

The Roles and Identities of Byzantine Power Elite Women

: Based on the Sigillographic sources of the 7th-12th centuries¹

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I. INTRODUCTION

II. WOMEN DURING THE 7th AND 10th CENTURIES

III. WOMEN DURING THE 11th AND 12th CENTURIES

IV. CONCLUSION

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, we find many female outstanding leaders in various domains; politics, economy and culture in national and international scale. Their influence and ability have considerably increased. Moreover it is said that the power elite women will appear more and they become decision makers in the international affairs keeping pace with the fast globalization in the course of the 21th century.²

On the other hand, how was it like to be women in the medieval Byzantium? According to the Byzantine ideology, women were thought to be weak in body and fragile in soul compared to men. So they had to be devoted to education for children and to management of household while men occupied major positions in the public domains, for example, in the imperial Army or civil Administration as well as in the Church. However, the byzantine literary sources show a class of women not always subject to traditional role divisions, and taking male positions in public domains.³

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² On the roles of contemporary power elite women in Korea, see Jeong duk-jin and Kim ki-hun. *Korean Power Elite* (Hwangkum Nachimban, 2006), pp.269-306.

³ On the gender identity of Byzantine women, James Liz, "Men, Women, Eunuchs: Gender, Sex, and Power", John Haldon (ed), *Social History of Byzantium* (Blackwell, 2009), pp.36-42.

The Byzantine power elite women came usually from noble families enjoying the economic privilege, political influence and social connections. Thus these women could have inherited the family properties equally with male heirs and even managed the patrimony in the absence of family's male head. Moreover, their dowry was not subjected to their husband's properties. For this reason the aristocratic heiresses took usually the paternal or maternal family names instead of her husband's family name and also even after marriage they could have wielded a considerable influence on making their families' promotion.⁴

Many studies of Byzantine women have contributed to illustrate the elite women's lives and careers as well as their roles. However, how much had the roles of these women changed in the course of the 7th and 12th centuries? It seems that the answer to this question is not clear in the recent studies only based on the literary sources.⁵ By the way, we have the other historical sources very useful to identify the Byzantine women's roles and its changes during the same period. The Byzantine lead seals, which were used to authenticate legal documents and letters, are nowadays considered to be very important research material because they provide us with much information on the identification of the Byzantines. A group of female signers' name, title, kinship tie and symbolic image are well attested on a number of dated seals.⁶ Thus in the light of these elements stamped on the seals, this paper will highlight the Byzantine power elite women's roles and identities changing in the medieval Byzantine history.

II. WOMEN DURING THE 7th AND 10th CENTURIES

The Byzantine literary and sigillographic sources identify a group of women holding the imperial title and wielding the power in imperial court. First of all, the empress was considered to be the most representative and influential woman in Byzantium. The Byzantines called the empress 'basilissa' (in Greek) or 'augusta' (in Latin). The title of empress was derived from the role of imperial wife playing in the imperial court. They could have exercised the imperial authority as regent when her husband or

⁴ On the naming and inheritance of the Byzantine aristocratic women, J.-C. Cheynet, "L'anthroponymie aristocratique à Byzance", *Document de l'histoire sociale des mondes méditerranéens médiévaux*, M. Bourin et J.-M. Martin als. (eds) (Rome, 1996), pp.53-80; Idem, "Aristocratie et héritage (XIe-XIIIe s.)", *La transmission du patrimoine*, G. Dagron et J. Beaucamp (eds.), (Paris 1998), pp.53-80.

⁵ On the recent studies of the Byzantine power elite women, see Lynda Garland, *Byzantine empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium AD 527-1204* (London-New York 1999), pp.1-228; Judith Herrin, *Women in Purple. Rulers of Medieval Byzantium* (London, 2001), pp.3-338; James Liz, *Empresses and Power in Early Byzantium* (London, 2001).

⁶ On the Studies of Byzantine Sigillography, see N. Oikonomides, *Byzantine Lead Seals* (Washington D.C. 1985), pp.7-24 ; Wonho HWANG, "Byzantine Society Stamped on the Seals : Studies on Identities and Communications", *Western History Review(서양사론)* vol.112 (03. 2012), pp.126-158.

son died early. And also an official empress or legitimate princess could have taken choice of a new Emperor through her marriage with a capable man (usually a military general).⁷ In the case of its being unavailable, she could have exercised the imperial authority for herself without a male ruler. In that case, the Byzantines called the female ruler *'autokratorissa'*. There were only two empresses nominated to this position in Byzantine history. It was the case with Empress Eirene (797-802), wife of the Emperor Leo IV, and with Empress Theodora (1055-1056), sister of the Empress Zoe.⁸

When there was an official wife of emperor, other imperial women could be invested in the dignity of *'sebastos'*. For example, Helena, first wife of Romanos III Argyros, Maria Skelerina, mistress of Konstantinos IX Monomachos and Maria of Alane, second wife of Michael VII Doukas enjoyed the privilege attributed to the high position *'sebastos'* in the court hierarchy. Beside the imperial wives, there were other imperial women at imperial inner circle, for example, an emperor's mother-in-law was titled in the dignity of *'patrikia zoste'* (*patrikios* with belt). This title attributed only to women having close kinship with the emperor was superior to the male dignitary of *'patrikios'* in the hierarchy. Both the literary sources and seals show there were only a dozen of women honoured in this title in the course of the 9th and 11th centuries.⁹

Accessing to the imperial court and holding the court title was not only permitted to imperial female members but also to the imperial dignitaries' wives from different aristocratic families. These women's standings depended generally on their husband's honorary position or official function, that is, the noble women were called according to their husband's office title (function) or honorary title (dignity). For example, a woman whose husband's office would be *'strategos'* (military commander of *themata*) was called *'strategissa'* (wife of strategos) and a woman whose husband's honorary title would be *'magistros'* was called *'magistrissa'* (wife of magistros) or a woman whose husband's honorary title would be *'proedros'*, could be called *'proedrissa'* (wife of proedros) etc....¹⁰



⁷ The imperial princesses were also called *"basilissa"* in the 12th century. As the Komnenian dynasty arranged more frequently the marriage alliance with foreign states, the imperial princesses' position was much increased. For example, Anna Komnene was described as *'basilissa'* while her husband Nikephorus Bryennios was mentioned as *'kaesar'* which was inferior to *'basilissa'*; J. Darrouzes, *Georges et Démétrios Tornikès, Lettres et Discours* (Paris 1970), pp.223, 227,251,275; On the imperial family's kinship formation by the marriage in the 11th and 13th centuries, see A. Laiou, *Marriage, amour et parenté à Byzance aux XIe-XIIIe siècles* (Paris 1992), p.59-66.

⁸ On the empress title, see El. Bensammar Malamut, "La titulature de l'impératrice et sa signification. Recherche sur les sources byzantines de la fin du VIIIe siècle à la fin du XIIe siècle", *Byzantion* XLVI(1977),p.243-291.

⁹ J.-C. Cheynet, *Patricienne à Ceinture: une femme de qualité*, P. Henriot et A.M. Legras; (eds) *Au cloître et dans le monde: Femmes, hommes et sociétés (IXe-XVe)*, (Paris 2000), p.179-187.

