Conclusion

Cypriot high society experienced great social change during the fifteenth century. Different social, cultural and ethnic groups intermingled at the Cypriot court and created a society that was characterized by the rise of *homines novi* and of previously not represented social groups as well as by strict social boundaries which were not easily transgressed.

In this study, I have divided the components of Cypriot élite society into three groups: the nobility, the Syrian and Greek aristocracy, and Western immigrants. The nobility included many crusading families who had come from the Holy Land and settled in Cyprus in the thirteenth century, as well as families from Western Europe who had joined this group of knightly families later in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Within this group, a visible social disparity existed between simple squires and knights and powerful and wealthy barons. Traditionally, the nobility was the most powerful echelon of Cypriot society and the ruling élite of the Lusignan state.

However, starting from the end of the fourteenth and continuing in the fifteenth century new social elements rose to challenge this ruling group, in a process similar to what was taking place in other European regions. During this period, Syrians, i.e. Oriental Christian immigrants from the Levant, and members of Greek families from Cyprus rose through the state administration and thanks to the wealth they had acquired through trade, and began to play an important role in Cypriot high society. This new aristocracy possessed a social and professional profile similar to other urban élites that climbed the social ladder throughout fifteenth-century Europe. Like in France, the Iberian peninsula and especially Aragonese-held islands such as Sicily and Sardinia, these new men were secretaries, notaries and merchants. In my analysis, I have generally considered Syrians and Greeks as one social group because of the similar professional profiles their shared, and because they often intermarried. However, like the nobility, this group was highly stratified. It included lesser aristocratic families who served as secretaries or *baillis*, and families who were more successful in gaining important office, in addition to a small group of extremely rich and powerful families that appears in the sources only from the 1430s onwards.

Besides the old nobility and the new aristocracy, immigrants from the West also constituted the upper echelons of Cypriot society. I have analysed this group according to their place of origin. This points to the fact that, though I consider them to be the third component of fifteenth-century Cypriot élite society, they were not one cohesive social group but a collection of individuals coming from various European countries.

Men and women from all the above mentioned groups were connected to the Cypriot court. They pursued careers and interacted in various circles in which they constructed their identities by choosing from varying discourses. This process helped determine their social standing and their role in society. I have analysed the lives of these people from several perspectives. I have used prosopographical data to approach questions of social mobility and general demographic developments within the various aristocratic groups (ch. 2). The results of my analysis provided the basis for my study of the contacts between aristocratic families (ch. 3), of social mobility and careers, of the power balance within the ruling power élite, and the role of social newcomers within Cypriot high society (ch. 4). Finally, I have examined the ways in which aristocrats constructed their identities according to ethnic, social, and religious discourses, and how these identities relate to social change (chs. 5 and 6).

These distinct types of analysis provide complementing perspectives that allow me to push beyond the boundaries of former research. Research in the field of Cypriot studies had typically either not distinguished between the various élite groups and therefore come to incorrect conclusions about the nature and extent of social mobility (see Rudt de Collenberg's work), or narrowly focused on the the heyday of Lusignan rule in the fourteenth century, thus treating the fifteenth century only as an afterthought.

Specifically, the prosopographical analysis (ch. 2) has shown social developments with many interdependent facets. Above all, my study illustrates the development of lineages within the nobility and the new aristocracy and offers clues concerning the relationship between these groups. The composition of the nobility changed substantially between the 1370s and the 1460s. Close to 60 % (or, in the more uncertain calculation, above 70 %) of the noble lineages that existed before 1374 became extinct or disappeared by the end of Lusignan reign. This development suggests that the total number of nobles living in Cyprus may have decreased during our time period, though it is impossible to test this affirmation conclusively because we lack detailed information about the size of the families themselves. It is significant, however, that many of the disappearing families belonged to

the higher echelons of the nobility. Some of them, such as the Tiberiade family, had played crucial roles in Cypriot politics for a long time. The disappearance of these families caused the balance of power within the Cypriot nobility to shift towards a small group of families such as the Caffran, de Fleury and Nores (ch. 2.1).

The reasons for the exceptionally high turnover of noble families in comparison with other European countries are varied. The exile of many nobles after the Genoese-Cypriot war in 1374 was one of the primary events that ignited the social shifts. Between 25 and 40 % of noble families (depending on the calculation, see ch. 2.1) do not reappear in Cypriot sources after 1374. Other factors also contributed to these changes, such as the natural extinction of some lineages like the Le Jeune, and the recurring bouts of the plague that decimated the population of Cyprus. Some important events, however, such as the Mamluk invasion of 1426, on the contrary do not seem to have had a great impact on noble lineages. There is also no clear interrelationship between the economic decline of Cyprus after the Genoese-Cypriot war and the disappearance of lineages, though this might be due to the lack of sources.

