Catalonia[253]. He also makes very clear that these settlers were expected to rule the island together with the king:

Send and bring from among your friends and those of your religion good knights to hold your fiefs, and appoint officers, and share your kingdom between you and them, and give them heritages in which they will be at rest. They will be at good heart to order your kingdom[254].

Thus, fifteenth-century Cypriot narratives place the origins of Cypriot nobility in the fiefs awarded after 1192. Modern scholarship essentially confirms these narratives[255]. According to Angel Nicolaou-Konnari, the names of knights and their families found in Cyprus at the beginning of the Lusignan reign suggest that the majority came from the crusader states. The only document still extant from Guy of Lusignan's reign shows that indeed most of the barons who had supported him in Jerusalem (Bethsan, le Bel, Soissons, Giblet, Mayre) accompanied him to Cyprus, although others came from Western France, in particular from Poitou[256].

As in the Crusader states, these fief-holding families constituted a distinct social group which exercised authority over the rest of the population. The notions that, according to Peter Edbury, defined this nobility were the same as in Jerusalem: a noble was a Latin knight, who held a fief in return for military service, paid homage and fealty to the king, and could claim noble ancestry. Again, as in the Crusader states, these principles formed an impermeable barrier that separated the nobility from the indigenous population, but also from the Latin burgesses[257]. Subsequently, according to Peter Edbury, »to preserve their exclusivity knights would find their marriage partners in those families they considered their equals, and this resulted in the emergence of a fairly small group of closely interrelated families that dominated noble society[258]«. Angel Nicolaou-Konnari confirms that there are

Richard, Royaume latin, esp. 88-90; Riley-Smith, The Feudal Nobility; Mayer, Geschichte der Kreuzzüge; Setton, History of the Crusades; Hamilton, Latin Church; Holt, Age of the Crusades, esp. 33-35. Newer works include Gervers/Powell, Tolerance and Intolerance (collective volume); Hunyadi/Laszlovszky, Crusades and Military Orders (collective volume); Jotischky, Crusading; Barber/Rist, Challenge of State Building (collective volume); Barber, Crusader States; Murray, Ethnic Identity; Yolles, Latin Literature; Jacoby, Economic Function; MacEvitt, What Was Crusader?. Nader, Burgesses has offered a study of the formerly neglected field of the burgesses in both Jerusalem and Cyprus.

247 Lock, Companion 426.
248 Lock, Companion 423; cf. Edbury, Franks 77; Holt, Age of the Crusades 33-35.
249 Lock, Companion 427; Pahlitzsch/Weltecke, Konflikte 122-123. The book of John of Ibelin, written around 1265, confirms that knights and liegemen as well as the haus homes, literally the 'high men', probably meaning the barons, had certain legal privileges. Cf. Ibelin, Livre des Assises (Edbury) 53: »because the great men and those who are bound to the seigneur by liege homage, and the seigneur to them, and their liegemen and knights, should not be treated like burgesses...« (por ce que haus homes et ceaus qui sont tenus au seignor de foy, et le seignor a iaus, et lor fiés et chevaliers ne doivent pas estre ensi menés come borgeis…) (Cf. Assises de la Haute Court [Beugnot] 23-24).

250 Nicolaou-Konnari, Greeks 45; Nicolaou-Konnari, Encounter 290-291. 316; Hamilton, Latin Church 162.
251 Edbury, Franks 65-66. 77; Edbury, Kingdom of Cyprus 18-20; cf. Hill, History II 8; Papadopoullos, Frontier Status 19-20.
252 Eracles (Academie des Inscriptions) 191-192.
253 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 26.
254 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 25: πέψε φέρε ἀπὸ τοὺς φίλους σου καὶ ἀπὲ τὴν πίστιν σου καλοὺς καβαλλάρους ψουμάτους καὶ ποῖσε ἀβιτζιάλιδες, καὶ μοίρασε τὸ ρηγάτον σου εἰς αὐτόν σου καὶ εἰς αὐτόν τους, καὶ ποῖσε τους κληρονομίες ὅπου νὰ ἦνε ἀναπαμένοι. θέλουν ἔχειν καρδίαν νὰ δηγοῦν τὸ ρηγάτον σου.
255 For the classic account, see Hill, History II 39-40. More recent accounts are found in Edbury, Kingdom of Cyprus 16-19; Nicolaou-Konnari, Encounter 190-191; Richard, Peuplement latin et syrien 158-161.
256 Nicolaou-Konnari, Encounter 190-191; cf. Edbury, Feudal Nobility of Cyprus 43-52; Edbury, Kingdom of Cyprus 18-19 and Richard, Peuplement latin et syrien 158-161, who find the same.
257 Edbury, Franks 77-78; Edbury, Feudal Nobility of Cyprus 11-13. 59.
258 Edbury, Franks 78.

no signs of intermarriage between nobles and the indigenous population during the thirteenth century, although marriages between nobles and Latin burgesses cannot be ruled out[259].

The social system implanted into the island was therefore a logical continuation of the system in place in the Holy Land. However, as early as the thirteenth century this system developed distinct Cypriot characteristics. In contrast to the Holy Land and other Western European states, the Cypriot nobles were a relatively egalitarian group: none of the noble estates in Cyprus, called *casalia*[260], had a castle that could have enhanced the owner's status vis-à-vis other nobles. Also, nobles did not have judicial powers. Public justice was an affair of the royal courts. Gilles Grivaud, among others, has attributed these centralizing tendencies to the influence of the Byzantine system governing the island before 1192. He states that the centralization of the state suited the Lusignans after their experience of noble resistance in the Holy Land[261].

The Crusader settlers and the social system they imported into Cyprus met with a society that had been part of the Byzantine Empire for several hundred years. In Byzantium, legal separation between the upper classes and the rest of society did not exist, nor did Byzantine society develop a system of feudal tenure based on vassal ties. However, social differentiation of course existed also in the Byzantine Empire, which possessed powerful élite groups both in the capital Constantinople and in the provinces. Belonging to the *eugeneis* (Gr., ›well-born‹) was based on a family's or individual's access to economic resources and wealth, and especially on family connections or ancestry[262]. Cyprus as a Byzantine province had possessed a strong élite group of so-called *archontes* (Gr., 'rulers, lords'). The fate of these families after the Latin conquest is, however, rather unclear. Some are said to have fled to Constantinople. In any case, no powerful Greeks – or *Rhomaioi*, as the Byzantines called themselves[263] – seem to have persisted in early Lusignan society. The élite consisted only of the new noble Latin settlers.

However, the majority of the population to come into contact with the newcomers was still Greek-speaking and Orthodox, and had until recently considered themselves subjects of the Byzantine emperor[264]. These Greeks lived in the towns as well as in the countryside and constituted most of the peasant population of the island. Greek peasants could be unfree serfs (Gr. *paroikoi,* ›neighbours‹) or freemen (Gr. *lefteri* or *eleutheroi*, ›free‹, Fr. *francomati*). Greek burgesses (Gr. *perpyriarioi*[265]) had to pay the *chevage*, a poll-tax, although this seems to have been the only limitation to their personal freedom[266].

The Armenian Christians, Western merchants from Venice, Genoa or Pisa and the small Jewish community that also inhabited the island were considered free burgesses. Moreover, Oriental Christians (Melkites, Nestorians, Syrian Orthodox, Maronites) who had already lived under Latin rule in the Holy Land also moved to the island in the course of Latin immigration from the Levant after 1192, and especially after the fall of Acre in 1291[267]. The Oriental Christians settled for the most part as merchants in the trading town Famagusta, but they also lived in Nicosia and in some cases even in the countryside, where they specialized in sugar production[268]. Their social status was generally that of burgesses[269].

Through the fourteenth century, this diverse Cypriot society developed in ways that were in some points similar to other regions in Europe, and in others unique to the island. In Western Europe in general, huge social differences existed within many noble groups. In the kingdom of France, and even more so in the Iberian Peninsula, the social division between lower and higher nobility was immense[270]. This situation was complicated by strong processes of social mobility. In many places, whole urban élites, many of them coming from the trading sector, pushed into the nobility. These urban élites, consisting of merchants, notaries and other professionals, usually ascended via state offices, and sometimes just as-

259 Nicolaou-Konnari, Encounter 191-192.
260 *Casale* was the term for a village in the countryside and was used to describe fiefs. A *prasteion* (pl. *prasteia*) in turn was a small village dependent on a casale. *Prasteia* could also be given out as smaller fiefs. See the appendix to the chronicle by Florio Bustron in Bustron, Historia (Mas Latrie) 462 and Livre des remembrances (Richard) 232. Griechische Briefe (Beihammer) 108 traces the origin of the differentiation between casalia and prasteia to the Byzantine administration that differentiated between *chorion* ('village') and *proasteion* ('hamlet, estate'). For the use of both *casale* and *prasteion* for fiefs, see Documents chypriotes (Richard) docs. I-XII; MCC, PDc 2669.2 fol. 29ᵛ. For detailed information on *casalia, prasteia* and fiefs in Cyprus in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see Edbury, Feudal Nobility of Cyprus 380-403.
261 Grivaud, Les Lusignan 369-370; cf. Edbury, Franks 79; Edbury, Kingdom of Cyprus 20-21; Edbury, Feudal Nobility of Cyprus 14-16; Nicolaou-Konnari, Encounter 207. 212-213.
262 See e.g. Laiou, Palaiologoi 813-814; Gomez, Ottomans 196; Matschke/Tinnefeld, Gesellschaft 15-17. 26; Weiss, Kantakuzenos 6-7. Oaths of allegiance indeed existed, but they differed from feudal oaths in the West, see Angelov, Imperial Ideology, chapter 10: Manuel Moschopoulos, Plato, and government as social covenant. Studies on the Byzantine aristocracy are numerous. I will mention only a compact selection here: Každan, Social'nyj sostav (Italian version: Kazhdan/Ronchey, L'aristocrazia bizantina); Angold, Byzantine Aristoc-

racy (collective volume); Cheynet, Aristocracy (a collection of his studies on the Byzantine aristocracy); Magdalino, Court Society and Aristocracy; Haldon, Social Élites; Kiousopoulou, Emperor or Manager; Grünbart, Inszenierung (for a recent bibliography on the subject, see the latter 226-249).
263 Following common practice in modern historiography, I shall refer to the subjects of the Byzantine emperor as *Greeks.* For the Greeks, cf. e. g. Nicolaou-Konnari, Greeks passim.
264 For the traditional basic account of these population groups see Hill, History II 1-5.
265 According to Hill, History II 9, their name derived from the poll-tax, which they paid in hyperpers.
266 Nicolaou-Konnari, Greeks 31-41; Nicolaou-Konnari, Encounter 216. 218-219. 222; Hill, History II 8-10.
267 Grivaud, Minorités 51-57; cf. Hill, History II 1-2, who expresses the opinion that those Oriental Christians who had come to Cyprus before the Latin conquest had entirely fused with the Greek population. For the Jews, see especially Balletto, Cross-Social Contacts 37-39.
268 Jacoby, Venetians in Cyprus 74.
269 Nicolaou-Konnari, Greeks 41.
270 For the Iberian peninsula, see Leroy, Le royaume de Navarre; Aguado, El ascenso. For France, see Contamine, Noblesse esp. 82-84 and below. For Rome, see Carocci, Dominazioni.

sumed a noble lifestyle which the central government later legalized. This was the case for example in France, but also in Aragonese-held Sicily and Sardinia and in the Low Countries, to name just some few examples[271].

In some regions, a new *noblesse de robe*, i. e. a group ennobled by the tenure of a certain office, thus started to develop, though it is difficult to distinguish clearly between the traditional military (knightly) nobility and this new form of nobility until the sixteenth century[272]. Guido Castelnuovo's analysis of the duchy of Savoy, for example, has shown that the social mobility of new professional groups working in the administration was still deeply rooted in the old power structures of the seigneurial domain. Under Amadeus VIII of Savoy (1391-1439[273]), attempts were made to introduce some sort of order into these new processes by categorizing offices and individuals according to their status in the traditional noble hierarchy[274].