¹⁰ There was a separate female office (*Cubiculum*) and court (*Gynaikonitis*) around the empress' residence in the grand Palace. It was similar to imperial court and there were eunuchs and female servants who served the empress. According to the text *<Taktika>* written in 9th-10th century, it is told that when a woman was invested in *patrikia zoste*, she had to contribute two pound of solidus to court female servants and high dignitaries' wives such as *protovestiarissa*, *primikerissa*, *koitonitissai* and *koubikoulareai* etc...; N. Oikonomides, *Les Listes de préseance à Byzance aux 9e-10e*

< Image I. The lead Seal of the Empress Eirene (reign: 797–802) >

	<p>Obverse) : <i>Eirinē basil[issē]</i> (empress Eirene) Image): Eirene's effigy.</p> <p>★ The Empress Eirene wears the imperial crown added by double pendant of pearls (<i>pendilia</i>) on both sides. She holds a ball with the cross (<i>globus cruciger</i>) in the right hand and the scepter in the left hand, symbolizing the imperial authority.</p>
	<p>Reverse) : <i>Ei[rinē basiliss]ē</i> (Empress Eirene) Image) Eirene's effigy.</p> <p>★ The empress was the only woman having right to engrave her own effigy on the seals or coins. However it is rare that an empress' portrait was engraved on both sides of the seal. The presence of Eirene's effigy on both sides of seal reflects a powerful authority she could have exercised on behalf of her son.</p>
<p>Sources: Collection of Dumbarton Oaks Museum, no.58.106.504. diameter : 22 mm / weight : 5.00 g Literature: John Nesbitt, <i>Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art, V.6: Emperors, Patriarchs of Constantinople</i> (Washington D.C.), no.36. 5; G. Zacos and A.Veglery, <i>Byzantine Leads Seals</i> (Basel, 1972), vol. I, no.41.</p>	

Besides the byzantine female ruler' seals, we can find also a group of court women's seals used to authenticate documents or letters in the period of the 7th and 10th century.

< List I: Women in the 7th and 10th centuries >¹¹

- Anna, wife of *patrikios* (*patrikia*) (9th/10th c.)
- Euphrosyne, wife of *hypatos* (*hypatissa*) (end of the 8th c.)
- Anastasia, *koubikoulara kai parakoimomène* (?) (first half of the 9th c.)
- Maria, daughter of *kaesaros* (*thygratri tou kaesaros*) (first half of the 9th c.)
- Maria, mother of *augusta* Theophano (*metri Theophanous augustes*) (10th c.)
- Thekla, wife of *protostrator* (*protostratorina*) (second half of the 8th c. or first half of the 9th c.)
- Anonym, wife of *strategos* (*strategissa*) of Aegean theme (first half of the 9th c.)
- Theodora, daughter of Konstantinos *porphyrogenetos* (10th c.)
- Theoktiste, *patrikia zoste* and mother of empress (first half of the 9th c.)

siècle (Paris 1972), p.57.

¹¹ G. Zacos and A.Veglery, *Byzantine Lead Seals* (Basel 1972),no.1412,1718,1699,2673,3104,2675; Collection de l'Institut Français des Études Byzantines (*IFEB*) no.1217,2676; G. Zacos, *Byzantine Leads Seals*, vol.II (Basel,1972), no.1083.

First of all, it appears that the women's seals are not very numerous compared to the men's seals of the same period. It seems because the women's activities were generally shrinking in the period when the Byzantines had to fight with all their strength to defend the Empire against the Arab-Islam invasions and incursions. Nevertheless, the above list tell us about one Theodora, an emperor's daughter and another Maria, a *'kaisar'*'s daughter, whose father could be identified to be Alexios Mouselios, the loyal servant and son-in-law of the emperor Theophilos (829-842).¹² The same list also reveals two women (Maria and Theoktiste) who might be identified to be mother of an empress. In short, on this evidence, we can identify some female members belonging to the imperial families in the 9th century.

Secondly, according to the women's titles on the above list, the roles as mother and wife were more emphasized than the roles as daughter. It is likely that this women's role as ruler refers to the roles of Empresses Eirene (775-78/797-802) and Theodora (830-67). Because both of them were nominated to the official position *'basilissa'* when their husbands (Leon IV and Theophilos) were alive and then they also held regency for their sons (Constantinos VI and Michael III) after their husbands died early.

Thirdly, the above list shows that women's seals are intensively attested in the second half of the 8th century and first half of the 9th century. It seems that this evidence refers also to the reign of the same empresses Eirene and Theodora because the female rulers tried to put an end to the Iconoclasm taken by their husbands (Leo IV and Theophilos). The contemporary literary sources show that there were certain aristocratic women who participated in the restoration of icons in the same period. It is told that Euphrosyne, who was the Empress Eirene's granddaughter and later became the second wife of the Emperor Michael II, had appealed her strong conviction about the restoration of icons in having communications in letters with Theodoros, head of the Monastery of Stoudios in Constantinople. Thus in the light of the career of Euphrosyne we can understand that the most of the women on the above list could have been the most influential court women representing the old senatorial families and having great impact on the restoration of Icons under the reign of the same Empress Eirene and Theodora.¹³

Fourthly, the above list mentions a woman called Thekla titled in *'protostratorina'* (wife of protostrator) at the end of the 8th or the beginning of the 9th century. The *Chronicle of Theophanes Continuatus* mentions a contemporary woman called Thekla; she was a daughter of Bardas Turkos *domestikos of the scholai* (commander in chief of imperial Army) under the reign of the Empress

¹² It is told that Alexios Mouselos was promoted to the rank of *'kaisar'* after his marriage with the emperor Theophilos's daughter Maria, see on the marriage of Alexios, *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1838), III. p.18.

¹³ On the career of the empress Euphrosyne, see *Theophanes Continuatus* (Bonn 1838), vol. II 24, pp.78-79; III.1 (p.86); Theodoros Studita, *Epistulae*, ed. G. Fatouros, CFHB (Berlin/New York, 1992), p.514; A. P. Kazhdan-A.M.Talbot, "Women and Iconoclasm", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, vol.84/84 (1992), p.391-408.