The troubles of the nobility stand in contrast to the rise of the new aristocracy. This group appears to grow steadily during the fifteenth century though its rise during this period may be connected, in part at least, to the greater abundance of sources from the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, it is striking how in the fourteenth century there is trace of only 15 families from the new aristocracy, while by the 1460s we find 39 of them (ch. 2.2). The new aristocracy was not an entirely uniform group. Among the ascending Greek and Syrian families, we can discern more and less successful families, which I have categorised into lower, middle and higher aristocratic groups. While families in the lower aristocratic group usually held positions such as financial secretaries, some members of the middle families obtained higher positions, such as military commanders. The families of the high aristocracy achieved high state office and even became viscounts of Nicosia or chamberlains of the kingdom.

In contrast to the preceding centuries, the fifteenth century new aristocracy included more Syrian than Greek families. This is especially true among the most influential families, which were all Syrian except for the Greek Podocataro family. The Syrians were therefore the group most involved in social mobility and they accrued the greatest power during the period under examination. This dynamic must have been connected to the wealth Syrians had acquired through trade. The families who achieved the highest social rise usually did not have a background in administration, but instead used their riches to further their careers. Indeed, the huge sums that the Lusignan family owed them for King Janus' ransom in 1427 may have played a decisive role in their ascent (ch. 2.2).

A comparison between the Greek and Syrian families active in the administration during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries and those active in the sixteenth century provides further insight into this topic. Only a very few fifteenth- century families, such as the Sincritico and the Bustron, played a role before the fifteenth century. Most of the families, and especially the major fifteenth- century players such as the Salah, the Podocataro, the Mistachiel or the de Ras appear only at the end of the fourteenth or even the beginning of the fifteenth century. On the other hand, very few families, such as the Podocataro, managed to maintain their influence into the sixteenth century. Many, such as the Urri, disappear from the sources at the end of the Lusignan era. The Sozomeno or the Flatro belonged to the aristocracy in the fifteenth century, but only acquired an exceptional social status much later. Therefore, the fifteenth century stands out with a strong aristocratic Syrian and Greek group of its own.

Western immigrants integrated into Cypriot society at different rates according to their policies and the historical context. Genoese and Venetians were generally interested in using the island's economic infrastructure but did not usually integrate into Cypriot high society by intermarriage. The case of the Catalans and the few known Frenchmen is different, as men from both regions took care to marry into the Cypriot nobility. With the Catalans, this process becomes especially visible from the 1420s onwards, and seems to have been part of a conscious strategy to gain political influence in the island. In contrast, the Hospitallers possessed great estates on the island and conducted regular business with the Cypriot court but did not actually live on the island (ch. 2.3).

Contact and integration between the Syrian / Greek aristocracy and the nobility varied according to context (ch. 3). Syrians, Greeks and nobles worked together on a day to day basis and generally seem to have enjoyed good relations (ch. 3.2). The chronicles even speak of friendships and brotherhoods. Members of all groups visited the same churches and entertained relations with a range of church institutions, be they Latin, Greek or Oriental (ch. 6).

These common activities did not, however, abolish the boundaries between the groups. Indeed, ethnic divisions in addition to social boundaries remained well defined until the middle of the fifteenth century at least (ch. 5.2) and make Cyprus an especially interesting case of a socially mobile society. In terms of ethnicity, at the beginning of the fifteenth century nobles could identify with their Western origins and with the inclusive Cypriot identity of *Kypriotēs*. Greek members of the new aristocracy seem to have seen themselves as Cypriots and Rhomaioi, while Oriental Christians were designated as Cypriots and Syrians. This, at least, is the picture painted in Machairas' chronicle although it remains unclear if the Syrians actually saw themselves in such a way or if their identities were more tightly connected to their various religious communities. We also do not know how widespread the differentiation between Syrians and Greeks was among the higher echelons of society. Intermarriage between Syrian and Greek aristocratic families in the fifteenth century suggests that ethnic boundaries between these two groups were not very rigid (see ch. 3.3).

Parallel to ethnic differentiation, social demarcations between the components of the Cypriot élite are also clearly visible. The old crusader nobility usually lived off their estates and other fiefs; like their fellow nobles in regions as far off as the Low Countries, they regarded knighthood as an essential part of their social identity, even if not every Cypriot noble was a knight. This characteristic is evident from the specific concepts of knightly honour found in the chronicles, as well as from tombstones depicting nobles as knights (ch. 5.1). Moreover, nobles usually did not work in the financial administration. The sources show them in traditional high state offices instead such as constable or marshal. However, nobles were not only warriors but could also work in the royal household, occupying offices such as the *maître de l'hotel* (chs 2, 4).