In Byzantium, the beginning of the fourteenth century witnessed a flourishing of the aristocracy. The big aristocratic magnate families connected to Constantinople were a close-knit interrelated group that possessed vast estates and assets all over the empire, as shown by the well-known example of John Kantakouzenos[275]. This situation changed radically due to the great civil war of 1341-1354. The civil war itself, and the following Ottoman invasion of the Balkans, deprived most of the magnate families of their estates and their income. A crisis of the aristocracy ensued, and many aristocratic families started engaging in trade in the first half of the fifteenth century, an occupation that had not been considered worthy of an *eugenēs* before. This phenomenon also allowed some wealthy trading families to ascend into the highest echelons of society and to blend in with the *eugeneis*[276].

Everywhere in Europe, therefore, mostly urban élites were pushing into the highest echelons of society. Cyprus is no exception, though its ethnic diversity makes this process even more interesting. Recent research has shown that contact between the newly immigrated Latin settlers and especially the

Greek population took place quite early on[277]. In the long run, these contacts were to produce fundamental social changes. From at least the early fourteenth century, Greeks worked in the administration of royal and noble households and came to constitute a group of cultural brokers between the Frankish nobility and the Greek population[278]. Over the next century and a half, this group ascended into the higher echelons of society. This process was probably furthered by the massive enfranchisements of the Greek population under Peter I: the king decreed that the *perpyriarioi*, the Greek burgesses, who had been submitted to the *chevage,* the poll-tax, should be allowed to buy themselves out of paying this tax. He hoped to refill the emptying state treasuries with this measure[279].

On the verge of the fifteenth century, therefore, social change was already in progress. This poses the question how members of the élite in Cyprus saw themselves and their social order at the end of the fourteenth and during the fifteenth century. How was nobility defined, and who was seen as part of the élite? Were nobles still equated with knights of the Latin faith, or had social perceptions changed?

1.2 Cypriot Élites in the Fifteenth Century: Contemporary Perceptions

Contemporary perceptions of nobility in Western Europe at the end of the fourteenth century are relatively clear. In France[280], for example, we find a clearly defined notion of nobility. Several French texts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries document the conception of society as being divided into the well-established three estates: the clergy, the nobility and the labourers. Frequently, the nobility is assigned the task of defending the crown and the *chose publique*[281]. Treatises from Castile as well as Italy confirm this image of a well-defined nobility[282]. In France, letters of ennoblement, issued from the reign of Philippe IV (1285-1314) on, prove that nobility was also conceived very practically as a legal status, a concept

271 For the ennoblement process of urban élites see e. g. Aurell Cardona, Els mercaders catalans; Gauvard, Les élites urbains; Silvestri, Social Mobility in Sicily; Schena, Social Mobility in Sardinia; Damen, Knighthood in Brussels. In other regions, the phenomenon seems to have been less pronounced, such as in Warwickshire, England, where the high aristocracy recruited rather among the land-owning gentry than among merchants and other city dwellers, see Carpenter, Locality and Polity 138-152. For an assessment of these processes in Europe in general, see Contamine, European Nobility, esp. 92.
272 Contamine, Noblesse 67-76; Werner, s. v. Adel 126; cf. Autrand, Naissance.
273 Cf. Demotz, Amadeus VIII 502.
274 Castelnuovo, Ufficiali, esp. 17-18. 345-348.
275 Laiou, Palaiologoi 813-815; Matschke/Tinnefeld, Gesellschaft 26. For Kantakouzenos and his vast number of estates and cattle, see Weiss, Kantakuzenos 12. 21-22.
276 Oikonomides, Hommes d'affaires 120-123; Kiousopoulou, Emperor or Manager 36-38. 167-170; Gomez, Ottomans 196-201; Matschke/Tinnefeld, Gesellschaft 55-62. 158-160.
277 See esp. Nicolaou-Konnari, Greeks 40-41. 58-59 as well as Weyl-Carr, Art in the Court 239-243; Griechische Briefe (Beihammer) 55-62.
278 See Nicolaou-Konnari, Greeks 41-59; Griechische Briefe (Beihammer), esp. 55-62, for the example of Konstantinos Sekretikos, an important officer in the royal secrète who compiled the well-known manuscript Vaticanus Palatinus Graecus 367.

279 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 157; Machairas, Exēgēsis (Konnarē/Pierēs) 147-148; cf. Nicolaou-Konnari, Greeks 40-41. 58-59.
280 Another point of comparison which easily suggests itself could be the principality of Achaia/Morea, a Frankish territory on the Peloponnese, which was conquered by Guillaume de Champlitte and Geoffrey Villehardouin after the fourth crusade and subsequently ruled by the princes of Achaia from 1205 onwards (Talbot, Achaia 11). The Morea was therefore a Latin-ruled Greek land, just like Cyprus. However, the heyday of the principality was long over by the fifteenth century. The fourteenth century saw many conflicts about the claims to the throne, and the ruling dynasty indeed died out by the end of the fourteenth century, even if a fragment of the principality nominally existed until 1430 (Lock, Franks in the Aegean 134; Furon, Entre mythes et histoire 148-149). Therefore, a comparison between the kingdom of Cyprus as a fully functioning state in the fifteenth century with the fragments of the principality does not seem expedient, though a general comparison between structures in Cyprus and the Morea in earlier centuries would be a promising undertaking.
281 A text by Jacques d'Ableiges, the Grant coutumier (ca. 1388), for example, makes this point very clear, see D'Ableiges, Grand Coutumier (Dareste) 210; Contamine, Noblesse 3-7.
282 See Contamine, European Nobility 90-91.

that is usually connected to the growing power of the state in this period[283]. According to Martin Aurell, »the growing state turned the nobility into an estate[284]«, and controlled noble groups more and more by turning nobility into a privileged juridical status which only the king or prince could bestow[285].

In contrast, there are no fifteenth-century Cypriot texts that provide explicit statements about the concept of nobility on the island. No letters of ennoblement or even more general descriptions of the upper classes exist, and neither does central state power seem to have grown significantly. However, chronicles, as well as other documents, offer some hints about terms and categories that can help us discern the Cypriot mental map of society.

The events surrounding Peter I's murder (January 1369) have provided us with documents that scholars have often approached to discern the reasons of the regicide[286]. However, these sources also reveal social categories. On the day of Peter's death, the *coumunauté des homes liges*[287], the community of the liegemen, came together to deliberate on various matters. Amongst other things, they nominated a committee from among their ranks and tasked it with revising their laws. The committee was supposed to find the best version of John of Ibelin's book, an important law book which was to be used as future reference during lawsuits. It was to be kept in the cathedral of Nicosia[288]. This was done to protect the liegemen from further legal abuse such as they had suffered from King Peter I. In the preface to the new law code, the community of liegemen explicitly identified themselves as a social group in contrast to the rest of the population: »and this is done for the common profit of the *seigneur* and the liegemen and all the people[289]«. This statement from the centre of power makes clear that the liegemen considered themselves separate from the rest of the population on the grounds of their status – they constituted their own *coumunauté*, their own community.

The chronicle of Machairas, written about fifty to sixty years later, allows for the construction of a far more elaborate mental map, in which ethnic-religious and social categories overlap to a certain extent. For Machairas, *Latins* were generally members of the ruling class, even if he sometimes mentions *Latin* burgesses. His above-mentioned description

of the settlement of the early Lusignan state sets the foundation for this idea: the settlers invited by Guy of Lusignan constitute the Lusignan upper classes[290]. Right from the beginning, they are set apart from the *Rhomaioi*, the Orthodox Greek speaking population mentioned above. In the second half of the foundation myth, the new settlers beg their king to grant them legal privileges, so they would »not […] be judged like the men of the land[291]«. This legal separation is based on the status of knighthood as well as on the religious difference. Angel Nicolaou-Konnari has recently pointed out that Machairas describes members of the ruling class as *latinos kaballarēs*, or knight of the Latin faith, and the ruling class as a group of *kaballarēdes* (›knights‹)[292]. Social ascension into the group of knights and religious conversion from one rite to another go hand in hand: for example, Machairas characterizes Thomas Barech, an important statesman at the end of the fourteenth century, as: »Sir Thomas Barech, a Greek burgess who became a Latin knight[293]«.

The knights themselves are depicted as a strong and exclusive community which acts together and governs the kingdom[294]. Their function as the king's liegemen plays a great role in this conception. In a well-known episode, Peter I asks his vassals for advice, because there are rumours that his wife, Queen Eleanor, has had an affair with one of the nobles. However, the nobles decide to try to convince the king that the affair had not taken place. If it had, the nobles could have been treated as traitors who had failed to fulfil their oath to protect the queen's honour. In Machairas' account, the knights collectively state: »And our king is one body with ourselves; he is an eagle and we are his wings […] so the king can do nothing by himself without us, nor can we do anything without him[295]«. The bond between king and knights is clearly emphasized here as an important element of the groups' identity[296].

Although most instances of Machairas' chronicle designate members of the ruling class as knights (and never as nobles), he seldom also mentions *Latins* who were not knights. In his enumeration of the men who fell at the battle of Chirokitia, he groups together squires and *hommes d'armes* with the knights and the members of the royal family. All these are separated from »the common folk, by which I mean the men of the people[297]«.

283 Crouch, Birth of Nobility 3; Contamine, Noblesse 65-72; Caron, Noblesse 44.
284 Aurell, Western Nobility 264.
285 The period in which this change occurred is disputed. While Marc Bloch had argued that the change took place in the thirteenth century with the first laws restricting the access to knighthood to the sons of knights, further research has estimated the beginnings of this process much later, in the fourteenth or even fifteenth centuries. Bloch, Féodalité II 58-69; Contamine, Noblesse 329 n. 1; Morsel, Crise 17-42.
286 See Edbury, Murder; Richard, Révolution.
287 Ibelin, Livre des Assises (Edbury) 733.
288 Ibelin, Livre des Assises (Edbury) 734; cf. Grivaud, Literature 256-257.
289 Ibelin, Livre des Assises (Edbury) 737: *et ce est fait pour le coumun proufit dou seignour et des homes liges et de tout le peut*. Cf. also 733, where the same distinction is made.
290 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 25.
291 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 27: νὰ μὲν κρινίσκουνται κατὰ τοὺς τοπικούς.

292 Nikolaou-Konnarē, Onomatologia 337; Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) §§ 129. 255. 257. 259. 261. 269. 270. 277.
293 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 599: τὸν σὶρ Τουμᾶς Παρέκ, ῥωμαῖος πουρζέζης καὶ ἐγίνην λατῖνος καβαλλάρης. The translation is my own. Dawkins translated: »Sir Thomas Barech, a Greek citizen who became a Latin and a knight«. Judging from his name, Barech must have been of Oriental descent, but he is called a *Greek/Rhomaios* probably because he was a Melkite, and therefore Orthodox.
294 See for example the episodes around Peter I's murder, Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) §§ 261-281.
295 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 255: ὅποῦνε ἕναν κορμὶν δικόν μας, ὁ ποῖος εἶνε ἕναν ὄρνεον, καὶ ἐμεῖς τὰ πτερὰ του […] καὶ ὁ ρήγας μοναχός του δὲν φελᾶ χωρίς μας, οὐδ' ἐμεῖς φελοῦμεν χωρίς του.
296 For a more elaborate analysis of this episode, see ch. 5, p. 128 on concepts of honour.
297 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 685: τὸ κοινὸν τοῦ λαοῦ, τουτέστιν ποπλάνους. For the term squire, see pp. 42. 45.

Nevertheless, we can also observe a social stratification within the *Latin* noble group. While the knights, squires and *hommes d'armes* constitute the base of the social group, a powerful group of barons (Gr. *parounides*) make up its upper echelons. The king asks these barons, who are also called *afentes* (›lords‹) and usually take part in the royal council as *archontes tēs boulēs*[298] ('lords of the council'), for advice, and they are therefore very close to the centre of power[299]. They constitute the faithful group nearest to the king, especially in times of war[300].