Eirene and killed in a revolt against the Emperor Nikephoros I. Thekla, after marrying her father's loyal officer Michael, later became the first wife of the Emperor Michael II (820-829). On the other hand, according to the other source written by *Skylitzes* it is mentioned that this Michael was nominated to the office of 'protostrator' when Leo, Michael's old friend ascended to the imperial throne in 813 (Leo IV). In brief, Thekla's high position and career lead us to suppose that she would have been the first noble woman who contributed to make her family to the promotion through her marriage to the military commander in the 8th and 9th centuries.¹⁴

Finally, the title 'koubikoularia' and 'parakoimomene' attested on Anastasia's seal lead us to suppose that she might have been a wife of imperial servant holding the office of 'koubikouarios'(imperial eunuch) and 'parakoimomenos'(imperial bed chamber). Taking into consideration that these offices were very often engaged by the imperial eunuchs, this idea is not reasonable because a eunuch could not be allowed for a marriage in Byzantium. Instead, we can suppose that Anastasia would have been a female servant who attended on around the Empress Theodora very influential at court in the first half of the 9th century. Because it is told that there was a separated court(*gynaikonitis*) reserved only to imperial women in Palace and that Theodote, wife of the Emperor Konstantinos VI, had been responsible for the office 'koubikoularia' in the *gynaikonitis* before her marriage with the emperor.¹⁵

III. WOMEN DURING THE 11th AND 12th CENTURIES

The Byzantine aristocratic families much developed from the 9th century to the 10th century were all concentrated in Constantinople in the 11th century. It was because the powerful military clans against the imperial authority had been all controlled by the Emperor Basil II (976-1025) putting an end to the grand rebellions of Bardas Phokas and Bardas Skleros at the end of the 10th century. As a result, the political forces supporting the Macedonian dynasty were polarized into two factions from this time in Byzantium: the one was the families of civil tradition in Constantinople and the other was the military clans originated from Asia Minor.¹⁶



¹⁴ The title of Thekla 'protostratorina' on her seal refers to her husband Michael's official position before his accession to the imperial throne in 820; On the birth of Thekla, see *Theophanes Continuatus* vol.II, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn 1838), p.78; the career of the emperor Michael II and his seal, see Ioannes Scylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed.J.Thurn (Berlin 1973), p.13; G.Schlumberger, *Sigillographie de l'Empire byzantin* (Paris 1884), p.358, no.2.

¹⁵ On the birth and career of the Empress Theodote, see Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, 2 vols (NewYork 1980) p.484; C. Mango and R. Scott (ed and tr.), *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor* (Oxford 1997), p.665.

¹⁶ On the historical survey of the 11th century, see G. Ostrogorsky, *Byzantinische Geschichte 324-1453*, 비잔티움 제국사 (한정숙-김경연 역), (가치 1999), pp.251-279; On the Byzantine Aristocracy and its evolution in the 11th and 12th centuries see A. Kazhdan-S. Ronchey, *L'aristocrazia byzantina dal principio dell'XI alla XII secolo* (Palermo 1997),

As the Emperor Konstantinos VIII (1025-28) like his brother Basil II died without a male heir (*porphyrogennetos*) in this circumstance, the imperial succession must have been maintained by two imperial legitimate heiresses (*porphyrogenneta*). That is, the imperial throne was first of all preserved by the Empress Zoe who was married successively to imperial dignitaries and adopted one stepson. After her death, the imperial succession have been achieved by her sister Theodora (1055-56) Hascending in her turn for herself to the imperial throne as an '*autokratorissa*'. From this time on, we can find a number of seals of court women, who could be identified to be daughters from the aristocratic families in Constantinople¹⁷.

< **Image II: The Chrysobull of the Empress Theodora (reign: 1055–1056)** >

	<p>Obverse) Inscription : Ι(ησοῦ)ς Χ(ριστό)ς. [Ἐμ]μανουήλ./ Jesus Christ Emmanuel</p> <p>Effigy of Jesus Christ: Jesus Christ holds the Bible in the left hand, blessing in the right hand. The aura (<i>nimbus</i>) behind his head symbolize God's authority while the Icon in itself signifies a divine protection and warrantee on the imperil document.</p>
	<p>Reverse) Inscription : Θεοδώρα ἀὐγο[ύστα]/ Empress Theodora</p> <p>Effigy of Theodora: Theodora wears the imperial crown decorated with the cross and four flowers. Wearing also the <i>loros</i> (consular uniform in ancient period), she holds the imperial scepter in the right hand and a ball (<i>globus</i>) in the left hand.</p>
<p>Sources : BZS no. 1961.20 (Dumbarton Oaks Museum) Diameter: 27 mm/Weight: 15.21g/material : Gold Literature: G. Zacos and A. Veglery, <i>Byzantine Leads Seals</i>, Vol.1, no.81-821.</p>	

The Chrysobull was the golden seal issued only by the emperor or empress and used to authenticate the most solemn act or document. So the appearance of the Empress Theodora's golden seal illustrates the extent to which the byzantine female ruler could exercise the imperial authority as an *autokratorissa* in the Empire.

< **List II: Women in the 11th century** >

- *Dalassena Anna*, wife of *kouropalates* and *domestikos* (*kouropalatissa kai domestikissa*) (1057-1067)¹⁸

pp.133-152; J.-C.Cheyne, "L'aristocratie byzantine (VIIIe-XIIIe s.)", *Journal des Savants*, 2000, pp. 281-322.
¹⁷ On the life and career of Zoe and Theodora, see Lynda Garland, *Byzantine empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium AD 527-1204*, pp.136-157, pp.161-167.
¹⁸ J.-C.Cheyne et J.-F.Vannier, *Études prosopographiques* (Byzantina Sorbonensia 5), (Paris 1986), p.97.

- *Dalassena Anna* (11th-12th c.)¹⁹
- *Dalassena Eudokia*, wife of *proedros* (*proedrissa*) (Second half of the 11th c.)²⁰
- *Dalassena Euphemios*, wife of *proedros*, *stratelates* and *douk* (*proedissa*, *stratelatissa kai doukaina*) (Second half of the 11th c.)²¹
- *Dalassena Irene* (11th-12th c.)²²
- *Dalassena Maria*, wife of *protoproedros* (*protoproedrissa*), (Second half of the 11th c.)²³
- *Doukaina Anna*, wife of *magistros* (*magistrissa*), (Second half of the 11th c.)²⁴
- *Doukaina Anna*, wife of *nobelissimos* (*nobelissime*), (Second half of 11th c.)²⁵
- *Kommenos Eudokia*, wife of *magistros* (*magistrissa*), (Second half of 11th c.)²⁶
- *Goumelina Maria*, wife of *strategos* (*strategissa*), (Middle of 11th c.)²⁷
- *Karatenos Anna* (first half of 11th c.)²⁸
- *Kourkouase Helena*, wife of *vestes* (*vestena*), (Second half of 11th c.)²⁹
- *Makrembolitissa Maria*, wife of *kouropalates* (*kouropalatissa*), (End of the 11th c.)³⁰
- *Melissene Maria*, *patrikia zoste* (Third quarter of 11th c.)³¹
- *Mousaraphene Anna*, wife of *katepanos* (*katepanissa*), (11th c.)³²
- *Mouseline Maria* (the 11th/12th c.)³³
- *Mouseline Theodora*, wife of *mistographos* (*mistographissa*), (End of the 11th c.)³⁴
- *Mousalonissa Theophano*, wife of *archontes* (*archontissa*), (First half of the 11th c.)
- *Nestongissa Maria*, wife of *patrikios* (*patrikia*), (First half of the 11th c.)³⁵
- *Radene Irene*, *patrikia zoste* (Second half of the 11th c.)³⁶
- *Radene Zoe*, wife of *protoproedros* (Second half of the 11th c.)³⁷

¹⁹ Collection de Zacos (Bibliothèque National de France),no.204

²⁰ Vente Münz Zentrum, n.76 (10-12 November 1993), seal no.21.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.93

²² Collection de Zacos (Bibliothèque National de France), no.236

²³ J.-C. Cheynet et J.-F.Vannier, *Études prosopographiques*, p.101; I. Jordanov, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria*, vol.2 (Sofia, 2006), no.155.