Nobles generally did not engage in the careers which emerged out of the new possibility of studying in Padua, even if the endowment that enabled these studies in the first place had been provided by the well-known Caffran family. Nobles also did not engage greatly in active service in the Latin church (ch. 6.3); instead, they seem to have maintained their traditional style of living a knightly life financed by their estates and family fortune. The only exceptions to this rule are the de Nores and the Montolive families, who served in the Latin church as early as the fourteenth century and later pursued studies in Padua. Interestingly, the de Nores family was one of the few Latin families to survive well after Cyprus was taken over by the Venetians. This poses the question of whether there was any connection between their will to adapt to new career possibilities and their ability to survive.

In any case, the nobility mostly pursued a different career policy and social lifestyle than the new aristocracy. Most Syrians and Greeks were burgesses and not nobles as far as their legal status was concerned (ch. 3.1). This is evident from notarial documents as well as from tombstones, which depict them with cloaks instead of knightly armour (ch. 5.1.2). Syrians and Greeks often lived from salaries earned as secretaries or *baillis* in the administration, or even as doctors. The average salary of a secretary or *bailli* usually equalled between a third and a half of a squire's fief. Though the income provided to new aristocrats through their offices was enough to allow for a comfortable life, it was nowhere near as ample as the wealth attained from a noble's estate. However, in some families, the riches attained through trade more than made up for this difference (see ch. 2.2). In general, the new aristocrats were the professional workforce of the kingdom. Consequently, they used the Caffran foundation to study in great numbers in Padua. In this respect, they followed career paths and channels of social mobility similar to other countries. Merchants and officials from Sardinia and Sicily, for example, sent their sons to the Italian universities for the same reasons.

Social mobility between the new aristocracy and the nobility certainly took place on various levels. Some secretaries – and presumably others, too, who remain invisible – became royal vassals and obtained small fiefs from the king. Receiving these grants probably made them members of the nobility in a legal sense, although we have no ultimate proof for this assertion, nor is it clear if other nobles accepted them as such. Other Syrians and Greeks carved out important careers in the state administration and even became royal counsellors. It often remains unclear, however, if they became royal vassals. In some cases, the status of these new aristocrats was unclear even in the eyes of their contemporaries. Indeed, some of these Syrians and Greeks who reached the highest echelons of the Cypriot élite occupied a grey zone between the nobility and the rest of the aristocracy. However, some high social climbers, such as Giacomo Urri, the Podocataro siblings or Hugh Soudain, clearly became part of the nobility. Their rank of office, as well as knighthood and vassalage make this claim evident (ch. 3.1).

The analysis in chapter 4 has shown that these high social climbers were actually an important factor in the power élite of the 1430s to 1450s. Based on an examination of power structures and the relative importance of various high state offices, I compared the power élite at the end of the fourteenth century with that of the mid-fifteenth century. It is obvious that Syrians occupied high offices as early as the fourteenth century, especially in the years of Peter II's reign, due to the power vacuum caused by the exile of many powerful nobles and the struggle between John of Lusignan and Queen Eleanor for power (ch. 4.1). However, the fifteenth-century social ascension within the power élite at court took on a new quality: at the end of the fourteenth century, the social climbers were isolated cases and they did not manage to establish noble families of any importance. From the 1430s onwards, however, there were many more new men in the government and they generally maintained powerful positions over long periods. Most importantly, they established a close-knit group of highly interrelated families which stayed influential for more than one generation. They were a power factor which the old nobility had to reckon with. Nobles were still powerful in this period, as can be seen from examples such as Badin de Nores and Jacques de Caffran. However, Jacques de Fleury's extraordinary position as chief royal counsellor in these years also hints that the power balance within the nobility was disturbed. It was possible for one man to become all-powerful as well as for social climbers to rise to high positions (ch. 4.2).

Despite this loss of power, the nobility still set the standard for social and cultural rules in the middle of the fifteenth century. Those families and individuals who wanted to rise into the highest echelons of society had to adapt to noble fashions, and therefore degrees of social mobility were connected to cultural choices (chs 5 and 6). As a consequence, members of the lesser and middle aristocracy often adopted some cultural traits of the nobility while rejecting others. Syrian and Greek tombstones, for example, are often made in the same style as those of nobles but are written in Greek (ch. 5.1.2). Some aristocrats chose to remain faithful to their traditional religious identities. We have seen that Machairas consciously

retained his Orthodox identity, judging others for converting to the Latin rite. However, it has also become clear that such a conversion was the (probably unwritten) precondition for the last step of social ascension into the nobility. Unlike in other European countries therefore, achieving the highest of social rises was connected to actively giving up cultural and above all religious identities, and acquiring new ones. Many Syrian families as well as the Greek Podocataro family decided to take this step in order to solidify their careers. It appears that for many, conversion was a reasonable price to pay for social ascension. The documents concerning the erection of new Latin churches on the Podocataro *casalia*, for example, show how the family focused on projecting their new Latin identity in order to secure social acceptance, representing themselves as more Latin than the Latins (ch. 6.4).