Machairas describes the »common folk« that was separated from the knights as merchants, shoemakers, and cooks, but also freedmen and strangers[301]. They usually include above all the *Rhomaioi*. Other discernible groups are the *Armenians* and the *Syrianoi*, who both possess burgess status and are mostly mentioned as merchants or soldiers[302]. While Machairas' term *Armenides* identified, as it does today, an ethnic group generally originating from Armenian Cilicia[303], the term *Syrianoi* is more difficult to place. This difficulty stems from a difference of use in early sources of the Holy Land on the one hand, and the Cypriot Machairas chronicle and later Crusader sources, on the other. In the thirteenth century Holy Land, *Syri, Suriens,* or *Suriani* was generally a designation for Melkites, Arabic speaking Christians who belonged to the Byzantine Orthodox Church and celebrated their liturgy in Syriac. They were distinguished from other groups of Oriental Christians, for example *Nestoriani* (›Nestorians‹) or *Maroni* (›Maronites‹)[304]. The Melkites of the Holy Land had a better juridical status than other Oriental Christians[305]. The assizes of the burgess court, a law book written in the middle of the thirteenth century for Jerusalem, specifies for example that a Melkite (*Syrian*) had to pay only half of the dues for assault[306].

Machairas as well as later Crusader sources, in contrast, use the term to describe not only the Melkites, but all Oriental Christians[307]. Machairas, for example, includes a certain Francis Lacha, a Nestorian, among the *Syrianoi* in Famagusta[308]. In another case, he enumerates a range of *Syrianoi* families, including the Urri family, some of whom from the 1420s on had converted to the Latin rite[309]. Other episodes confirm this picture[310]. Machairas therefore regarded all Oriental Christians as members of one *Syrian* group, regardless of their religious iaffiliation.

For Machairas, the differentiation between the knights and the burgesses is not necessarily connected to wealth or even political influence. *Rhomaioi* and *Syrianoi* burgesses could be very wealthy and even have influential administrative offices, such as the *bailli de la secrète*[311]. They play an important role in Machairas' society and can even be called *archontes* (›lords‹) if they are wealthy[312]. Machairas even explicitly contrasts the riches of a *Syrianos* merchant with the destitution of the knights: when King Peter I and his knightly entourage visited the merchant Sir Francis Lacha in Famagusta, their host had a huge tray of pearls and precious stones brought before them. Every guest was allowed to take whatever they wanted to have, »and many of the knights were greedy and poor, and reached out their hands, and every one snatched what he pleased, and they took from him great store; and all that they took seemed to him as nothing[313]«. In this episode, the knights cannot compete with the merchant's incredible wealth, but they are nevertheless the king's closest followers.

298 Normal knights are also sometimes designated as *archontes*, see e. g. Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 147. This seems to be a more general term for members of the upper echelons of society, cf. below.
299 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) §§ 101. 108. 118. 119. 192. 268. 411.
300 See e. g. Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 119: Καὶ ὁ ρὲ Πιὲρ μὲ τοὺς καβαλλά-ριδὲς του καὶ μὲ ὅλην του τὴν παρουνίαν ἀπάνω εἰς το καπετανίκιν ('And King Peter with his knights and with all his barons embarked in the flagship'). The stratification is also apparent in other sources. In a peace treaty between Cyprus and Genoa from the year 1411, the Genoese notary described how the king stood in for all socials, writing: *Dominus Ianus Dei gratia Hierusalem, et Cypri, et Armeniae Rex, pro se et successoribus suis in dictis Regnis, Baronibus, Nobilibus, complicibus et adhaerentibus suis, et pro universa Gente, et populo dictorum Regnorum suorum* (Sperone [ed.], Real Grandezza 142). The barons form their own sub-group, representing the high nobility.
301 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 685.
302 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) §§ 111. 257. 377. 411. 433. 437. 654. 681. 685. 696.
303 See Grivaud, Minorités 44-45.
304 Pahlitzsch/Weltecke, Konflikte 121 and Pahlitzsch, Suriani in Lusignan Cyprus (forthcoming).
305 Cf. Pahlitzsch, Graeci und Suriani 14-15; Suttner, Melkiten 499-500; Hamilton, Latin Church 159-160.
306 Assizes (Coureas) codex I no. 279, codex II no. 277.
307 For the later Crusader sources, see Richard, Le peuplement Latin et Syrien 166. For Machairas, see below. Grivaud, Minorités 51 generally mentions that the designation *Syrian* is a difficult term, as the Franks did not know the Oriental Christians well and therefore used the term for all confessions. This confusion is also discernible in his own article, which seems to use the term sometimes for Melkites and sometimes for all Oriental Christians. Cf. also Nikolaou-Konnarē, Holos ho topos 153.
308 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 92.
309 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 375.
310 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) §§ 111. 411. 437. 654. 681. 685. In another episode, Machairas designates a man with a distinct Arab name, Thomas Barech, as *Rhomaios*, as Orthodox. Perhaps he was referring to his confession as Melkite in this way. See Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 599 and cf. also below. In Arabic, the Melkites also used the term *rūmī*, cf. Pahlitzsch, Graeci und Suriani 14. – Machairas also tells us that the Syrians in Cyprus possessed more extensive privileges than the *Rhomaioi*, just as the Melkites had been privileged in the Holy Land. The Syrians in Cyprus were only expected to pay half of the taxes which the locals had to pay (Machairas, Exēgēsis [Dawkins] § 26). It is unclear if this meant that all Oriental Christians had an elevated status in Cyprus. Although Machairas usually numbers all Oriental Christians among the Syrians, he might have used an older source for this passage which still distinguished between the Oriental confessions. This distinction is maintained for example in the fifteenth-century Greek copy of the assizes of the burgess court, see Assizes (Coureas) codex I nos 59. 60. 279, codex II nos 60-62. 277. However, this does not necessarily mean that Melkites and other Oriental Christians were still practically distinguished in Cyprus. Riley-Smith and Mayer have proven that the assizes did not necessarily reflect the current juridical situation even when they were first written in the thirteenth century, see Riley-Smith, Feudal Nobility 58-61; Mayer, Register 166, cf. Griechische Briefe (Beihammer) 109. Moreover, no other sources confirm an elevated status of the Syrians in Cyprus, cf. Nicolaou-Konnari, Encounter 208.
311 See Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 704.
312 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 91; cf. Nikolaou-Konnarē, Onomatologia 337 .
313 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 92: καὶ πολλοὶ ἀπὸ τοὺς καβαλλάριδες ἀχόρ-ταγοι καὶ πτωχοὶ ἐβάλαν τὰ χέρια τους καὶ πασαεῖς ἐπίασεν ἀππόθεν τοῦ φάνη καὶ ἐπῆραν του μίαν μεγάλην καντιτάν· καὶ ὅ, τι τοῦ πῆραν δὲν τοῦ ἐφάνην τίποτες.

The classification of knights versus burgesses is still found in the later chronicle attributed to Georgios Bustron. Again, similar to the chronicle of Machairas, the upper classes are not designated nobles, but are almost solely identified through their status as vassals and knights. Only in one instance does the chronicle use the term *zintilarchontes* for men representing the government in the face of the people, combining the French or Italian *gentil(e)* and the Greek *archōn* (›lord‹)[314].

Like Machairas, Bustron frequently describes the knights as the most prestigious social group. They act collectively and on behalf of the government. In numerous instances, *all the knights* come together to discuss a problem and are described as counterpart to *the people*. On the occasion of Queen Charlotte's coronation, for example, the author states: »all the knights and all the common people conducted the queen to (the cathedral of) Holy Wisdom[315]«. And when James the Bastard (later James II) had the viscount of Nicosia murdered, a rumour stating that he also wanted to kill *all the knights* spread through the island[316]. Many more examples could be cited for this social categorization[317]. On one occasion, the *Diēgēsis* even includes women into this group: in the description of Caterina Corner's exodus from Cyprus, the queen is accompanied by the *kaballaries kai oi kaballarēdes* ('knightly women and knights')[318]. Here, knighthood is clearly a marker of status, rather than a reference to the male military profession[319]. However, in contrast to Machairas, the religious connotation of this social difference is lost; Georgios Bustron never mentions it and generally does not seem interested in religion as an identifying marker[320].

Bustron emphasizes the importance of knighthood when he describes the integration of newcomers into the upper classes. He uses fixed phrases to describe this process: a newcomer favoured by the king was knighted and given a fief, and sometimes also an office. Concerning Thomas of Morea, Queen Helena Palaiologina's milk brother who had relocated to Cyprus with her, the author states: »the king had honoured him and had given him many revenues, making him, moreover, a knight and the chamberlain of the kingdom[321]«. Other descriptions of foreigners integrated by James II follow the same pattern[322].

Knight is the first identity label adopted by the *Diēgēsis* to describe members of the upper class, even before mentioning other personal traits. When James flees onto a ship in Famagusta after murdering Thomas of Morea, Bernardo Riosec, the admiral, is sent after him to convince him to return to Nicosia. The text reads: »they ordered a knight, Sir Bernard Rouset, who was the admiral of Cyprus, to go at once as a messenger to the skipper so as to have the postulant brought down from the galley[323]«. The fact that Riosec was the admiral of Cyprus is used only as secondary identification. Above all, he was a knight. It is the knights who are listed by Georgios Bustron when he enumerates Queen Charlotte's followers in the castle of Keryneia in 1460. He states, »and there were also many other burgesses and valets (i. e. squires[324]), whom I have not written down[325]«. The burgesses, and even the squires are not important enough to be mentioned by name.

Just as in Machairas' chronicle, the knights' personal relationship with the king is an important component of their group identity. This becomes apparent when John II summons his son James the Bastard before the Haute Court after the latter had murdered the viscount of Nicosia. In his answer to the summons, James, who had been given the archbishopric of Cyprus as fief, emphasizes his status as his fathers' liegeman. He is ready to die in his father's service, since he has sworn fealty to him[326]. When John II assembles the high court, he calls together all the knights and liegemen (Gr. *omilizíoi*) to assist him in judging his son[327]. Thus, even after the end of Lusignan rule, the author still perceived the body of liegemen as a special group, who retained their power to pass judgement over their peers. Moreover, he placed great importance on the oath of fealty itself. An episode from the civil war between James and his sister Charlotte points to this fact. When he captures some of Charlotte's followers, James concedes them the possibility of serving him as king instead. Some comply, but one Gualtier de Nores declines, explaining that he had only one oath to give, and has already given it to Charlotte. James stripped him of his fief, but later awarded him a small annuity, probably because he admired his steadfastness[328].

314 Bustron, Diēgēsis (Kechagioglou) 300; Boustronios, Narrative (Coureas) § 270.
315 Boustronios, Narrative (Coureas) § 28. For the Greek text, see Bustron, Diēgēsis (Kechagioglou) 56: έφεραν την ρήγαιναν ούλοι οι καβαλλάρηδες και όλος ο λαός εις την Αγίαν Σοφίαν.
316 Bustron, Diēgēsis (Kechagioglou) 18-20: και εσκότωσεν τον μισέρ Γιάκουμο Γούρρην, [...] και θέλει να σκοτώσει όλους τους καβαλλάρηδες. For the English translation, see Boustronios, Narrative (Coureas) § 10.
317 Bustron, Diēgēsis (Kechagioglou) 14. 20-22. 44-46. 54. 62.
318 Bustron, Diēgēsis (Kechagioglou) 316; my own translation. Boustronios, Narrative (Coureas) § 280 rightly translates »the ladies and the knights«. Cf. Nikolaou-Konnarē, Onomatologia 337.
319 The social significance of knightly titles has naturally been noted by scholars for other regions, see e. g. Damen, Knighthood in Brussels 261-262, who describes both the military and the social importance of a knightly title in fifteenth-century Brabant.
320 Cf. ch. 6.3, p. 156 for a more profound analysis of this aspect.