²⁴ Collection of Dumbarton Oaks Museum, no. 47. 2. 1152.

²⁵ Collection de Zacos (BNF), no. 204; J.-C. Cheynet et J.-F. Vannier, *Études prosopographiques*, p.139.

²⁶ G. Zacos and A.Veglery, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, no.2700.

²⁷ W.Seibt-M.Zarnitz, *Das byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk*. no.1.2.4.

²⁸ I. Jordanov, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria*, vol.II, no.267-272.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 241.

³⁰ Ch.Stavrakos, *Die byzantinische Bleisiegel mit Familiennamen aus der Sammlung des Numismatischen Museums Athens* (Wiesbaden, 2000), no.153.

³¹ W.Seibt, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Ö sterreich I*, no.128

³² A.K.Wassiliou-W. Seibt, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Ö sterreich II*, no.270.

³³ Collection de Zacos (BNF), no.100.

³⁴ V.Laurent, *Le Corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantine, tome II : L'Administration centrale* (Paris,1981),no.128.

³⁵ G.Schlumberger, *Sigillographie de l'Empire byzantine* (Paris, 1884), pp.432-433.

³⁶ V.Bulgurlu-A.Ilasli, "Seals from the Museum of Afyon", *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography*, vol.8(2004), no.26.

³⁷ G.Schlumberger, *Sigillographie*, p.573, n.4.

- *Skleraina Eudokia*, wife of *proedros* (Second half of the 11th c.)³⁸
- *Synadene Helena* (Second half of the 11th c.)³⁹
- *Synadene Maria* (Second half of the 11th c.)⁴⁰
- *Synadene Zoe* (Second half of the 11th c.)⁴¹
- *Taronitissa Eudokia* (Second half of the 11th c.)⁴²
- *Tornikaina Helena*, *patrikia zoste* and wife of *kouropalates* (End of the 11th c.)⁴³
- *Tripolitana Helena* (First half of the 11th c.)⁴⁴
- *Parsakountene Anna*, wife of *patrikios (patrikia)*(First half of the 11th c.)⁴⁵
- *Pegonitissa Irene*, wife of *magistros*, *vestarches* and *doux* (Second half of the 11th c.)⁴⁶
- *Pekoulina Konstantina*, wife of *protospatharios* and *tototeretes (protospatharissa kai topoteretissa)*, (First half of the 11th c.)⁴⁷
- *Philokalina Eudokia*, wife of *proedros* (End of the 11th c.)⁴⁸
- *Tzintziloukina Pulcheria* (End of the 11th c.)⁴⁹
- *Hexachionitissa Helena* (First half of the 11th c.)⁵⁰

On the evidence of the above seals, we can draw some points about the identities and roles of the women in the 11th century.

First of all, we find that the 11th century's women are adding the family names to their given names while the women's seals appear to be more numerous than the previous period. Taking into consideration that the addition of patronyme to a given name refers to one's birth or family origin, it clarifies that the contemporary women's status was getting better and their social position also was more improving in upper classes. Moreover it is well known that the marriage alliance was more frequently arranged between the noble families in this time in Constantinople. The literary sources confirm the importance of the princess *Zoe porphyrogenneta*'s marriage to Romanos III Argyros and other two men in the imperial succession. On the other hand, we can also see the court women taking the paternal or maternal family name instead of their husband's family name. The reason why the noble women emphasized the membership to their family of birth above the marriage bond to their

³⁸ Collection of Dumbarton Oaks Museum, no.58.106.5739.

³⁹ Ch.Stravrakos, "Sigillographische Beiträge zur Familie der Synadenoi", *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography*, vol.7 (2002), p. 178.

⁴⁰ Collection de Zacos (BNF), (Toul.75).

⁴¹ Ch.Stravrakos, "Sigillographische Beiträge zur Familie der Synadenoi", p.178

⁴² V.Laurent, "Sceaux byzantines inedits", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, vol.33(1933),no.20.

⁴³ J.-Cl.Cheyne, "Patricienne à Ceinture : une femme de qualité", p.184

⁴⁴ I. Jordanov, *Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria*, vol.2 no.729.

⁴⁵ W.Seibt, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Österreich I*, no.127

⁴⁶ Collection de Zacos (BNF), no.460.

⁴⁷ J.-C.Cheyne et als., *Les sceaux byzantines de la collection Henry Seyrig*, no.336.

⁴⁸ W.Seibt, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Österreich I*, n.149.

⁴⁹ Collection of Dumbarton Oaks Museum, no.58, 106,777.

⁵⁰ Collection de l'Institut Français des Études Byzantines (*IFEB*),no.124.

husband in the 11th century had good relation with the Byzantine aristocratic family's inheritant system in the 11th century.⁵¹

Secondly, we can see the tradition of following husband's title has been maintained in the 11th century. Moreover it shows that the noble women's position was more based on their husband's honorary title (dignity: *axia dia brabeiou*) than the office title (*axia dia logou*). It seems that it was because the honorary titles (dignity) made sure more stable position and fixed cash income (*roga*) for a given aristocratic families. However it is attested that some noble women follow her husband's office title. In this case, it was concerned about when their husband was taking a high military office title. For example, we can see on the above list women holding the title, 'doukaina' (wife of military commander in chief of Tagmatic Army), 'strategissa' (wife of commander-in-chief of Thematic Army), 'topoteretissa' (wife of senior officer of Tagmatic Army), and 'manglabitissa' (wife of Imperial Bodyguard). On the other hand, it is rare for noble women to follow their husband's civil office title. It explains also that the military functions had been exercised more on the hereditary basis than the civil functions in the Byzantine bureaucracy in the course of the 11th century.⁵²

Thirdly, the women on the above list could be identified to be female offspring of the grand aristocratic families who participated in the competition for the imperial power, especially in creating a new ruling family when the Macedonian dynasty's dominant authority have been declined in the middle of the 11th century. The literary sources mention the family Dalassenos, Doukas and Synadenos who have represented the most powerful factions in Byzantine political history in the 11th century. Thus we can understand why many women of the same family names appear in the same period. Especially the frequent appearance of the women's seals of the family Dalassenos could be understood in the life and career of Anna Dalassene (1030-1101/2), sister-in-law of the Emperor of Issakios I Komnenos and mother of the Emperor Alexis I Komnenos (1081-1118).

The life and career of Anna Dalassene are well known thanks to the literary sources written by her granddaughter Anna Komnene and grand son-in-law Nikephoros Bryennios.⁵³ Anna Dalassene was born between the Dalassenos family's mother and the Charon family's father in 1030's. Very smart

⁵¹ According to the byzantine aristocratic family's inheritant system in the 11th century, a daughter herited an equal part of properties with son and also the woman's dowry was never assimilated to her husband's family properties. If a woman would be divorced, the woman's property could be intact to be returned to her own family and when she dies it could be attributed to her sons or transmitted to new husband's family on her remarriage ; J.-C.Cheyne, "L'anthroponymie aristocratique à Byzance", pp.53-80; Idem, "Aristocratie et héritage (XIe-XIIIes)", pp.53-80; P.Stephenson, "A Development in Nomenclature on the Seals of the Byzantine Provincial Aristocracy in th Late Tenth Century", *Revue des Études Byzantines*, vol.52 (1994), pp.184-211.

