ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΜΕΙΖΟΝΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΥ

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Summary :

An illustrious member of the Doranites aristocratic family from Trepizond. Constantine Doranites' activity should be viewed within the context of the civil strife that disrupted the Empire of Trebizond in the 14th century. During the period of the reign of emperor Michael Grand Komnenos he was granted the dignity of *protovestiarios*. He revolted against Alexios III Grand Komnenos without any success, as the *kephalatikeuon* of the Limnia.

Date and Place of Birth

First half of the 14th century, Trebizond

Date and Place of Death

Second half of the 14th century

Main Role

State dignitary, *protovestiarios*

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1. Short biography

Constantine Doranites, a scion of the Doranitai' noble house of Trebizond, was brother of Theodore Doranites, a megas stratopedarches, during the reign of Alexios III Grand Komenos (1349-1390) and father to John Doranites, a pinkernes during the reign of Michael Grand Komnenos (1344-1349). His activity, and that of his family in general, took place in the middle of the 14th century, during the civil strife that outbroke after the death of Emperor Basil Grand Komnenos (1332-1340) and troubled the Empire of Trebizond in the course of that period. Constantine himself organized an unsuccessful uprising against Alexios III in 1352.

2. Political actions

2.1. Historical framework of the civil strife, middle of the 14th century

During the first half of the 14th century, the aristocracy of Trebizond was represented mainly by two houses, that of Scholarios family, who followed the Constantinopolitan tradition, and that of the native Amytzantarios family. They both defended their interests quite fiercely. After the death of Basil Grand Komnenos, his widow Eirene Palaiologina (1340-1341) did not succeed in assuming power herself, deprived as she was of any descendants and heirs, and the noble houses of Trebizond tried to etablish a new social and political balance.[1] The Doranites family, with Constantine as a protagonist, sided with the Scholarioi and closely cooperated with them.

2.2. Taking part in the uprising against Eirene Palaiologina

When the Scholarioi in 1340 turned against Eirene Palaiologina and entrenched themselves inside the monastery of St Eugenios, which became their operation center, Constantine Doranites with other members of the notable lineages of Trebizond supported the effort to overthrow the empress. Nevertheless, the exact nature of his intervention is not known, neither to what degree did his intervention reach in this uprising that ended ingloriously with the arrival of megas doukas John at Trebizond from Constantinople, for the reinforcement of Eirene. Neither is it known if he was among the persons that were arrested and were driven to the castle of Limnia when the monastery of Saint Eugenios was overtaken by the imperial troops and committed to the flames.[2]

2.3. The activity of Constantine against Anna Anachoutlou

The traces of Constantine Doranites are lost for one year after the attempt againstEirene Palaiologina, until 1341, when according to

the chronographer Michael Panaretos,[3] he participated in the attempts made by members of the aristocracy of Trebizond, to dethrone Anna Anachoutlou (1341-1342), the sister of Basil Grand Komnenos. The prevalence of the natives Amytzantarioi, after the accession to the throne of Anna Anachoutlou on the 17th of July 1341, urged the Scholarioi, the Doranites and the Meizomates to constant efforts against her rule, or so the sources estimate.

Constantine Doranites with his son John, Niketas Scholares, the brothers Gregory and Michael Meizomates and other members of the aristocracy, after their unsuccessful attempt to drive out Anna Anachoutlou and to offer the throne to Michael Grand Komnenos (1344-1349), brother of Alexios II Grand Komnenos (1297-1330), departed with a Genoese ship for Constantinople on August 1340. There they came in contact with the son of Michael, later emperor John III Grand Komnenos (1342-1349), to whom they offered the crown of the Empire of Trebizond. On 17th of August 1341 Constantine Doranites, John Grand Komnenos and the other members of aristocracy departed for Trebizond with two ships of John and three Genoese ships. They arrived on the 4th of September 1342, and a few days after (9 September) John was crowned emperor in the church of Panagia Chrysokephalos, right after the overthrow of Anna Anachoutlou.