321 Boustronios, Narrative (Coureas) § 3. For the Greek original, see Diēgēsis (Kechagioglou) 6: ο ρήγας ετίμησέν τον και έδωκέν του και πολλές ρέντες και έποικέν τον και καβαλλαρήν και εποίκεν τον και τσαμπερλάνον του ρηγάτου.
322 See e. g. Bustron, Diēgēsis (Kechagioglou) 170. 228.
323 Boustronios, Narrative (Coureas) § 7. For the Greek text, see Bustron, Diēgēsis (Kechagioglou) 14: μοναύτα ορδινίασαν έναν καβαλλάρην, τον μισέρ Μπερνάρδο Ρούσε, ο ποίος ήτον αμιράλλης της Κύπρου, να πάγει μοναύτα μαντατοφόρος εις τον καραβοκύρην, να τον κατεβάσει τον αποστολέ από το κάτεργον.
324 For the explication of the Greek word *bachliotēs* and its various translations, see p. 42 n. 362.
325 Boustronios, Narrative (Coureas) § 50. For the Greek text, see Bustron, Diēgēsis (Kechagioglou) 86.
326 Bustron, Diēgēsis (Kechagioglou) 22-24; Boustronios, Narrative (Coureas), § 12.
327 Bustron, Diēgēsis (Kechagioglou) 20; Boustronios, Narrative (Coureas), § 11.
328 Bustron, Diēgēsis (Kechagioglou) 114; Boustronios, Narrative (Coureas) § 70.

Both chronicles characterise knights as the leading element of society[329]. Within this knightly upper class, the authors use state offices as a further method of creating hierarchies, and sometimes only refer to individuals by mentioning their office. This practice is common for the holders of prestigious offices, such as the viscount. While relating an incident in Peter I's reign, Machairas states: »And the sheriff (i.e. viscount) went out with a strong force[330]«. The same holds true for the *Diēgēsis*, e.g. when fief holders are requested to do homage liege to Queen Caterina Corner: »the viscount went to the house of Marietta Bragadin on the same day[331]«.

This picture of a knightly society is confirmed by other sources. However, in contrast to the chronicles, many archival sources use the term noble, and thereby confirm that this concept existed in fifteenth-century Cyprus. Benedict de Ovetariis, one of King John II's notaries, described how a comet appeared over Cyprus in 1456 and brought calamity to the »princes and knights« (*principum et militum*), and how in the two subsequent years many knights and nobles died (*in quibus duobus annis multi milites et nobiles sua morte perierunt*)[332]. This double designation suggests that knights were part of the nobility, but that there could be nobles who were not knights. These individuals appear rarely in the documentary sources, but more frequently in funereal epigraphic inscriptions. The majority of these are written in French and always use the term *noble* to describe a member of the nobility. Men's tombstones are usually comprised of the standardized text »here lies the noble knight/squire (of the king)« (*ici git le noble chevalier/escuier [du roi]*). In contrast, burgesses are sometimes explicitly designated as such, e.g.: »here lies Brother Johan Zaist who was burgess of Famagusta[333]«. Interestingly, on the few tombstones of female nobles, the women are often not designated as noble themselves, but as madam, spouse/daughter of the noble knight (*madame/dame, espouse/fille dou noble chevalier*)[334]. Only »the noble dame Marguerite Carel(?) [sic!], spouse of the king's noble squire sir Pierre Fardei[335]« is called noble. Thus, noblewomen can mostly be identified via their husbands and fathers. Tombstone inscriptions confirm that nobility and knighthood were closely related, but that simple squires were also regarded as noble.

Documents such as protocols taken in sessions of the Haute Court, state treaties and testaments describe individuals by using combinations of the terms noble, knight and eventually the individual's office. Latin state treaties from the end of the fourteenth century are especially revealing. They designate important witnesses and members of the Haute Court by their titles and as *dominus* of their estates. The men who appeared in these lofty documents were members of the high nobility, the most important men of the kingdom. They were not only knights, but also great lords. These men are therefore often designated as either *miles* (›knight‹), *magnificus dominus* (›magnificent *dominus*‹) or *nobilis vir* (›nobleman‹), or varying combinations of these, sometimes adding *spectabilis* (›glorious‹) or *egregius* (›honourable‹). The document instituting Pierre de Caffran as royal procurator in 1391 for example mentions the witnesses as *nobilibus et egregiis viris dominis Johanne de Nevillis domino de Azoto, Monteollivo de Vernino domino de Sageta*[336].

The contract between the Cypriot king and Venice from 2 October 1389 calls the members of the Haute Court *magnifici domini* (*ratificantes […] ut alta curia, magnifici domini: Petrus de Caffrano amiratus regni Cypri, et dominus Johannes Gorab dominus Cesariensis auditorque regni Cypri*[337]). In opposition to *spectabilis* and *egregius*, the adjective *illustris* was reserved for members of the royal family. In 1432, for example, King John II, *princeps serenissimus et illustrissimus dominus dominus Johannes, Dei gratia Jherusalem, Cipri et Armenie rex* made his uncle his procurator in Western Europe, the document calling the latter *illustrem dominum dominum Hugonem de Lucignano, divina miseratione episcopum Penestrinum*[338].

The consistent mention of offices, just as in the chronicles, gives ample proof of the importance of titles and offices for the leading groups of society.

Non-nobles are sometimes designated as *burgensis*. In a document concerning the estate of Vrechia, Antonio Audeth is called *dominus Antonius Audeth, burgensis Nicosiensis*, while Philippe de Grenier, who had held Vrechia as fief, is designated as *spectabilem militem dominum*[339]. This fragment also shows that *dominus* itself was not a special designation for nobles. The same accounts for the designation for young persons, *domicellus/domicella*, as can be seen from a certain Antonio de Bergamo's legacies. Some money from his inheritance is given to the burgess Simon Jason in order to marry off his daughter (*pro matrimonio domicele dare filie*[340]), because he cannot afford the wedding himself.

329   They therefore offer a similar perspective for example to Brabant, where knighthood was the main, if not the only indicator for nobility, see Damen, Knighthood in Brussels 257, who even decided to study only knights, thus avoiding any confusion among various criteria for nobility.
330   Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 111: Καὶ ἐπῆγεν ὁ βισκούντης μὲ λᾶς πολλοὺς.
331   Boustronios, Narrative (Coureas) § 109. For the Greek text, see Bustron, Diēgēsis (Kechagioglou) 160: Την αυτήν ημέραν επήγεν ο βισκούντης εις το σπίτιν της Μαριέττα Περγαντή.
332   Documents nouveaux (Mas Latrie) 391-392.
333   Imhaus, Lacrimae Cypriae no. 281: *Ci git frere Johan Zaist qui fu bourges de Famagouste*. One tombstone in the collection designates the defunct as *nobilis merchator*, but it belongs to a Florentine merchant, thus explaining the combination of the two terms. See Imhaus, Lacrimae Cypriae no. 7.
334   See Imhaus, Lacrimae Cypriae nos 260. 569.

335   Imhaus, Lacrimae Cypriae no. 6: *la noble dame marguerite carel(?)* [sic!] *espouze dou noble escuier dou roi monseigneur pierre fardei*.
336   Mas Latrie (ed.), Histoire II 420-421.
337   Mas Latrie (ed.), Histoire II 417.
338   Mas Latrie (ed.), Histoire III 2.
339   Both quotes Richard, Une famille 109.
340   ASVen, Cancelleria inferiore. Notai b. 56/3. This use of *domicella* is contrasted by the chronicle of Georgios Bustron, who uses the term to designate the Queen's female company: »his wife was one of the Queen's damsels« (Boustronios, Narrative (Coureas) § 15; Bustron, Diēgēsis (Kechagioglou) 30: η γυναίκα του ήτον μία από τες ταμιτζέλλες της ρήγαινας). In Savoy in contrast, *domicellus* was the designation for nobles who had not been knighted (yet), see Castelnuovo, Ufficiali 348.

In contrast to the Latin state treaties, the documents concerning proceedings of the Haute Court were recorded in French, and some of them have been preserved in Italian translations. Interestingly, these documents do not designate nobles as knights, as *chevalier* (Fr.) or *cavalier* (It.), which would be an equivalent to the Latin *miles*. Instead, nobles are consistently called *cher, bien amé et feaul sir/dame* ('dear, well-beloved and loyal sir/dame'), followed by their name and their office. In these documents, which admittedly all come from the same context of vassalage, the focus is on the nobles' status as liegemen, in contrast to burgesses who are sometimes *cher* and *bien amé*, but not *feaul*, loyal[341]. The members of the Haute Court testifying in the documents are referred to in the same manner, thus reducing the various forms in the Latin texts to one formula. Similar to the Latin *dominus*, *ser* or *miser* is not reserved for nobles, but used for everybody except serfs[342]. The same holds for (Fr.) *dame/madame* and (It.) *donna/madonna*[343].

Only one of these documents explicitly uses the French term *gentilhomme*, which it connects to the status of vassalage. In 1448, Zoi Catacouziny, Jacques de Fleury's second wife, was awarded the privilege of choosing herself a new husband, should Jacques die. Usually, noble widows had to select a husband from three candidates chosen by the king. Zoi was allowed to choose for herself, the one condition being that her future husband had to be one of the king's liegemen, without question a *gentilhomme* (*mais qui soit home lige et nostre subget et de nos hoirrs, et qu'il soit gentilhome sans nul debat ni contredit*[344]).

All in all, the various contexts of the sources afford a focus on different aspects of noble life and functions. While contemporary chronicles perceived knighthood as the most prominent aspect of the leading class, administrative documents depict nobles above all as the king's loyal vassals. In general, the frequent occurrence of the term *noble* or *nobilis* proves that a concept of »being noble« existed, and its almost continuous combination with the term *knight* suggests that in the eyes of the contemporaries being noble was connected to the status of knighthood until the end of Lusignan reign, even if technically it was not necessary to be a knight in order to be noble.

Cypriot nobility was recognized as such in other regions of Europe[345]. Papal registers, for example, describe Cypriot nobles as *miles, nobilis vir* or *nobilis generis*, while non-nobles are designated as *civis* (*Nicosiensis* etc.)[346]. Moreover, Cypriot nobles could be integrated into knightly orders of other kingdoms, and vice versa. In 1453, the Aragonese king Alfonso V awarded Hugo Podocataro the right to select ten Cypriot nobles of either sex as new members of the Catalan order of knights[347]. Conversely, foreign knights traveling through Cyprus were sometimes received into the Cypriot order of knighthood founded by Peter I[348]. In fifteenth-century Cyprus therefore, as in many other regions of Europe, nobility was perceived as an »international« phenomenon[349]. A Catalan noble would be recognised as such in Cyprus, as would French, or Byzantine nobility. This fact is also demonstrated by various stories of integration into Cypriot noble society. Machairas, for example, mentions the Byzantine aristocrat Joannes Laskares Kalopheros who befriended Peter I and married the Cypriot noble woman Marie de Milmars. After Peter's death, Joannes was imprisoned in 1370, but eventually left Cyprus when he was set free. He ended his life in the principality of Morea, again as part of the aristocracy there[350]. Queen Helena Palaiologina and her entourage, as well as Jacques de Fleury's Byzantine wife Zoi Catacouziny, are also excellent examples for this kind of integration. In the second half of the fifteenth century, even a couple of Mamluk officers received fiefs from James II as a reward for helping him to conquer the island. Their families still lived in Cyprus during the Venetian period[351].

Thus, in the eyes of its contemporaries, Cypriot society possessed an upper social class, the members of which were designated as nobles both by the Cypriots and by other Europeans. Being noble was frequently connected to the status of knighthood and vassalage, although there were also noble squires. For the chronicler Machairas in particular, nobility was connected to status and Latin religious-ethnic origins. Other groups or individuals, such as Greek or Syrian burgesses, may have been wealthy and even influential, but they were not seen as part of the nobility.