⁵² On the Byzantine honorary and office titles, see Nicolas Oikonomides, *Les listes de préséance byzantine des IXe et Xe siècles* (Paris 1972), pp. 281-347.

⁵³ Anne Comnène, *Alexiade*, I-III, ed. B. Leib (Paris, 1937-45),[*Anna Komnene*]; *Nicephori Bryennii historiarum libri quattuor*. Introduction, texte, traduction et notes by P. Gautier (CFHB, series Bruxellensis IX), Bruxelles 1975. [*Bryennios*]

and pious in her young age, she married Ioannes of the Komenos family in 1044 and had five sons (Manuel, Issakios, Alexios, Adrianos and Nikephoros) and three daughters (Maria, Eudokia, and Theodora). Ioannes, her husband, was brother of the Emperor Issakios I Komnenos and honored in title *kouropalates* and promoted to the top military position ‘*mega domestikos*’ (grand commander-in-chief of imperial Army) when his brother Issakios I acceded to imperial throne in 1057. Two years later, injured in hunting and falling ill the Emperor Issakios I had to retire under the pressure of adversary civil faction in Constantinople. Then he proposed to his younger brother Ioannes the succession of imperial throne. At that time, Anna also pushed her husband to accept his brother’s offer to keep the imperial power in the Komenos family. But Ioannes Komnenos, not ambitious, rejected her wife’s proposal. When Konstaninos of the Doukas family, competing with the Komnenos for the imperial succession, gained finally the imperial throne, Anna was so disappointed that she had strong hatred against the Doukas family. From that time, to prevent the Doukas family from succeeding to the imperial power in Palace she had a plan of making grand connections through her three daughters’ marriage. Following her plan, the eldest daughter Maria was married to Michael of the family Taronites, the second daughter Eudokia to Nikephoros of the family Melissenos, the youngest daughter Theodora to Konstantinos of the family Diogenes, all the offspring of the most powerful military families at that time.⁵⁴

Although Anna had tried to accelerate her ambitious plan, the position of Komnenian family couldn’t get better because her husband Ioannes Komnenos died unfortunately in 1067. Being widowed, she now must lead for herself her husband’s family on behalf of her young sons. In spite of the new dominance of the Doukans family in Palace, she still tried to be involved in complot in supporting Romanos Diogenes for the imperial power. Finally as Romanos Diogenes succeeded in taking the imperial throne against Konstaninos X Doukas, she had more influence on the imperial court in favour of the Komnenian family. As a result the new emperor Romanos Diogenes made promotion of Anna’s eldest son Manuel to the top military commandership in the imperial Army.

After then, Manuel had participated in the battle against the Turks of Seljuk in Bithynia in 1071 but injured in the battle field and died of it. It was told that on hearing this news, Anna Dalassene rushed to the battle to see her son’s dead body and she felt deeply sad and painful because she lost even the eldest son in around five years after her husband’s death. However, hoping to compensate for her son’s missing she sent her third son Alexios to the frontier. Alexios, only 14 years old at that time but obedient to her mother, joined immediately to the campaign of Manzikert. But he had to be sent back following the advice that it would be better for him to console his mother. This episode shows clearly how much Anna Dalassene and her family were concerned with overcoming not only the imperial crisis but also her family’s destiny at the end of the 11th century.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Nicephoros Bryennios, *Nicephori Bryennii historiarum libri quattuor*, p. 85-87.

⁵⁵ Nicephoros Bryennios, *Nicephori Bryennii historiarum libri quattuor*, p.103.

When Michael VII Doukas (1071-1078) succeeded to the imperial throne at the end of the battle of Manzikert in 1071, Anna Dalassene and her family's position was still unstable. Then it is said that she tried to contact with Romanos IV Diogenes preparing for a rebellion in Asia Minor in order to regain the imperial throne against the Michael Doukas. But she was exiled to the island of Prinkipo with her sons because the letters she sent to Romanos IV was intercepted by the Emperor Michael VII. So she was pushed into the leading conspirator.⁵⁶ At any way, she and her family's members could be back to Constantinople after the ex-Emperor Romanos VI was executed by Michael VII. In the meantime, Alexios Komnenos attaining his majority supported the Emperor Michael VII to defend his throne in a revolt against the Doukas family in 1077. In compensation of his exploit he was promoted to high position in the court and even took a chance to marry Eirene Doukaina, granddaughter of kaisar John Doukas who held real power in the Doukas family. Anna Dalassene having still hatred against the Doukas family didn't agree to his son's marriage with Eirene Doukaina. Although, this marriage alliance made the Komnenian family a turning point to the great success in the 12th century.

57

When Nikephoros III Botaneiates (1078-1081) succeeded to imperial throne after the revolt against the Emperor Michel VII Doukas in 1078, Anna Dalassene was still sticking to her family strategy based on the marriage in order to have good opportunities for the Komnenian family's ascension. While she tried to marry her granddaughter (dead eldest son Manuel's daughter) the grandson of the Emperor Nikephoros III, she moved at the same time forward with the plan to succeed her own son to the imperial throne. Alexios and Issakios agreed with her mother's plan to abdicate the old Nikephoros III and they left Constantinople in order to raise an army of rebellion in Asia Minor. Meanwhile Anna took refuge in the Church of St. Sophia with the rest of her family's women and there she negotiated on the family's security with the Emperor Nikephoros III.⁵⁸

When Alexios Komnenos succeeded to the imperial throne at the age of 24 at the end of the military rebellion in 1081, Anna Dalassene had the most glorious period in her life. On his accession to the throne, the Emperor Alexios I, who must have still plunged in the military expeditions to deter the invasion of the Turkish army in Asia Minor, appointed her mother Anna to the '*despoina*' and attributed all his imperial power to her mother. According to the chrysobull issued by Alexsios at that time, the Emperor declared that her mother's making decisions will have the same value as his. Anna Dalassene having full confidences and all powers to reform the Empire could play the leading roles as

⁵⁶ Nicephoros Bryennios, *Nicephori Bryennii historiarum libri quattuor*, p.131.



⁵⁷ Nicephoros Bryennios, *Nicephori Bryennii historiarum libri quattuor*, p.143.6-9.

⁵⁸ Anna Komnene, p.65.13-15 ; Nicephoros Bryennios, *Nicephori Bryennii historiarum libri quattuor*, p.221.22-24. It is told that she declared not to remove from St. Sophia if the Emperor Nikephoros wouldn't take pledge on the cross for her family's security. After that, the Emperor accepted Anna's claim but her and her family members should have taken efugee in the monastery of *Petron* in Constnatinople until the rebellion was over in 1081.

regent for 15 years on behalf of her son. From this time on we can find Anna's official status changed to 'mother of emperor' (*metri tou basileos*). Thus it was officially appeared on the public documents or seals (see the seal below).⁵⁹

Fifteen years later, when the external threat against the Empire was almost gone and it was no longer necessary for Alexios to leave Constantinople for the military campaigns, Anna Dalassene realized that her long presence at Court became burden to his son and daughter-in-law. In the end, Anna was determined willingly to resign from politics and quietly retired to the monastery of '*Pantepoptes*' founded under her own patronage. And five years later, the first November in 1101/2, she died at her age of 71.⁶⁰ Below two seals of Anna Dalassene illustrate her dramatic life and long career representing the role and identity of the Byzantine elite women devoted to their family and Empire's integration at the end of the 11th century.