Adaptation to noble customs and culture can be found on other levels, too. Many families, such as the Podocataro, but also the Urri and the Salah, gave their children Latin names. These names often had no Greek or Arab equivalent. We do not know if these men had other, Greek or Arab names, too, but Hugo Podocataro's testament suggests that this was not the case. Hugo, at least, used only Latin names for himself and his siblings. Tombstones also illustrate the adaptation process on a social level: men such as Pericoun de Ras took care to be depicted as a knight in armour with an inscription in French, just as any other Cypriot noble would have done (ch. 5.1.2). Nevertheless, the analysis of religious identities has shown that although men like Hugo Podocataro might have given in to social pressure and converted to the Latin rite, they could still be attached emotionally to their former religious communities. Although Hugo was a Latin Christian, he desired to be buried in the same Orthodox monastery as his father. Therefore, these ascending families probably lived in a highly hybrid cultural and social space, bridging the gap between their traditional communities and the nobility they aspired to become part of (ch. 6.4).

Social ascension and adaptation, however, did not automatically mean social acceptance by the nobility. The few preserved reactions from the nobility to social mobility within the Lusignan court were negative. Social mobility was seen with a critical eye. Moreover, the analysis of marriage alliances has shown clearly that although Syrians and Greeks may have ascended into higher social positions, marriages took place almost solely within the respective groups. This is particularly clear for the end of the fourteenth century. It was not until the 1450s that marriage alliances between the most important families of the new aristocracy (Podocataro, Mistachiel, de Ras, perhaps Boussat) and nobles occurred, suggesting that their high success in politics slowly also made them eligible as marriage partners (ch. 3.3).

Real integration between the nobility and the new aristocracy was therefore a slow process for the ascending families. Immigrants from the West fared better, even though we have seen that not all Western immigrants were interested in integration into the Cypriot nobility. However, foreigners who wished to integrate were not impeded from doing so. At the end of the fourteenth century just as in the middle of the fifteenth century, foreigners who came to Cyprus and served the Lusignan kings had good chances of marrying into influential Cypriot noble families. This was true for the Venetian Antonio de Bergamo and his daughter Bertolina or the Frenchman Berenger Albi in the 1390s and for the Catalans who started coming to Cyprus after the 1420s, like Carceran Suarez and Juan de Naves (chs 2.3, 3.3).

Integrating into Cypriot noble society was probably easier for these foreigners on the grounds of shared ethnic and religious notions. Foreigners from the West were usually of the Latin rite. They also had little trouble accepting the double ethnic affiliation, for example being both Cypriot and French or Italian, that was prevalent among the Cypriot nobility (ch. 5.2). Moreover, some foreigners, such as Juan de Naves or Carceran Suarez, were already noblemen in their own countries, which made them highly eligible as partners. The same was true for Helena Palaiologina and her follower Zoi Catacouziny. Byzantine Orthodox nobles were also accepted as such and were eligible marriage partners, though in much smaller numbers than their Western European counterparts (ch. 3.3). These foreigners therefore had better chances of integration into Cypriot noble society than Syrians and Greeks from Cyprus, on account of their social standing and in the case of the Western foreigners also of their culture.

Transgressing social boundaries and integrating into the highest echelons of Cypriot noble society was therefore a more difficult process for Greek and Syrian social climbers than for Western immigrants. However, the persistence of social boundaries should not create the illusion that the nobility and the new aristocracy lived in two hermetically isolated cultural worlds. The way nobles as well as the royal family constructed their religious identities in relation to the Latin and Orthodox (and possibly Oriental) Churches shows that all involved parties lived in a hybrid space, in which various traditions were in contact (ch. 6). However, this world was riddled with hierarchical structures that effected contacts of any kind. Thus, though contacts were a matter of course in everyday life, they acquired important connotations in the context of social standing and self-representation. The social hierarchy was subject to continuous challenges during the fifteenth century, when more mobile elements in society continuously pushed and renegotiated social boundaries. However, real change in the boundaries themselves, in particular concerning ethnicity, can only be seen after the civil wars of the 1460s and 1470s (ch. 5.2). Writing at the end of the fifteenth century, Georgios Bustron no longer differentiated between Syrian, *Rhomaioi* and Latin. In his eyes, they had been substituted by the one inclusive identity *Kypriotēs*.

This constant negotiation between ethnic, religious and social difference, between Syrian, Greek and Latin, between inclusion and exclusion is what makes the Cypriot élite a special and fascinating case of social mobility in fifteenth-century Europe.