---

341 See e. g. Richard, Une famille 105; MCC, PDc 2669.2 fol. 43ʳ.
342 Cf. Nicolaou-Konnari, Encounter 287, who finds the same for the thirteenth century. This practice is also to be noted in documents drafted in other parts, for example in Venice. In 1398, a Parisian merchant and burgess is called *ser*: *circumspecti viri ser Dinus Rapondi burgensis Parisiensis* (Mas Latrie (ed.), Histoire II 442). However, Mario Damen has noticed that in fifteenth-century Brabant, *messire* was reserved for knights and bannerets alone (Damen, Knighthood in Brussels 263).
343 Nicolaou-Konnari, Encounter 287-288 states that the term *dame* was usually only used for nobles in the thirteenth century, and in Nikolaou-Konnarē, Onomatologia 344, she confirms the same use for the chronicle of Machairas. This term therefore seems to have experienced a broadening of meaning in other fifteenth-century sources.
344 Documents chypriotes (Richard) 151.
345 This had been the case also in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see Edbury, Franks 82-83 and Edbury, Feudal Nobility of Cyprus 33, where he

points out that the Cypriot feudal class kept pace with the West and did not take a course of its own.
346 Rudt de Collenberg, Études de prosopographie nos 1-228 passim.
347 Mas Latrie (ed.), Histoire III 810.
348 Boulton, Knights of the Crown 245.
349 Cf. Duggan, Introduction; Contamine, European Nobility 90-91, and 95, where Contamine shows how even social terms for élite groups, such as *noblesse* etc., were translated into different languages.
350 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) §§ 167. 190. 194. 200. 563; Jacoby, Jean Lascaris Calopheros 190-195.
351 See Documents chypriotes (Richard) 151 for Zoi; Ganchou, Rébellion passim for Helena; MCC, Dandolo Prov. Div. C. 992/21 fols 6ᵛ-7ʳ; Bustron, Historia (Mas Latrie) 418; Pahlitzsch, Mamluks and Cyprus 117-118 with further literature concerning the Mamluk officers.

1.3 Cypriot Élites in the Fifteenth Century: Modelling the Present Study

On the basis of the contemporary view as well as the existing research, it is now time to model the approach of the present study. I have shown in the introduction how other scholars have thought about the Cypriot élite[352]: while older works did not define the Cypriot nobility and vaguely spoke of social mobility in the Greek population, newer literature has focused on various aspects of the topic and come to different conclusions. Wilpertus Rudt de Collenberg used a very open and implicit definition of nobility, numbering among it every family that was more or less wealthy[353]. Benjamin Arbel, on the contrary, followed the view of the sources and postulated that only families with knights in their ranks belonged to the nobility[354]. Jean Richard, Gilles Grivaud and Angel Nicolaou-Konnari took a broader view on society as a whole: Richard postulated that there was a basic distinction between the free and the unfree. Among the free population, he distinguished between the nobility, which according to him was based on lineage and feudal tenure, the burgesses and a so-called *bourgeoisie d'office*, a group of burgesses working in the financial administration. Grivaud called this latter group a *noblesse d'office*, while Nicolaou-Konnari defined it as a new aristocracy[355].

The present study follows some of these ideas, while others are rejected on the basis of the source material. Fundamentally, it appears sound to ground the following analytical steps in the conception that indeed two broad social groups composed Cypriot society: the free and the unfree. As far as the further division of the upper classes is concerned, I will argue that the division into two aristocratic groups, a nucleus of old noble families and a group of ascending families, is basically correct. Using the differentiation between aristocracy (or élite) and nobility explained in the introduction – aristocracy being a high socio-economic group with access to resources and power and nobility being an aristocracy with legal privileges[356] – I will consider both the old nobles and the ascending families aristocratic but will designate only the old families (plus a few ascending families who attained knighthood and liege homage) as nobility, even if their legal privileges in the fifteenth century were disputable. I postulate a grey zone between nobles and aristocrats consisting of persons whose exact place in society could not easily be discerned because of their social mobility. Finally, as is visible from the title of this study, I also use the term *élite(s)* as synonym to the Cypriot aristocracy as a whole.

Let us begin with the old nobility. Its members came from well-known Levantine, Western French or even Italian families that had thrived in Cyprus for many generations and that possessed smaller or larger estates[357]. Many among them also performed important functions within the Lusignan state. Its contemporaries saw this group as the ruling class of the kingdom and considered knighthood as its most salient characteristic. However, was this the case? Was this group a nobility in the sense attributed to the term by Marc Bloch[358], i.e. did it still possess legal privileges which other social groups did not have? And were these connected to knighthood?

Although knighthood may have been the most visible characteristic of nobility, it was not a legal criterion for membership in this group. Noble squires (Old Fr. *noble escuier*) mentioned on Cypriot tombstones prove this very clearly: one did not have to be a knight in order to be noble[359]. Moreover, squires were not only young sons of knights who had not been knighted yet. Some squires in the sources were certainly not young anymore: in 1468, for example, Jean Chappes had a fief as an écuyer, and the document explicitly states the liege homage he and his heirs had to pay to the king[360]. Two squires in particular cannot have been adolescents, since they played important roles in politics: one écuyer du roi, Pierre de Montolive, became one of the 12 regents of the kingdom after Peter II's death, and another, Simonin du Puys, negotiated the marriage contract between Anne of Lusignan and Louis of Savoy[361]. It seems therefore that in Cyprus, nobles could decide if they wanted to be knighted or not[362]. This phenomenon is similar to developments that can be detected in the Kingdom of France, where knighthood played a less pronounced role as early as the fourteenth century, as many nobles preferred to remain squires in order to avoid the additional costs related to knighthood[363]. Thus, Arbel's hypothesis that knighthood was a decisive criterion for identifying a member of the Cypriot nobility is only correct in part[364]. While

---

352 See p. 11.
353 Rudt de Collenberg, Domē kai proeleusē 814; Rudt de Collenberg, Études de prosopographie 523-524. 550-554; Rudt de Collenberg, Dispenses matrimoniales 55.
354 Arbel, Nobility 177-180. 184. 187-188.
355 See Richard, Politikoi kai koinōnikoi thesmoi 355-356. 364; Richard, Culture franque 403. 414; Grivaud, Ordine 536; Nicolaou-Konnari, Encounter 224-235; Nicolaou-Konnari, Greeks 58-59.
356 Cf. p. 18f.
357 Cf. ch. 2.1, p. 51.
358 See p. 18.
359 Imhaus, Lacrimae Cypriae nos 6. 62. 114. 288. 361.
360 Livre des remembrances (Richard) no. 170.
361 For Pierre de Montolive see Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 392. 599. 602-603. 605. 607. 610-611 and Mas Latrie (ed.), Nouvelles preuves I 73 as well as Bustron, Historia (Mas Latrie) 306. 350-351. For Simonin du Puys, see Mas Latrie (ed.), Histoire II 525-526 and III 14.

362 Cf. p. 37. The Greek equivalent of *écuyer/squire* in the Cypriot chronicles is *bachliotēs*, a term which is derived from the French *valet*. *Bachliotēs* is a rather problematic term, since it can signify a (noble) squire, but also just any servant (cf. for example Bustron, Diēgēsis [Kechagioglou] 28, where an unfree servant is called a *bachliotēs* and therefore cannot have been noble, and Machairas, Exēgēsis [Dawkins] § 392, where the noble squire Pierre de Montolive appears). This is probably due to the meaning of the French term, which originally designated a knight's servant, but later also servants at the court and from the fourteenth century onwards also influential persons at the French court (see Lalou, Valet). The Greek term can therefore not automatically be used in order to ascertain an individual's status. Cf. Nikolaou-Konnarē, Onomatologia 337, who only mentions the meaning of noble squire.
363 Contamine, Noblesse 82-84; Contamine, Écuyer 1554-1555.
364 Arbel, Nobility 178. Cf. p. 12.

knighthood was central to noble culture, and a knight would certainly always be noble, being a knight was not an exclusive criterion for membership in the Cypriot nobility.

At the same time, it is not entirely clear to what extent traditional legal privileges were still exclusive for nobles in the fifteenth century. Two centuries earlier, the nobility's legal privileges were first and foremost the right to be judged by the Haute Court, as opposed to other parts of the population, and tax privileges. In order to enjoy these privileges, one had to be a royal vassal and to profess the Latin faith[365]. In the fifteenth century, the question is more complicated. The system of vassalage itself existed until the end of Lusignan rule. Fiefs were awarded in return for liege homage and military service. Entry no. 169 of the *Livre des remembrances* for example specifies the details of a fief which James II awarded to Henry of Lusignan on 15 July 1468: »we, representing ourselves as well as our heirs, […] have given, granted and conceded as a permanent fief the casale of Quit (Kiti) […] to our well-beloved and loyal Henry of Lusignan […] in return for his service as knight and of liege homage[366]«.

Many other examples could be mentioned. In 1475, Caterina Corner awarded the *casale* of St Armolo with the *prasteio* (a small dependent of a *casale*[367]) Fachi to Blesim Moustazo, with the usual requirements of liege homage and military service[368]. Even Louis of Savoy, Charlotte's husband, in his function as titular king of Cyprus distributed fiefs to his supporters[369].

The chronicles assume that legal privileges were still attached to this procedure. Machairas considered the liegeman's privilege to be judged by the Haute Court valid. He tells us, for example, about a certain Nicolo de Naou, a foreign notary, whom Peter I had made his (Gr.) *lizios*, his liegeman, and had subsequently promoted to *bailli de la secrète*, the head of the royal financial administration[370]. Nicolo was sentenced to death in 1370, because he tried to help Peter I's widow Eleanor to take revenge on her husbands' murderers. However, since he was the king's vassal, the Haute Court was summoned to judge him according to the assizes[371]. The later chronicle by Georgios Bustron confirms Machairas' picture. Various episodes, such as James the Bastard's judgement by the Haute Court after his murder of the viscount of Nicosia cited above[372], show the Haute Court fulfilling its function as court for the king's liegemen.

Other sources shed a more ambivalent light on the nobility's presumed legal rights. Royal estate transactions are particularly revealing. The Haute Court was not only responsible for the liegemen's affairs in penal law, but also for matters of civil law such as issuing fiefs and other transactions concerning estate properties[373]. However, in the 1430s, those burgesses who bought estates from the crown also conducted their business in the Haute Court. The crown sold estates to burgesses, such as the Audeth family, sometimes in repayment of debts[374]. These transactions were witnessed by the Haute Court, probably because they concerned estates which had hitherto been issued as fiefs. Just as fief documents, they start with the formula stating that the king, in the presence of his men (*in presentia di nostri homini*) has concluded a transaction[375]. Burgesses were involved with the Haute Court because they had acquired estates with a privileged status – this element, and not the purchaser's social status, seems to have been the crucial point for the choice of legal forum.

Moreover, burgesses who bought estates enjoyed the same tax privileges and conditions as liegemen in relation to their estates. The transaction conditions in the texts are almost identical. This can be seen from a comparison of documents dating between 1435 and 1452: in 1435, King John II gave the *prasteio* Tragovouni as fief to Piero Podocataro and his heirs. In 1443, the *casale* of Marathassa was sold to the brothers Audeth and to Thomaso Mansel. In 1444, Piero Podocataro obtained another estate. This time he bought the *casale* of Paralimni together with Thomas Urri and Isabella Salah. In 1452, the royal counsellor Odet Boussat bought the *prasteia* Pano and Cato Mauromaria[376]. All these documents use almost identical formula and word order to confer possession of the estates and all the rights and customs associated with them in regard to worked and non-worked land, planes, woods, mountains, or gardens. The landowners are also exempt from any taxes other than Church tithes, with the exception of Piero Podocataro, who has to make a yearly payment to the royal *secrète* for his fief. Compare for example the sale to Odet Boussat:

> We […] have sold […] to you […] Odet Boussat, […] without any royal tithe or any other tax, with exception of the tithe of the church alone, […] the two prasteia Apano and Cato Mauromaria with all their rights, properties, usages and other things pertaining to them, in worked and unworked fields, in plains, woods, mountains, and gardens[377].