<Image III-1: Seal of Anna Dalassene >

	<p>Obverse) Inscription : <i>Μήτηρ Θεοῦ</i> (mother of God) Image) St. Maria's effigy: <i>Theotokos</i> (mother of God) stands in holding the young Jesus Christ in the right hand.</p>
	<p>Reverse) Inscription : <i>Θεοτόκε βοήθει τῇ σῇ δούλῃ "Ἄννῃ κουροπαλατίσῃ καὶ δομεστίκισσῃ τῇ Δαλασσηνῇ</i> "Mother of God, help your servant Anna Dalassene, <u>wife of kouropalates and domestikos</u>"</p>
<p>Date)1067-1081/ Source) Collection of Fogg Museum, no.732./ Diameter) 31mm</p>	



Maria, mother of God, is considered to be the most popular female saint patron and many Western and Byzantine Christian women preferred to cult her. From this time a different type of Maria

⁵⁹ Anna Komnene, p.101.37-39; p.101.44-103.95.

⁶⁰ Anna Komnene, p.100.10-35; Zonaras, p.18.24.10; the monastery of '*panepoptes*' was a male establishment dedicated to Jesus Christ and served by male monks. The fact that Anna Komnene retired at this male monastery reflects her powerful influence in Constantinople. On history of the monastery '*panepoptes*' in Constantinople, see Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin* vol. 3: *les églises et les monastères* (Paris 1969), p.277 et p.397.

appeared more frequently on various objects of art and architecture as well as on the seals. So the presence of Holy Maria on this seal symbolizes the rising status of Byzantine aristocratic women at the same period.⁶¹ On the other hand, the presence of Anna Dalassene's title and family name refers to her social position as well as the solidarity with her own family.

<Image III-2: Seal of Anna Dalassene>

	<p>Obverse) Inscription of 4 lines : <u>Κύριε βοήθει Ἄννη μοναχῇ τῇ Δαλασσηνῇ/</u> Lord (Jesus Christ), help Anna Dalassene and (followed by the inscription on reverse)</p>
	<p>Reverse) Inscription : <u>τῇ μητρὶ τοῦ βασιλέως/ (Mother of Emperor)</u></p>
<p>(Date) after 1081/ (Source) Hermitage Museum (St. Petersburg), no.6197.</p>	

On the above seal of Anna Dalassene we can observe that the cult on Jesus Christ was emphasized while the cult on Maria was emphasized on her seals issued before 1081. Taking into consideration

⁶¹ It is important to note that the Byzantine cult and image of Saint Maria had an impact on Western medieval society in the same period. We think that the Byzantine imperial princesses married to Western royal families could have played a considerable role in the religious acculturation of two different Christian Worlds. For example, Theophano, niece of the Byzantine Emperor Ioannes I Tzimiskes was married to Otto II, the Emperor of Holy Roman Empire in 972. At this time Theophano took many relics of Orthodoxe saints including St. Maria and the luxurious goods to German countries. After her marriage, being the Empress of the Holy Roman Empire, she made an effort to keep and diffuse the faith of Byzantine Orthodox in founding many churches and monasteries in Aachen, Frankfurt, Köln and Neimehen etc and also she made a devotion to educate her son Otto III around Byzantine culture at imperial court; on the roles of Byzantine princesses in foreign countries, see Judith Herrin, *Byzantium : The surprising Life of A Medieval Empire*, 이순호(역), 『비잔티움 : 어느 중세의 경이로운 이야기』 (글항아리, 2007), pp.415-416; On the medieval women's increasing position and the appearance of the Saint Maria's images, see Yong-ku Cha, *Discovering the Medieval Women : Eve's daughter becoming Saint Mother*, 차용구, 『중세 여성의 발견 : 이브의 딸 성녀가 되었다』 (한길사 2011), pp.127-167.

that Anna founded the male monastery "Pan-epoptes" and dedicated it to Jesus Christ, the evidence of the seal illustrates a changing pattern in Anna's social position and religious identity between the years of 1081-1087. It is also interesting that her title "mother of emperor" was emphasized on the above seal dated after 1081. This evidence confirms also her role and identity changed around the year of 1081.

On the other hand, the above list II mention two women from the family of Makrembolitissa and Pegonitissa who could be identified being relatives of the Doukas family by marriage. Because the contemporary literary source tells us of the marriage of the Emperor Konstantinos X Doukas to Eudokia Makrembolitissa in the second half of the 11th century and that Eudokia's family members participated in the complot with the Doukas family against the emperor Michael IV. In case of the Pegonitissa, It is told that Eirene was married to John Doukas, brother of the Emperor Konstantinos X Doukas. The title marked on her seal, '*magistros, and vestarchos kai doukaina*' confirms her husband's high court position before 1059.⁶²

By the way, the presence of the family name of Synadenos, Komnenos, Maniakes, Melissenos, and Tornikios demonstrates the identities and activities of noble women from the powerful clans in Asia Minor or Balkans. For example, Maria Bryennios could be identified to a woman who supported her own family Bryennios when Nikephoros Bryennios raised a revolt against the Emperor Michael VII in 1077-78. Thus we can now identify the role of aristocratic women who participated in the competition for imperial throne in the course of the 11th century.⁶³

The Brachamios, Radenos, Moseles, Bourtzes were also well known for the military families who had a significant influence in the 11th century. Especially, it is told that the Radenos had offered a few high functionaries from the 10th century on and that a number of family members served the Emperor Romam III Argyros as his faithful servants in the 11th century. It is known that two persons from the Radenos held the office of *eparchos* (governor of Constantinople) in the 11th century. The title '*patrikia zoste*' held by Eirene Radenos confirms that her family was of the civil faction in Constantinople in the same period. On the other hand, the Philokales were the family whose member accomplished public services of the high military and civil offices under the reign of the Basil II. The identity of the Chrysotzepoulinos, Pekoulinos, Metalinos and Tripolitanos are not found in the literary sources but we can only suppose that they would have been local families who had settled in the

⁶² A woman representing the Doukas family was the Empress Eirene Doukaina, wife of the Emperor Alexsios I Komnenos. Her role and career are not well known in the literary sources until 1090's. It seems that it was because of Anna Dalassene's powerful influence at court in imperial Palace.

⁶³ According to the literary source, it is said that aristocratic women were participating in rebellion in the late of the 1080's. For example, Anna *kouropalattissa* and Batatzina, mother and female relative of the rebel Nikephoros Bryennios, supported the rebellious troops at Raidestos, see Miguel Ataliates, *Historia*, Pérez Martin(ed.et tr.) (Madrid 2002), p.177, p.179-180; Nikephoros Bryennios, *Nicephori Bryennii historiarum libri quattuor*, p.225, p.281.

