



Summary :

Aristocratic family from the Pontos. The activity of the family of Doranites had been closely connected to the internal strife in the Empire of Trebizond, which broke out during the reign of Irene Palaiologina (1340-1341) and continued to torment and divide the Empire until the first years of the reign of Alexios III Grand Komnenos (1349-1390). Their relations with the imperial throne were restored during the third quarter of the 14th century.

Date and Place of Birth

Before 1204, Dryona (Kobata), Eastern Pontos

Main Role

Aristocratic family

1. The Doranites family

1.1. Background and evolution (13th century)

The noble family of the Doranites came from the countryside of [Trebizond](#), probably Dryona (Kobata). Their first appearance is in 1204, during the foundation of the [Empire of Trebizond](#). This family is considered to be one of the native families of the area of [Pontos](#)¹ who supported the Grand Komnenoi in their effort to establish themselves in the area, providing both people and material help. However, there is not much information on the members of the family during that period.

1.2. Prime (14th century)

During the 14th century, the Doranites were considered among the wealthiest families of landowners in the Empire of Trebizond. They owned land in [Mesochaldia](#), also the centre of their activities, while they ascended the hierarchy of the imperial court and of the Church by receiving titles such as [protovestiarios](#), judges of the imperial court, [megas oikonomos](#) of the Great Church. Their role in the political scene was also crucial, as they actively participated in the [internal strife](#) of the Empire in the 14th century.

At the time, the great noble families sparked the beginning of revolts, which often turned into civil wars fuelled also by the differences between them. The Doranites played a leading part in these revolts and have continuously worked with other noble families such as the [Scholarios](#), the [Kabasitai](#), the Kamachenoi, the Tzanichites, aiming to enhance their political power and establish a social and political balance. Information on the evolution of this family during the 15th century is scarce. We do not know anything about the family after the [fall of the Empire of Trebizond](#) to the Ottomans in 1461/3.

2. The Doranites and their involvement to the internal strife

2.1. The family during the reign of Eirene Palaiologina

The activities of the Doranites have been closely linked to the internal disputes in the Empire of Trebizond, which broke out during the reign of [Eirene Palaiologina](#) (1340-1341) and continued to divide the Empire until the first years of the reign of [Alexios III Grand Komnenos](#). The Trebizondian aristocracy was, at the time, represented by two main groups: the Scholarioi, who were loyal to the Constantinopolitan traditions and the native [Amytzentarios](#). These two groups revolted with the aim to establish a new social and political situation,² taking advantage of the political void after the death of [Basil Great Komnenos](#) (1332-1340); he had no heir from his legal wife Eirene Palaiologina (1340-1341) and, furthermore, the empress was proving unable to establish herself as a ruler. The Doranites family sided with the Scholarioi, working closely with them.

In 1340, the Doranites, together with the families of Meizomates, Kabasites and Kamachenoi, supported the Scholarioi against



Eirene Palaiologina, and they fortified themselves in the [monastery of St Eugenios](#), which was the centre of expeditions against the empress. A member of the family mentioned by name is [Constantine Doranites](#), without any other information. After the defeat of the rebels by the imperial army, everyone involved was arrested and led to the fortress of Limnion, while the monastery was burned to the ground.³

2.2. The revolt of the family during the reign of Anna Anachoutlou

After the suppression of the revolt in the monastery of St Eugeniou the Doranites are absent from the sources; they reappear to the political scene a year later with the fall of the empress Eirene⁴ and the rise to the throne of [Anna Anachoutlou](#) (1341-1342), sister of the former Emperor of Trebizond Basil Grand Komnenos. After Anna's rise to power, the prevalence of the native Amytzentarioi drove the Scholarioi to make several consecutive efforts to overthrow the new empress; other noble families, the Doranites included, supported their actions. The future emperor (1344-1349) [Michael Grand Komnenos](#), brother of [Alexios II Grand Komnenos](#) (1297-1330), and later on his son John, the future [John III](#) (1342-1344) were in charge of the noble families' efforts to remove Anna from the throne. The Doranites were once again active in the political events during the reign of Anna Anachoutlou (1341-1342), supporting the political choices of the Scholarioi.