2.4. Participation of Constantine in the overthrow of John III Grand Komnenos

Afterwards, Constantine appears to have been involved in that group of nobles that recalled Michael Grand Komnenos (1341, 1344-1349), father of John III. John had prolonged his father's exile,[4] to which he was driven after the unsuccessful attempt to ascend to the throne of Trebizond, a fact that at the end turned many of the nobles against him:[5] they ended by overthrowing him. After the accession of Michael to the throne, on the 24th of May 1344, Constantine received the dignity of protovestiarios, whereas other archontes of Trebizond were honored as well with high-ranking titles and offices for their support in his efforts to take possession of the throne.

2.5. Action of Constantine against Alexios III Grand Komnenos

The emperor Alexios III Grand Komnenos (1349-1390) was not able to impose himself over the mutually torn-to-pieces aristocratic powers that had inflicted to the Empire the dreadful experience of the civil war since the period of the reign of Eirene Palaiologina (1340-1341) and thereafter. He preferred to attach himself, according to the circumstances, sometime to the one sometimes to the other noble house, and at the same time arresting members of the one or the other family. Within the framework of this kind of policy, at the beginnings of June 1350, Constantine Doranites, his brorther and *megas stratopedarches* Theodore Doranites (the so-called Pileles) and other members of the family, whose names are not known, were arrested and imprisoned for a short period of time, in a prison especially formed for *archontes*.[6]

Constantine Doranites appears again in the front scene on September of 1352 as a rioter. That period, although he was kephalatikeuon of the castle of Limnia, west of Trebizond, he had probably imposed a state of autonomy in the region. The fact is that, for obscure reasons, the imperial troops attacked him; in charge of the attack was the mother of the emperor, Eirene of Trebizond.[7]

On his carreer after these events, and his further activity, we have no evidence.

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1. See Λυμπερόπουλος, Β., *Ο Βυζαντινός Πόντος. Η αυτοκρατορία της Τραπεζούντας* (Athens 1999), p. 138.

2. See Bredenkamp, F., "The Doranites family of the 14th century Byzantine Empire of Trebizond", *Βυζαντιακά* 19 (1999), pp. 239-265, esp. p. 245.

3. Λαμψίδης, Ο. (ed.), «Μιχαήλ του Παναρέτου περί των Μεγάλων Κομνηνών», *Αρχείον Πόντου* 22 (1958), pp. 65, 67, 69.

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4. After his unsuccessful attempt to overthrow Anna Anachoutlou, Michael Grand Komnenos, was arrested and confined initially to Oinaion and later to Limnia. See Χρύσανθος Φιλιππίδης, μητροπολίτης Τραπεζούντος, «Η Εκκλησία Τραπεζούντος», *Αρχείον Πόντου* 4-5 (1933), p. 242.

5. On March 1344, Niketas Scholares helped Michael to escape, to return to Trebizond (3 May 1344) and to overthrow his son John III Grand Komnenos, who was exiled to the cave-church of Saint Sabas. See Χρύσανθος Φιλιππίδης, μητροπολίτης Τραπεζούντος, «Η Εκκλησία Τραπεζούντος», *Αρχείον Πόντου* 4-5 (1933), pp. 243-244.

6. This view is supported by A. Bryer, "The Estates of the Empire of Trebizond. Evidence of their resources, products, agriculture, ownership and location", *Αρχείον Πόντου* 35 (1979), pp. 370-477 [reprinted in Bryer, A., *The empire of Trebizond and the Pontos* (Variorum Reprints Collected Studies, London 1980)]. F. Bredenkamp places chronologically the arrest of the members of Doranites family on June 1351, see Bredenkamp, F., "The Doranites family of the 14th century Byzantine Empire of Trebizond", *Βυζαντιακά* 19 (1999), p. 246.