Bulgaria in the 11th century.⁶⁴

It is known that the Byzantine aristocratic society had been changed under the reign of the Komnenos Dynasty of the 12th century. It was above all because the Emperor Alexios Komnenos had reformed the court imperial elite on the base of the faction who supported his imperial succession. In this course, he promoted all his family members to the top ranks in the court hierarchy in order to concentrate and integrate all powers into the Komnenos dynasty. It is also known that this measure was taken and achieved under his mother's Anna Dalassene regency (1081-1095) at the end of 11th century. So the presence of the following seals of 12th century illustrates the influence of Anna Dalassene at Court on the contemporary aristocratic society in Byzantium.

< List III: wife of *sebastos* in the 12 century >⁶⁵

- *Dalassene Irene*, wife of *sebastos*.
- *Dalassene Theodora*, wife of *sebastos*.
- *Dalassene Xene*, wife of *sebastos*.
- *Bryennissa Anna*, wife of *sebastos*.
- *Kamytzina Anna*, wife of *sebastos*.
- *Kantakouzinad*, wife of *sebastos*.
- *Kontostephanina Eudocia*, wife of *mega drongarios*
- *Kontostephanina Theodora*, wife of *sebastos* and *mega domestikos*
- *Radene Irene*, wife of *sebastos*.
- *Synadene Irene*, wife of *sebastos*.
- *Syrenade Eudokia*, wife of *sebastos* and nun.

It is significant that the wife of '*sebastos*' was more frequently attested from the 12th century. Because it confirms that this honorary title *sebastos*, originally the dignity honouring one or two imperial family members, came to be attributed to several imperial men having a close kinship tie with the Komnenian emperors (emperor's brother, cousin, nephew, brother-in-law and son-in-law) in the same period. Thus, we can also identify on the above list the aristocratic women who arranged a marriage with the Komnenian family members. First of all, the presence of three Dalassenos' women

⁶⁴ On women of the Komnenian family in 12th century, B. Hill, *Imperial Women in Byzantium, 1025-1204: Power, Patronage and Ideology* (London, 1999); Lynda Garland, *Byzantine empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium AD 527-1204*, pp.180-224.

⁶⁵ Collection of Dumbarton Oaks, no.85. 106.4133, no.58 106 4916, no.58.106. 1814; Collection of Fogg Museum, no.1208, no.251; Collection de Zacos (BNF) no.245, no.230-231 ; J.-C. Cheynet-J.-F. Vannier, *Études prosopographiques*, p.109 ; I.Jordanov, "Pecati na vizantijski sevasti ot teritorijata na Bulgarija", *Numismatika i sfragistika* 5/2 (1998),no.34; Ch.Stavrakos, *Die byzantinische Bleisiegel mit Familiennamen aus der Sammlung des Numismatischen Museums Athens* (Wiesbaden,2000),no.216; V.Laurent, *Le Corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantine*,vol.5/2,no.1468.I; I.Jordanov,*Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria*, vol.2, no.683; V. Laurent, *Le Corpus des sceaux byzantines*,vol.II,no.897.

confirms the same family's continuing power and influence at the imperial court in the 12th century. On the other hand, we can also identify several different families, for example, the family Bryennios, Kamytzina, Kontostepanos, Radenos and Synadenos, who had supported the Komnenian family from the second half of the 11th century and were after all promoted to the top rank of the aristocratic class through the marriage alliance with the imperial family in the 12th century.

<List IV: Women of the Komnenian family in the 12th century >⁶⁶

- Maria Komnene, wife of *sebastos*, sister of emperor (*autadelphie tou basileos*)
- Maria Komnene, granddaughter of *sebastokrator* (*engone tou aoidimou Sebastokratoros*)
- Anna Komnene, daughter of kaisar (*thygatros kaisarisses*)
- Anna Komnene, daughter of Andronikos *sebastokrator* (*paid' Andronikou*)

On the above list IV, we can observe some Komnenian family's ladies emphasizing their kinship tie with the imperial family's male members; granddaughter and grandfather, a daughter and father, a sister and brother).

<List V: Women of the Komnenos family in the 12th century >⁶⁷

- Andronikos Komnenos, emperor's nephew (*anepsis*), son (*uios*) of **Eudokia born in purple salon** (*ex Eudokias porphyrophyous ekphyeis rizes klados*) and Theodoros Batatzes.
- Alexios, son of **Theodora of the Komnenian family** (*paidos Komnenes eutuchous Theodoras*).
- Michael Strypnos, *mega drongarios* and husband of **Empress Theodora** (*augustadelphes syzygou Theodoras*)
- Alexios Komnenos-Palaologos, despotes, Emperor's son-in-law (*gambros*), husband of **Emperor's first daughter** (*protopaida Basilissan Eirenen*).
- Theodoros Komnenos-Laskaris, despotes, husband of **Emperor's daughter Anna** (*anaktopaidos syzygon Annes*).

On the above list V, we can find the imperial family's male members emphasizing their kinship tie with the imperial family's female member (son of Eudokia born in purple salon, son of Theodora of the Komnenos family, husband of Empress Theodora, husband of Emperor's first daughter). In the light of the evidence on the list IV and V we can understand the imperial women's roles and positions significantly increased in the course of 12th century.

< List VI: Women of the Komnenina family in the 12th century >⁶⁸

- Eudocia Komnene, *porphyrophyne* (see the below image 4)
- Maria Komnene, *porphyrogenneta* (see the below image 5)

⁶⁶ G.Zacos and A.Veglery, *Byzantines Leads Seals*, vol.1,no.2712,2720,2722,2733,2730,2726,2749,2752,2753,2728, 2729,2731.



⁶⁷ *Ibid.* no. 2730, 2726, 2749, 2752, 2753.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* no, 2728, 2729, 2731.

- *Maria Komnene, porphyrogenneta*, daughter of the Emperor Alexios Komnenos

On the above list VI, we can see the princesses of the Komnenos family adding the epithet ‘*porphyrogenneta*’ (born in purple salon) in their title which means the legitimate birth of the imperial family. It is well known that this epithet ‘*porphyrogennetos*’ was originated to make sure the imperial succession under the reign of the emperor Konstantinos V in the 8th century. One century later, when the emperor Leo VI obtained his son Konstantinos at the end of his fourth marriage with Zoe Karbonopsina, he emphasized much more this epithet ‘*porphyrogennetos*’ for his only male heir Konstantinos. After that, this term had an extended meaning of the imperial successor’s legitimate birth. And One century later in the absence of the imperial male heir as the imperial princesses Zoe and Theodora even succeeded collectively to imperial throne in 1042, the adding of epithet ‘*porphyrogenneta*’ gained the same importance in the imperial succession. Thus, the presence of this epithet on the seal of Komnenian princesses confirms the Komnenian family daughters’ position and role climaxed in the course of the 12th century.⁶⁹



<Image IV: Seal of Eudokia Komnene >

	<p>Obverse) Inscription : Μητηρ Θεοῦ Effigy: Mother of God in standing position. Description : She is praying in holding Jesus Christ</p>
	<p>Reverse) Inscription: Κόρη παναμώμητε, σὴν λατρὶν σκεποῖς πορφυροφυῆ Κομνηνῆν Εὐδοκίαν/Eudokia Komnene born in purple salon.</p>
<p>Date) 12th century; Source: G. Zacos–A. Vegliery, <i>Byzantine Lead Seals I</i> (Basel, 1972), no. 2729.</p>	

⁶⁹ On the ‘*porphyrogennetos*’, see Judith Herrin, *Byzantium: The surprising Life of A Medieval Empire*, 이순호 (역), 『비잔티움 어느 중세의 경이로운 이야기』(글항아리, 2007), pp.379-390.