---

365 See ch. 1.1, p. 33 f.
366 Livre des remembrances (Richard) 88, § 169: *nous, pour nous et pour nos hers, […] avons donné, otroié et consenty en fié perdurable à nostre bien amé et feaull Harion de Luzenian […] le cazaul dou Quit […] pour le servize dou cors conme chevalier et de lige omage.* – A document from the end of John II's reign (1457) shows that sub-enfeoffing fiefs was also still in practice. Odet Boussat is given a fief of two *prasteia* with the permission to pass it on to one of his children, who in spite of holding the fief from their father will still have to render liege homage to the king, as was established custom: *et celuy de tes dis anffans à cuy ledit fief sera donné, comme dit est, et ses dis hoirs doivent faire lige homage à nos et à nos hoirs* (Documents chypriotes [Richard] 156).
367 For a more detailed explanation of *casale* and *prasteio*, see p. 35 n. 18.
368 MCC, Dandolo Prov. Div. C. 992/21 fol. 46ʳ.
369 Brayer et al., Vaticanus Latinus 4789, 73.
370 For a more detailed explication of this office, see pp. 104. 171.
371 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) §§ 311-315.
372 See p. 39.
373 See e. g. Documents chypriotes (Richard) 139-157.
374 See Richard, Une famille doc. I; MCC, PDc 2669.2 fol. 43ʳ.
375 Richard, Une famille 101.
376 MCC, PDc 2669.2 fols 28ᵛ-29ᵛ. 29ᵛ-31ʳ; Richard, Une famille doc. I; Documents chypriotes (Richard) 153-154.
377 Documents chypriotes (Richard) 153: *nous […] avionns vendu […] à toy […] Odet Boussat, […] sans nul disme real ne autre avarie, reservé le disme de l'iglize tant seullement, […] les deux presteries de Apano et Cato Mauromaria o tous leurs drois, raisonns, husages et apartennances, en terres laborées et non laborées, en plains, en bois, en montaignes, en jardins.*

and the issuing of a fief to Piero Podocataro:

> We have given and give, granted and conceded in permanent and free fief to you […] Piero Podocataro […] the prasteio of Tragovouni, […] with all its rights, properties, usages, and other things pertaining to it, in fields worked and unworked, in plains, woods, mountains, vineyards, […] in running and spring waters, in gardens […] and that you […] and your said heirs […] may not be held to pay a royal tithe, assignment, nor anything else […] other than the tithe of the church alone, and similarly to pay to our royal secrète for the police of said secrète six hundred and one besants in kind every year according to the statute of our secrète[378].

All holders are allowed to sell, donate and do as they wish with the estate in their possession. Both types of documents are witnessed by members of the Haute Court and sealed with the royal seal. The only difference lies in the type of transaction itself: when an estate was issued as a fief, the documents state without exception that it was »given, granted and conceded as permanent fief« (Fr.: *donné, otroié et consenti en fié perdurable*[379]; It.: *havemo donato et donemo, concesso, et consentito, in rendita perpetua*[380]). In some cases, as in Henry of Lusignan's privilege, the document specifies the services rendered in return: the liegeman must render military service and the liege homage[381]. On the other hand, when an estate is sold, the verb *vendere*, to sell, is used, as for example concerning the sale of Paralimni: »our most cherished and beloved consort Queen Helena Paleologo […] has sold […] the casale of Paralimni to our well-beloved named below« (*la nostra carissima et amantissima compagna la Regina Helena Paleologo […] vendete alli nostri ben amati, li sottonominati […] lo casal d paralimni*[382]). Moreover, the crown could buy back the estates in question for the same amount of money as had been paid for them.

In all cases, although the conditions of purchase differ, the rights and exemptions granted were the same, which confirms the hypothesis that the privileges were tied to the estate itself rather than to the purchaser's social status. It was not only nobles anymore who discussed matters of civil law in the Haute Court, and tax privileges could be gained by burgesses, too.

Unfortunately, there is no information on the exertion of penal law by the Haute Court in the fifteenth century other than the episodes from the chronicles mentioned previously. Therefore, no statements can be made on vassals' privileges in this respect. But small insights into the development of the right to take part in the sessions of this institution, i.e. to be a judging member of the Haute Court, can be gleaned. Originally, this was a vassals' right. But from 1445 onwards, a certain Philippe Salah was a regular member of the Haute Court in his function as the *bailli de la secrète*. Until at least 1442, he had been a normal secretary in the *secrète*, but we do not know if he had acquired the status of the king's liegeman before 1445. His relative Jean Salah had been made *bailli de la secrète* in 1432, and he was explicitly called a burgess by Leontios Machairas[383]. It is possible, therefore, that Philippe was part of the Haute Court without possessing the status of liegeman.

Moreover, it is not conclusively proven that in the fifteenth century, adherence to the Latin rite was still a prerequisite for vassalage. But as will be seen later, it is striking that all individuals of the Orthodox and Oriental rites who attained fiefs and the status of knighthood at some point converted to the Latin rite[384]. Thus, this element very probably was still a strong social marker.

In the fourteenth century, other social markers of noble society were connected to various practices, such as hunting, especially with falcons, and the reception of chivalric literature such as the tales of the Arthurian cycle[385]. Though we have no sources on these practices from the fifteenth century, we may assume that these markers could still be used for social differentiation. Again, Cyprus strongly tied into Western European noble culture in this respect, though we know less details about these practices than for example in France, where nobles besides bearing heraldry and hunting i.a. had special status at universities and the permission to carry weapons even inside towns and cities[386].

To conclude, in several aspects the nobility's legal privileges were no longer exclusive in fifteenth-century Cyprus. However, noble families still consisted of knights and squires who were royal vassals and obtained fiefs, which were inherited by their heirs. They enjoyed the same privileges as in the preceding centuries, even if some of these privileges were partly also enjoyed by others. They officially all adhered to the Latin rite. Many families could trace their ancestors for generations, and the sources mentioned above prove that they saw themselves and were seen as nobles[387]. Therefore, they will feature as nobility throughout this study.

---

378 MCC, PDc 2669.2 fols 29ᵛ-30ᵛ: *havemo donato et donemo, concesso, et consentito, in rendita perpetua et francha a ti […] piero podochataro […] il prastio di tragovuni, […] con tutti sui dretti, rason, usanze, et pertinentie, in terreni lavorati, et non lavorati, in piani, in boschi, in montagne, in vigne, […] in acque corrente et sorgente, in giardini […] et che ti […] et toi ditti heredi […] non siate tenuti pagar decimo regal, assegnamento, ne alcuna altra cosa […] altro che il decimo della giesia tanto solamente, et similmente pagar alla nostra secretta real per pollice della ditta secreta (sic) ogni anno, in robe secondo il stato della nostra secretta bisanti seicentouno.*

379 Livre des remembrances (Richard) no. 169. See also other fief documents e.g. in Documents chypriotes (Richard) 143. 146. 149. 156.

380 MCC, PDc 2669.2 fol. 29ᵛ. See also fol. 31ʳ.

381 Livre des remembrances (Richard) no. 169. See also Otten, Féodalité 90-91.

382 MCC, PDc 2669.2 fol. 28ᵛ. For other examples see e.g. Richard, Une famille 101.

383 For Philippe, see Documents chypriotes (Richard) 141-153; Documents nouveaux (Mas Latrie) 380. For Jean, see Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 704.

384 See ch. 6.3, p. 150.

385 Edbury, Franks 84-85.

386 See Contamine, Noblesse 21-45; Caron, Noblesse 45. Cf. Mourier, Nobilitas.

387 For the adherence to the Latin rite, see ch. 6.2; for the nobles' ancestors, see ch. 2.1; for the view of the sources, see ch. 1.2.

Just as in other European countries[388], there were further social differences within this nobility, although these are not easy to discern. Machairas differentiated between barons and other nobles, though the practical meaning of this differentiation remains unclear. In the kingdom of Jerusalem, there had been four important baronies, the holders of which at least theoretically possessed certain legal privileges that differentiated them from the rest of the nobility. According to Peter Edbury, this was not the case in Cyprus. Though the Cypriot kings bestowed certain titles belonging to counties of the kingdom of Jerusalem such as the count of Edessa, the count of Jaffa or the prince of Galilee[389], on their greatest followers from the middle of the fourteenth century onwards, these men did not have any legal privileges, nor is there any sign that they possessed the fiefs that belonged to their titles[390]. Nevertheless, these titles and the subsequent designation as baron were a sign of the highest royal favour: apart from members of the royal family, they were only awarded to the most important statesmen who served the Lusignan state in high positions over many years[391].

However, these titles are not the only way to identify members of the high nobility. Social prestige can also be deduced from office. Holders of high state offices such as the seneschal, the chamberlain, or the constable of Cyprus had great influence and were therefore first and foremost part of the power élite[392]. However, their political influence brought with it a high degree of social prestige, which can be used to discern the families and individuals who were members of the highest circles.

Below this level, it is more difficult to assess social differentiation. However, social prestige was surely connected to the value of the fief held from the crown. This is illustrated by an episode in Machairas, where a noble complains that in spite of being one of the bravest and strongest knights of his community, the king only awarded him a small monthly wage (Gr. *mēnion*) instead of an estate[393]. We might assume that a monetary fief was usually less prestigious than a landed estate, but in fact *mēnia* could be worth more than a small estate (see below).

However, there were great differences between fiefs in general. John II's most influential advisor Jacques de Fleury, for example, possessed a series of villages, which together were worth about 4,000 Venetian ducats[394]. His son in law also called several villages his own, but these were worth less than a quarter of that sum (900 ducats)[395]. A certain Louis de Verny, on the other hand, seems to have held just one *casale* worth about 1,050 besants, the Cypriot currency. A ducat was worth between six and seven besants[396]. De Verny's fief was therefore worth around 170 ducats, less than a twentieth of Jacques de Fleury's income. However, it was still a fortune. In comparison, a slave who wanted to free himself from labour service had to pay 24 besants annually in recompensation in the 1440s. A whole year of labour therefore was worth a fraction of a small fief[397]. Squires held fiefs similar in income. The squire Jean Chappes for example held a monetary fief which was worth 1,500 besants, 100 *modii*[398] of wheat, 200 *modii* of barley and 100 metres of wine[399]. Thus, in terms of wealth, there were immense differences between the members of the nobility, though all nobles were wealthy compared to lesser members of society[400].

Beyond the office hierarchy and the size of fiefs, the question arises as to whether the difference between knights and squires played a role for social differentiation. In the kingdom of France for example, this status difference was an important means of social stratification based on financial power. Between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, the number of knights in France dropped significantly, because squires could not afford the costs of knighthood[401]. Philippe Contamine has estimated that écuyers and modest *nobles hommes* were by far the largest group within the French nobility at roughly 84 % in the middle of the fourteenth century, while the knights amounted only to about 15 % and the high nobility (*la grande noblesse*) to 1 % of the nobility[402].

It is unclear if Cyprus experienced a similar development. Usually, squires seem to have been inferior to knights on the island, but the sources do not allow a real assessment of their social status. They certainly payed less military service than knights and possessed smaller fiefs. However, a few squires were influential in Cypriot politics, as seen above. Pierre de Montolive was even part of the regency council after Peter II's death[403]. Nonetheless, these were probably exceptions, as there are no other squires in notable positions.

---

388 Cf. e.g. Contamine, European Nobility 97-99.
389 Jacques de Fleury e.g. was count of Jaffa in the 1440s and 1450s, while Jacques de Caffran was prince of Galilee, see Documents chypriotes (Richard) 142. 148-157 for Fleury; MCC, PDc 2669.2 fol. 40ᵛ for Caffran.
390 Edbury, Feudal Nobility of Cyprus 17-32.
391 Cf. Richard, Politikoi kai koinōnikoi thesmoi 356; Edbury, Feudal Nobility of Cyprus 22.
392 Cf. chs. 4.1 and 4.2.
393 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 79.
394 In the following, ducats are usually Venetian ducats, unless otherwise specified.
395 Documents chypriotes (Richard) 124-125.
396 In 1423, one ducat was worth about 6 besants, in 1468 about seven, see Documents chypriotes (Richard) 18.
397 Hospitaller Documents (Luttrell et al.) xxxvii-xxxviii.
398 A *modium* was a dry measure for grain and other cereals that was used in Cyprus and Rhodes, but also for example in Spain and Sicily. One *modium* of

wheat in Cyprus probably equalled around 32 litres, while a *modium* of barley equalled 34 litres, see Hospitaller Documents (Luttrell et al.) xli.
399 Livre des remembrances (Richard) nos 145. 170.
400 This phenomenon is of course known from other regions in Europe. E.g. in the *ammanie* of Brussels, the smallest fiefs were worth about 1/100 of the great lordships held by only a handful of nobles, see Damen, Knighthood in Brussels 272. Damen has been able to calculate the percentages of fiefholders with a certain income, e.g. 53 % of nobles had an income of less than 100 pounds. Such a detailed calculation is unfortunately impossible for Cyprus.
401 Cf. p. 42. A similar phenomenon seems to have occurred in England, see Carpenter, Locality and Polity 39-40.
402 Contamine, Noblesse 82-84. Cf. Batany, Les débats 137. For more information on the high nobility, see Caron, Noblesse 45-53.
403 For Pierre de Montolive see Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 392. 599. 602-603. 605. 607. 610-611 and Mas Latrie (ed.), Nouvelles preuves I 73 as well as Bustron, Historia (Mas Latrie) 306. 350-351. Cf. above, p. 42.