7. This view is supported by Bryer, A., "Greeks and Turkmens: The Pontic exception", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 29 (1975), σελ. 144. On the contrary, F. Bredenkamp suggests that the mother of Emperor Alexios III Grand Komnenos, Eirene of Trepizond sojourned in the house of Doranites at Limnia for three months · see Bredenkamp, F., "The Doranites family of the 14th century Byzantine Empire of Trebizond", *Βυζαντιακά* 19 (1999), p. 247.

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Glossary :

archon

Term that designates a governor in general. When it is not used in a technical sense, it denotes members of the aristocracy, high officers of the byzantine empire and it is even used for independent princes.

kephale, kephalatikevon

A term denoting the highest official of the Late Byzantine provincial administration. From the mid-13th century on, the office of the kephale gradually substituted that of the doukas. From the 14th century on, the kephale was political and military head of the *kapetanikion*, an administrative division smaller than a theme, or of the castle. In the Empire of Trebizond the officer was also called kephalatikevon.

megas doukas

The commander of the Byzantine fleet (from 1092 onwards). In the Late Byzantine period, the title of the megas doukas was assigned to the highest officials of the imperial administration/army.

megas stratopedarches

Superior officer responsible for the provision of equipment and supplies for the military forces of the byzantine empire of Nicaea.

pinkernes

[also pikernes or epikernes, possibly from the Latin pincerna, a word deriving from the greek verb *epikerannymi*, meaning to mix (wine)]). Cup-bearer of the palace. Official at the personal service of the emperor. In the Late Byzantine years, the pinkernes was a very honorary title, while in the 14th century it was awarded to very important figures, such as Alexios Philanthropenos.

protovestiarios

(and protovestiarites) Honorific title given to high-ranking officials and future emperors during this period. The protovestiarios was originally responsible for the imperial wardrobe, but in the 9th-11th centuries the holders of the title could command an army or conduct negotiations with foreign states.

Sources

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Chronological Table

First half of the 14th century: Birth of Constantine Doranites

1340: Participation in the unsuccessful “uprising of Saint Eugenios” against the rule of Eirene Palaiologina (1340-1341)

17 July 1341: Participation in a fruitless uprising against Anna Anachoutlou (1341-1342), in favor of Michael Grand Komnenos

August 1341: Constantine Doranites and other nobles went to Constantinople to offer the crown to John Grand Komnenos

17 August 1341: Departure of Constantine Doranites from Constantinople to Trebizond along with the later emperor John III Grand Komnenos

4 September 1342: Arrival of Constantine Doranites to Trebizond along with the later emperor John III Grand Komnenos

9 September 1342: Accession of John III Grand Komnenos (1344-1349) to the throne with the support of Constantine Doranites

24 May 1344: Accession of Michael Grand Komnenos (1344-1349) to the throne with the support of Constantine Doranites

May 1350: Arrest and imprisonment of Constantine Doranites and other members of his family in a prison especially formed for *archontes*, within the framework of Alexios III Gand Komnenos' (1349-1390) policy

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September 1352: Expedition of the imperial troops against Constantine Doranites at Limnia

Auxiliary Catalogs

List of Emperors of the Empire of Trebizond

Alexios I (1204-1222)

Andronikos I / Gidos (1222-1235)

John I / Axouch (1235-1238)

Manuel I (1238-1263)

Andronikos II (1263-1266)

George / Planos (1266-1280)

John II (1280-1285, 1285-1297)

Theodora (1285)

Alexios II (1297-1330)

Andronikos III (1330-1332)

Manuel II (1332)

Basil (1332-1340)

Eirene Palaiologina (1340-1341)

Anna / Anachoutlou (1341, 1341-1342)

Michael (1341)

John III (1342-1344)

Michael (1344-1349)

Alexios III (1349-1390)

Manuel III (1390-1417)

Alexios IV (1417-1429)

John IV (1429-1458)

Alexios V (1458)

David (1458-1461 or 1463)