The above seal's holder could be identified to be Eudokia Komnene, the youngest daughter of the Emperor Ioannes II Komnenos (1118-1143) and the wife of Theodore Batatzes. Her husband Theodore was *Pansebastohypertatos*, one of the highest dignitaries of the Empire in 12th century. It is interesting to note that the imperial family name 'Komnene' and the epithet '*porphyrogenneta*' were marked at the same time on the seal.

<Image V: the Seal of Maria Komnene>

	<p>Obverse) Inscription : Μητηρ Θεοῦ Image) St. Maris's effigy : Mother of God seated in throne and holding the young Jesus Christ on the knee</p>
	<p>Reverse) Inscription: Μαρία πορφυρογέννητος ἢ Κομνηνή : Maria Komnene Porphyrogennetos.</p>
<p>Date: the second half of the 12 century. Source: G. Zacos–A.Veglery, <i>Byzantine Lead Seals I</i> (Basel, 1972), no.2728.</p>	

The holder of this seal is indentified to be the oldest daughter of the Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1143-80). She made an engagement to Alexios, son of Hungarian king Bela. But her betrothal was broken off when Alexios II, son of the Emperor Manuel I was born in 1169. After then, she was married to the prince Renier of Monferra in 1180. So this seal shows the official position that Maria held as imperial heiress after her marriage with Renier of Monferra.

< List VII: wife of kouropalates >⁷⁰

- *Akropolitissa Maria*, wife of kouropalates (*kuropalatissa*)
- *Argyropoulina Maria*, wife of kouropalates
- *Doxiane Maria*, wife of kouropalates

⁷⁰ Collection of Dumbarton Oaks Museum, no.47.2.1019,no.56.106.1987,no.56.106,2873; S.Šandrovskaja-W.Seibt, *Byzantinische Bleisiegel der Staatlichen Ermitage mit Familiennamen*.1.Teil, no.29, no.75; W.Seibt-M.Zarnitz, *Das byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk*.(Vienne 1997),no.3.2.1.

- *Karantene Maria*, wife of kouropalates
- *Kastamonitissa Maria*, wife of kouropalates
- *Radene Eudokia*, wife of kouropalates
- *Romaia Anna*, wife of protokouropalates.

<List VIII: Women without husband's title>⁷¹

- *Alopina Irene*
- *Antiochissa Irene*
- *Antiochissa Petraliphaina Theodora* (1200)
- *Batazina Maria*
- *Iasitene Irene*
- *Kantakouzene*
- *Skleraina Theodora*
- *Synadene Eudokia*

The above list VII and VIII show a group of the noble women placed at the middle or low ranks of the aristocracy in the 12th century. Because the title *kouropalates* which had been attributed to one or two dignitaries having close kinship with emperor until the end of the 11th century, was declined to the modest dignity attributed to the middle and low functionaries in the course of 12th century. As for the women without their husband's title, they could be also identified to be daughters of families not illustrious in the 12th century.⁷² Although the presence of these women's family names on the seals such as the Akropolitissa, Alopina, Antiochissa, Argyropoulos, Romaia refers to the identities of the families who had seen the most glorious period in the reign of the Macedonian dynasty in the 10th and 11th century but lost the wealth and powers in failing to make marriage alliance with the Komnenian dynasty in the course of the 12th century.

IV. CONCLUSION

Now we can sum up the general points from what we have analysed; Firstly, the presence of a different rank of titles on the seals demonstrates some sort of power and influence that the Byzantine elite women had wielded not only for their family's promotion but also

⁷¹ Collection de Zacos(BNF),no.847; Collection of Dumbarton Oaks Museum,no.55.1.4553; Collection de l'Institut Français des Études Byzantines, no.676; Kunstmuseum de Vienne (MK 361); W.Seibt, *Skleroi*, n.31; S. Šandrovskaja-W. Seibt, *Byzantinische Bleisiegel der Staatlichen Ermitage mit Familiennamen*.1. n.18; *Studies of Byzantin Sigillography*, vol.5, p.132.

⁷² On the reform of the imperial hierarchy under the emperor Alexsios I Komnenos, see N.Oikonomides, L'évolution de l'organisation administrative de l'empire byzantine au XIe siècle (1025-1118), *Travaux et Mémoire*, vol.6 (1976), pp.125-152.

for the Empire's integration. Literary and sigillographic sources describe that these female leaders' influences were very significant in the historical events. The presence of empress' official title '*basilissa*' on the seal, which used to be attributed to the imperial wives and mothers or later even to daughters, represents clearly the elite women's roles and identities in Byzantium. Moreover the empress' effigy on the seals reveals also the elite women's most public **self-images**. If an emperor-husband died leaving a young heir, then it was expected that the child's mother would act as regent and if an emperor-husband was unable to carry out his duties then his empress-wife stepped in the public life.

Secondly, the different type of names and titles on the seals reflects changing patterns of the elite women's roles in the course of 7th and 12th centuries. Between the 7th and the 10th centuries, the remaining seals for empresses and aristocratic women are much less. It might be because the Empire was the most concerned with its military survival against the Arabs. One of the dominant images of empresses from this period was as **wife and mother**. Nonetheless two empresses were responsible for the restoration of icons during the period of Iconoclasm. Between these two, Eirene was the sole ruling Empress. The other iconophile Empress Theodora is portrayed in written and sigillographic sources as anxious for the salvation of her iconoclast husband and regent for her son. It is significant that the seals of the noble women come to the fore at the same period.

Thirdly, the addition of the family name to given name on the seals illustrates the elite women's roles and identities changing from the 11th century. We could understand that from the empress Zoe through to the women of the Komnenian dynasty, aristocratic ladies did on occasion wield imperial power for themselves and certainly provided a force to be reckoned with. Especially Anna Dalassene's dramatic life and long career confirms that, from the 11th century, the **daughters** of noble families played more significant role in favor of their families as bearers of lineage and property while the aristocracy extended its power within the Byzantium.

Finally, the different kinship-tie on the seals implies that the women had access to political power through the relationship with their family male members. This might be as mother (the empress Eirene and Theodora⁷³), wife (the empress Theodora⁷⁴ and Anna Dalassene) and daughter (the empresses Zoe and Theodora⁷⁵). Thus, in the course of the 12th century, the increasing numbers of the kinship ties on the seals demonstrate that the roles and identities of aristocratic women were the most formulated in public domains when their social position reached the climax.

⁷³ The mother of the emperor Michael III.

⁷⁴ The wife of Theophilos, same person as the mother of the emperor Michael III.

⁷⁵ The daughter of the emperor Konstantinos VIII, different person from the precedent reference