The numbers of squires in Cyprus are not clear. Perhaps, however, the decline of knighthood was not as pronounced as in Western Europe, since many more tombstones for knights than for squires have been preserved from Cyprus[404]. This could of course be a coincidence of transmission. But squires are also found rarely in other sources. Machairas mentions a few squires who fell in the battle of Chirokitia[405], and there are the occasional fief documents for squires as mentioned above. But all in all, there are many more knights in the sources. If knights actually played a more pronounced social role, then this could at least partly account for the invisibility of squires. But the latters' relative absence from the sources still suggests that their number at least did not greatly exceed that of the knights, as was the case in France.

Hommes d'armes pose an even more complex question. Machairas mentions them together with knights and squires as opposed to simple men during the battle of Chirokitia, but they are never mentioned in connection to other nobles anywhere else. In 1468, James II changed the income of two *hommes d'armes* from a salary to a fief[406]. Its sum lay between that of a squire and the salary of secretaries. However, whether this technical inclusion into the group of royal vassals actually made them part of the nobility in the eyes of the contemporaries is doubtful, and it is unclear whether this was a new phenomenon under James II.

In conclusion, we can deduce social stratification within in the nobility from offices and titles, from the size and nature of the fief, and finally more vaguely from the status of knighthood. Notwithstanding these social differences, the nobility as a whole was distinct from the ascending indigenous families. In the following pages, I will discuss the social standing of this second group and its relationship with the nobility.

The problem of defining the social status of ascending families derives from their very nature as a socially mobile group, but also from the differing approaches adopted by scholars. Richard called them a burgess group since most of them probably possessed the legal status of burgess. By designating them aristocracy, Nicolaou-Konnari has described their function in society[407]. This latter approach is also the one taken in this study. For if we employ the sociological definitions outlined in the introduction[408] and maintain that an aristocracy is defined through its access to senior positions in state (and church) as well as to economic resources, this includes all those families

and individuals who worked as clerks in Lusignan administrative institutions, as well as those wealthy merchants who influenced events by their economic power.

The sources show that almost all men in these positions in the fifteenth century came from either Greek or Oriental Christian families. While the Greeks were a rather homogenous group, the Oriental Christians belonged to various Christian confessions[409]. Nevertheless, Machairas and other contemporary sources encompassed all Oriental Christians in the terms *Syrianoi* (Greek) or *Sirici* (Latin)[410]. Moreover, the social situations of all these Oriental Christians were very similar, as we will see in chapter two, and some of them intermarried[411]. I shall therefore refer to all individuals originating from the various Oriental Christian communities as *Syrians*, following the designation of the sources and, if other information is lacking, judging by Arabic family names[412]. Though the English term *Syrian* might be a bit confusing at first, since here it does not denote inhabitants of what we today call Syria, its use seems important to me to emphasize the existence of this concept in the contemporary sources. The term is an external designation, and it does not mean that all these *Syrians* would necessarily have considered themselves as part of the same group. However, others clearly perceived the members of the various Arabic-speaking denominations as belonging to one *Syrian* group. The analysis will show, moreover, that many Syrians and even Greeks and Syrians were highly interrelated, suggesting that it is actually reasonable to speak of them as one aristocratic group[413].

The new aristocracy had a different social profile from the old nobility. In contrast to the old noble families, Syrians and Greeks mostly earned their keep through the offices they held. They worked as secretaries to nobles and in the financial administration or as *baillis* or *chevetains* (two often synonym terms meaning head officials) who governed the districts of the Lusignan state. *Baillis* also headed institutions such as the (Gr.) *comerchion*, which controlled commerce and collected taxes on commercial transactions, or they worked as doctors[414]. Moreover, we find Greeks and Syrians as canons of the Latin Church.

The salaries of all these offices seem to have been rather homogeneous. This is evident among others from the *Livre des remembrances* from 1468/1469. Thomas Petropoulos, for example, newly installed as secretary of the *secrète* and analogous to other secretaries, earned 600 besants and 90 *modii*

---

404 Sixteen tombstones from Imhaus' collection designate the defunct as chevalier, while only seven squires are registered. Of these, three are called the son of a knight, and therefore probably died young. See Imhaus, Lacrimae Cypriae nos 1. 63. 64. 129. 166. 177. 181. 260. 267. 283. 291. 366. 386 for the knights and nos 6. 62. 87. 114. 288. 361 for the squires. Cf. also Imhaus, Société 204.
405 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 685.
406 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 685; Livre des remembrances (Richard) no. 177.
407 Cf. p. 13 and above, p. 42.
408 Cf. p. 18 f.
409 Cf. ch. 6.3.

410 See e.g. a Venetian source that calls them *Sirici*, Mas Latrie (ed.), Nouvelles preuves II 140.
411 See chs. 2.2 and 3.3.
412 Other scholars also use this designation, see e.g. Jacoby, Venetians in Cyprus 67-69; Jacoby, Citoyens 168-169; Richard, Peuplement latin et syrien passim.
413 Cf. ch. 3.3.
414 For the terms *bailli* and *chevetain*, see Mas Latrie (ed.), Histoire III 810-811; Documents chypriotes (Richard) 65. For the *comerchion*, see Grivaud, Sur le comerc passim, but esp. 134-136. Nicolaou-Konnari, Encounter 209-211 also mentions Greeks who worked in Greek ecclesiastical and in burgess courts. I have not found many members of the new aristocracy working in these specific sectors in the fifteenth century, but this is surely only due to lack of sources.

of barley per year[415]. Dimitri Sgouropoulos, a physician in James II's service, received 500 besants, 40 *modii* of wheat, 40 meters of wine and 90 *modii* of barley. Cosma Gonem, *bailli* (and therefore head official) of the *comerchion* of Nicosia, in turn earned a bit more: he received 50 *modii* of wheat, 50 metres of wine, 90 *modii* barley and 400 besants, but additionally had a right to the victuals which all the *baillis* received, and the takings of the *rente du comerc*. Other officials, whose tasks are not specified, earned about 500 besants plus victuals, or 600 besants without victuals[416]. All officials earned between a third and a half of a squire's fief, which lay at ca. 1,500 besants plus victuals, as we have seen above[417]. Although these numbers all come from the years 1468/1469, there is no reason to assume that they differed greatly from those of the preceding years. In 1435, for example, the secretary Piero Podocataro earned 400 besants a year[418]. Although Piero's income was slightly less than that of later officials, it is quite close especially if we consider inflation.

The men who became members of the Latin clergy in the chapters of the Cypriot dioceses, too, possessed revenues from their prebends that were comparable to the officials' salaries, though there were differences between various canonries and offices. According to the papal registers up to 1417, a canon in Nicosia or Paphos earned around 100 ducats (the lowest, rather exceptional, pay being 40 florins, the highest 150 ducats, both for canonries in Paphos). Since a ducat was worth between six and seven besants, this salary is very similar to the earnings of officials in the state administration. However, the dioceses, which had between 6 (Limassol)[419] and 16 (Nicosia) canons, also possessed at least a treasurer, a cantor and an archdeacon, who earned some extra money additionally to their canonries. In Nicosia, the archdeacon earned 50 ducats extra, and in Famagusta the treasurer earned another 25 ducats. Usually, the archdeacon was the bishop's second in command, but in Nicosia, the highest cleric after the archbishop was the dean (*decanus*), who received 250 ducats[420]. Since it was possible to combine up to two different prebends, the members of the Latin chapter clergy must often have lived on sums between a secretary's salary and a squire's fief. Lay officials of the Church, such as notaries (the office was usually called a *scriptoria* or *scribania*), however, earned considerably less. Simeon de Baliano earned 20 florins a year as scribe of Famagusta in 1420[421].

In addition to their salaries as state officials or clerics, we must not forget that the families in the new aristocracy often had some sort of landed estates, which would have enhanced their income. In 1468, Pierre Bibi, secretary in the *secrète*, owned land which was part of the royal estate of Psimolophou as well as an estate with the name Pison[422]. In most cases, we unfortunately do not know how much these estates were worth. But we may assume that these men and their families lived comfortably and that combining their estates and salaries they were probably at least as wealthy as royal squires. However, we shall see in chapter two that differences in social status and economic position within these ascending families existed[423].

Parallel to this differentiation of wealth and status, another distinction is important. Within the aristocracy, many families were traditionally involved in the administration. However, members of merchant families could also be directly involved in the civil administration or influence state affairs more indirectly through financial and social ties with the royal family and other leading figures. Moreover, such families were sometimes interrelated with civil officers. The merchant family Audeth are a good example. Not one family member seems to have had a position in the civil administration, even though there was one bishop in their family[424]. They possessed immense wealth, probably acquired through trade, which might have even surpassed the important noble Jacques de Fleury's income[425]. Together, Antonio and Gioan Audeth had obtained two thirds of the *casale* Marathassa in 1442, which were worth around 9,300 ducats. Three years later, they rounded off their acquisitions with other estates, all in all worth another 5,300 ducats[426]. The king, as well as some members of the high nobility, were their debtors. In 1451, John II owed Gioan Audeth 100 ducats, for which Gioan had *una zara de arzento et uno bossolino d'arzento et un zaretta granda et una piccola* ('a silver jar and a silver ointment box and a big jar and a small one') in deposit[427]. Likewise, Gioan held some *canapi d'arzento con le groppi sie* ('silver cords/threads with their knots/or: with six knots[428]') in turn for 50 ducats which he had lent to Marie, the countess of Rouchas. Other members of the nobility, such as Francois de Montolive, also owed him or his brother money[429].

The Audeth's riches seem to have been paralleled for example by the case of Francis Lacha, a Syrian merchant who had lived almost a century earlier during the reign of Peter I and used to invite the king and his followers to banquets according to Machairas[430]. These merchants influenced affairs without directly visible political involvement. Some of them

415 Livre des remembrances (Richard) no. 1.
416 Livre des remembrances (Richard) nos 71. 92. 119. 12. 131.
417 Cf. p. 45.
418 MCC, PDc 2669.2 fol. 30ᵛ.
419 Cf. Nicolaou-Konnari/Schabel, Limassol under Latin Rule 278.
420 Kouroupakis, Hē Kypros kai to megalo schisma 150-151. 171.
421 Kouroupakis, Hē Kypros kai to megalo schisma 114.
422 Livre des remembrances (Richard) nos 31. 162.
423 Cf. ch. 2.2.
424 Rudt de Collenberg, Études de prosopographie nos 82. 158; Richard, Une famille doc. V.

425 Jacques de Fleury's estates seem to have been worth around 4,000 ducats, see Documents chypriotes (Richard) 124. However, it is unclear if we have complete information about his possessions.
426 Richard, Une famille docs I-II.
427 Richard, Une famille doc. V 115.
428 These must have been silver threads, possibly for weaving into clothing, held together with knots for safe-keeping. If we read *sue* instead of *sie*, this would translate to 'their knots'. However, *sie* could also mean *sei*, six.
429 All debtors are mentioned in Richard, Une famille doc. V 115.
430 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) § 92.

had the status of either White Genoese or White Venetians in addition to being Lusignan subjects. This meant that they profited from the sea republics' protection and enjoyed the same economic and fiscal privileges as Venetians or Genoese in the Eastern Mediterranean, though not in the republics themselves. Their status was profitable both for the merchants and for the republics, who increased their trade volume and influence through this means, though conflicts with the Lusignan crown over jurisdiction rights were frequent[431].

We do not know if the Greek and Syrian merchants considered themselves as belonging to the same group as the civil officers, since they possessed a much higher level of wealth. In any case, according to our definition, they were certainly aristocrats. We shall therefore keep in mind that there may have been people within the new aristocracy who did not feel that they necessarily belonged to the same group.

The designation of all ascending Greek and Syrian families, be they merchants or civil servants, as aristocracy is functional and does not refer to their legal status. Many members of this group were burgesses in the legal sense but had obtained offices or riches important enough to justify their inclusion in the aristocracy. This designation makes it possible to differentiate this group from others who enjoyed the status of burgesses but had neither wealth nor connections in the circles supplying the Lusignan state with officers. Employing the term aristocracy also seems more appropriate than Grivaud's *noblesse d'office*. This latter term is usually used in the context of societies such as France, where certain offices automatically ennobled their holders from at least the sixteenth century onwards[432]. This is not the case in Cyprus. Thus, I consider this group to be part of the island's aristocracy from a functional perspective.

The functional role of these Greeks and Syrians in Cyprus is similar to that of other ascending urban élites in Western Europe as well as the so-called *mesoi* (Gr., ›middles‹) in Byzantium. The latter group consisted of low-level officials, bishops and other clerics, schoolmasters, merchants, or traders. Its members were part of the élite, but not of the highest echelons of society, and they were not considered as part of the same group as the *eugeneis*, the high aristocrats[433].

Ascension from the aristocracy into the Cypriot nobility was possible. As we shall see, some members of Greek or Syrian families became part of the nobility. They attained high state office, became royal vassals and gained the status of knighthood. They achieved this rise mostly through working in the administration and through the wealth they acquired

in trade[434]. This is a similar process to the way social mobility worked in Byzantium. Ennoblement in France, however, worked through a broader array of channels. Men could rise through the military, since one of the crucial functions of the nobility was to supply the state with warriors. Moreover, Françoise Autrand has shown how some officers from the French royal household and the administration also achieved ennoblement[435], although this was not always the case[436]. Another route of social ascension in France from the late fifteenth century on was the collective ennoblement of certain urban élites. In 1470, King Louis XI ennobled all Normans who had possessed noble estates for at least 40 years without possessing noble status[437]. Such a process is not visible in Cyprus, perhaps because Cypriot society was too small for people to »usurp« a noble way of life without direct control from the crown.

Nevertheless, some cases of social mobility in Cyprus fell between the traditional social categories. I would therefore like to use the image of a »grey zone« between the old nobility and the new aristocracy in which socially mobile new aristocrats, whose social status was ambiguous, moved.

One example of such a career was the Syrian Philippe Salah, who started out as a simple secretary in the *secrète* and who later became *bailli de la secrète* and a regular member of the Haute Court[438]. We do not know if he became the king's vassal, or how he was seen by his contemporaries. This could of course just be a matter of lacking information. In other cases, however, not even the contemporaries knew exactly how to categorize an individual. The Syrian George[439] Billy, for example, was an important counsellor to King Janus. In 1402-03 he was involved in negotiations with the Genoese. George was Leontios Machairas' nephew, and the only high state official in his family. In a letter from King Janus to marshal Boucicault, the French governor of Genoa, the king describes George as a *nobilis vir* and royal counsellor[440]. However, another incident supplies a different perspective. This incident is the same episode from the year 1402 with which the introduction to this study started out: according to the chronicler Florio Bustron, George Billy was responsible for an attempt to recapture Famagusta from the Genoese together with Simon de Morphou, a member of an old noble family. Simon, however, was offended because he had to work together with a burgess, and thwarted the undertaking. Bustron concludes that King Janus appreciated Billy's competence despite his burgess status and made him *proveditore* of the kingdom[441]. One could conclude that Florio Bustron just did not know that Billy had risen to noble status. However, he channelled a

431 Jacoby, Citoyens 159-161; Jacoby, Venetians in Cyprus 69.
432 Cf. pp. 13. 36, as well as Grivaud, Ordine 536.
433 Gaul, All the Emperor's Men 245 n. 1. 247. 256.
434 Cf. ch. 2.2, from p. 67.
435 Autrand, Naissance esp. 177-190; 245-257.
436 Contamine, Noblesse 72-73.
437 For the ennoblement of 1470, see Rois, Ordonnances XVII (Pastoret) 337; Contamine, Noblesse 75-77.

438 See Documents chypriotes (Richard) 139-157.
439 A reference in a manuscript belonging to this man (*de moi Jorge Billy*) as well as Machairas' name for for him, *Tzortze/Tzortzou*, indicate that he actually used the French version of this first name. See Paschke, Klementinen-Epitomen 135-136 and Machairas, Exēgēsis (Konnarē/Pierēs) 425.
440 Machairas, Exēgēsis (Dawkins) §§ 630. 633; Mas Latrie (ed.), Histoire II 471-472. 473-475.
441 Bustron, Historia (Mas Latrie) 354.

tradition which considered Billy to be burgess and not noble. Generally, we may conclude that social mobility is a difficult phenomenon to analyse because of lacunae in the sources but also because the social status of individuals is ambiguous in the sources that are available[442].

The two Cypriot aristocratic groups described thus far were complemented by a certain influx of families and individuals from Western Europe, notably Genoa, Venice, Catalonia and France. As we shall see[443], these families or individuals came to Cyprus in different contexts and for different reasons. While many Venetians came for the sake of trade, individuals from France migrated mostly due to networks within the Latin Church. Catalan individuals came as corsairs and served the Lusignan kings with their ships. Their integration into Cypriot society followed different purposes and therefore its nature also differed. Our analysis will have to discern how these newcomers related to the Cypriot aristocracy and whether their integration allows us to consider them a real part of the Cypriot élite.

In conclusion, this study will examine three groups within the Cypriot élite – the nobility, the new Syrian and Greek aristocracy (with a grey zone between these two groups), and the groups of Western immigrants who integrated into this society. Although this approach, as all historical models, offers only a limited perspective on past reality, nevertheless it is a perspective that promises valuable results for research on Cypriot society in the fifteenth century.

1.4 Conclusion

Let us finally widen the perspective once again to locate the developments of the Cypriot aristocracies within their European context. Cyprus had many similarities with other European societies, but its exact characteristics constitute a unique case in the development of European societies in the Late Middle Ages.

Being based on a system of feudal tenure, Cypriot noble society partook of Western European social structures, and was accepted as such by its Western European neighbours. This is discernible from the mutual integration into the various orders of knighthood. Just as in Western Europe, nobles in Cyprus often possessed estates as fiefs, and their wealth and status were inherited by their heirs. Lifestyle markers, such as hunting and falconry, were enjoyed by nobles in Cyprus just as in France or in Spain. However, as has been noticed by scholars, Cypriot society was more centralized than societies

in Western Europe, judicial authority lying with the king at a time when the power of the state had not yet risen in Western Europe[444]. Just as the Holy Land, Cyprus was more urbanized than for example France. Its nobles lived in towns, and some of them even drew on monetary fiefs instead of estates[445]. As it was a small kingdom, direct contact to the king must have been a much more common and important phenomenon even for smaller nobles than in huge countries such as France. However, in Cyprus the great power of the state did not result in a stronger legalization of the noble estate. On the contrary, Cyprus seems to have lacked a discussion about the nature and functions of the group as it is found in the kingdom of France or in Italy. Perhaps Cypriot society was small enough to render such a discussion unnecessary. Although Cyprus experienced social mobility, there seem to have been no explicit attempts at ordering the upper echelons of society by creating an ideal system in which social climbers were consciously integrated, such as happened in the duchy of Savoy. This is all the more interesting as relations between Cyprus and Savoy were rather strong. Several Cypriots worked and lived at the court of Amadeus VIII and must have come into contact with the ideas that were present there[446].

Social stratification within the nobility existed in Cyprus just as in other countries. Barons and high officers had an elevated status, differentiating them from a normal knight. Fiefs could be of varying value and surely represented their holders' social status. But whether these differences were as pronounced as in Spain or in France, is difficult to say. The gap between knights and squires was certainly not as blatantly visible as in France.

However, processes of social mobility were prevalent in Cyprus just as in the kingdoms of France, Spain, Savoy or in Byzantium. Urban élites pushed into the nobility in all these regions, although the routes of ascension and integration may have differed from one society to the next. While rise into the nobility in the kingdom of France according to Contamine was primarily possible via the military, in Cyprus the royal administration was the best possibility, at least for indigenous families. In this point it was very similar to places such as Aragonese-held Sardinia and Sicily, which offer stories of social ascent that are amazingly similar to Cyprus[447]. Mass integration of whole urban élites into the nobility via the acquisition of seigneurial estates and successive official recognition did not occur in Cyprus. The insular society was probably much too small for such a social process to arise. However, just as in other regions, social mobility had to be processed by society and social climbers were partly integrated into the old system of feudal tenure, while in other

---

442 Moreover, it is unclear if noble status conceded to one man applied to his whole family accordingly, or if they remained burgesses as Coureas, Ethnicity and Identity 77-78 has postulated. Noble status must have been transferred to children. A new noble's siblings may have stayed burgesses, but they certainly profited from the rise in terms of prestige.
443 Cf. ch. 2.3.
444 Cf. Edbury, Franks 79; Grivaud, Les Lusignan 369-370.

445 Cf. Edbury, Franks 81.
446 For the attempts at creating an ideal social system in Savoy, see Castelnuovo, Ufficiali 345-348 and cf. p. 36. For the Cypriots living in Savoy, see Rudt de Collenberg, Cardinaux 100-101; Mas Latrie (ed.), Histoire III 18. 21.
447 Cf. Silvestri, Social Mobility in Sicily, esp. 293-296; Schena, Social Mobility in Sardinia, esp. 311-315.

cases their place in society was difficult to define. Despite the island's idiosyncrasies, the social characteristics and processes found there resembled Western European societies in such a measure that they were well compatible and considered part of the same European nobility.

However, this was also the case with Byzantium. Apart from the legal privileges and the developed system of feudal tenure which we do not find in Byzantium, the two states shared similar ideas about who was considered ›noble‹. Both in Cyprus and Byzantium, the combination of ancestry and wealth played an important role for the ruling élite. The importance of the relationship to the emperor or king was another shared feature. Finally, the fact that nobles did not have the right to exercise justice in their own fiefs in Cyprus further underlines the similarities.

One could argue that the reality of life for nobles in the two societies differed quite substantially. While Cyprus was a small island community with little room for independent developments, the turbulent events in the Byzantine empire and its successive fragmentation in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries brought parts of the Byzantine nobility a certain independence. Aristocrats in the Morea, for example, had enjoyed great freedom after 1204 and were not willing to yield their power to the commanders coming from Constantinople in the second half of the fourteenth century[448].

However, the processes of social mobility in Cyprus and Byzantium were to a certain extent similar. Both these societies had a strong aristocratic group that occupied mid-level state and church offices, and that in some cases rose to become part of the higher aristocracy (or in Cyprus, the nobility). However, while the Byzantine aristocracy reacted to the prolonged crisis in the second half of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth century by engaging in trade directly, noble families on Cyprus acted differently. In Cyprus, despite the financial difficulties evoked by the wars with the Genoese and the Mamluks, the nobility in general seems to have kept up the traditional way of living off their estates[449]. Even so, these differences should not hide the fact that there were similarities in social structures and thought which made these societies compatible.

The Cypriot upper classes in the fifteenth century operated within a distinctly European context of which they considered themselves an integral part. However, they also possessed numerous idiosyncrasies that were part of their very own regional identity. In the following chapters, we turn to the social and demographic development of these Cypriot élites during the fifteenth century.

---

448 See Necipoğlu, Byzantium chapters 9 and 10 on the Morea (235-284), but especially 248-255.
449 Edbury, Feudal Nobility of Cyprus 402-403, remarked that fiefs and therefore agricultural revenues were still the principal source of noble income in Cyprus at the end of the fourteenth century. As far as I can see, this did not change in the fifteenth century.