2.3. The Doranites during the reign of John III and Michael

Constantine Doranitis and his son John fled to [Constantinople](#) after the first fruitless attempt of Michael Grand Komnenos to become Emperor in 1340. Together with other aristocrats they appear to accompany John Grand Komnenos, the future John III (1342-1344) in Trebizond, when he tried to overthrow Anna Anachoutlou and seize power. However, afterwards, the Doranites appear to be part of the group of nobles who recalled Michael Grand Komnenos, father of the Emperor John III. The latter's insistence to keep his father in exile⁵ had turned some members of the Trebizondian aristocracy against him.⁶

After Michael ascended to the throne (1344-1349), the Doranites enjoyed the favour of the new emperor since they had played an important role to his rise to power. Therefore, when Michael honoured the nobles who had helped him, giving them the highest titles and offices of the empire, Constantine Doranites became *protovestiaris*, while his son John became *pinkernes*.

2.4. The Doranites during the reign of Alexios III

During the reign of Alexios III Grand Komnenos (1349-1390) the family of the Doranites received several blows, which reduced their political influence. Alexios did not have the power to control the aristocratic families who were fighting each other. Therefore, he found himself allied with members of several families and arresting others, according to the occasion. Within this policy, at the beginning of June 1350,⁷ Constantine Doranitis and his brother, the *megas stratopedarches*, [Theodore Doranites](#) (Pilelis) were arrested. They were incarcerated for a short time, together with other members of their family, in a prison especially established to house the *archontes*. Later on, however, the relations of the family with the emperor appeared to have improved, since on January 1351, Theodore Doranites received the title of *protovestiaris*,⁸ while in September of the same year, Constantine was already *kephalatikeyon* of the area of Limnion.

However, this respite was temporary, since on that same year, the Doranites were once again involved in conspiracies against Alexios. Theodore, with his son, his son-in-law Xenites and his children occupied the castle of Koulas, that is the [acropolis](#) of Trebizond. In this process, they captured the *megas doux*, [Niketas Scholares](#). At the same time, Constantine had [established his own power](#) in the area of Limnion while the emperor appeared to send against him armies with his mother [Eirene of Trebizond](#) in the head.⁹ Alexios successfully confronted the rebels of Koulas, whom he punished severely. A year after their fruitless revolt and their imprisonment in the castle of Kegchrinas, he ordered for them to be killed. In July 1352, Theodore and the other members of his family were strangled to death. The Doranites' execution also marked the severe reduction of their political power and influence.

3. Renewal of the Doranites' relations with the throne



Almost twenty years later, the Emperor Alexios III, in an act of good will towards the Doranites, tried to put an end to the internal discords that had tormented the Empire for a long time. So, in 1371, he issued a **chrysobull**, bestowing upon George Doranitis the right to inherit the village of Chorobe, given to George's father at an unknown time by the emperor Basil Grand Komnenos (1332-1340). In this chrysobull, George is called *oikeios*, a person of the inner circle of the emperor, while he seems to have the title of *amytzantarios* (a higher military official of the court). At the same time, in a document of the [monastery of Vazelon](#) he appears as *krites* (judge) of the imperial court and *megas oikonomos* of the Great Church.

The high offices bestowed upon George Doranitis are indicative of the emperor's attitude towards the family: The Doranites appear to have been forgiven for their consecutive efforts to overthrow the emperor, have returned to their land and were once again occupying positions of power, both political and ecclesiastical. Their good relations with the house of the Grand Komnenoi seem to have remained that way until the fall of their Empire to the Ottomans, as there is reference of another member of their family, John Doranitis, who was **protopapas** in 1432, under John IV Grand Komnenos (1429-1458).

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1. Other aristocratic families, such as the Tzanichites, the Kabasites and the Kamachenoi, also contributed to the rise of the Grand Komnenoi in Pontos. See Χρυσάνθος Φιλιππίδης, μητροπολίτης Τραπεζούντος, «Η Εκκλησία Τραπεζούντος», *Αρχαίον Πόντου* 4-5 (1933), pp. 56, 234, and Janssens, E., *Trebizonde en Colchide* (Bruxelles 1969), p. 67.
 2. See Λυμπερόπουλος, Β., *Ο Βυζαντινός Πόντος. Η αυτοκρατορία της Τραπεζούντας* (Athens 1999), p. 138.
 3. The revolt came to an end when the eunuch and *megas doux* John arrived to Trebizond from Constantinople to support the Empress. See Bredenkamp, F., "The Doranites family of the 14th century Byzantine Empire of Trebizond", *Βυζαντιακά* 19 (1999), p. 245. It is not clearly known how Constantine Doranitis was involved in this revolt or whether or not was among the people who were arrested at the time.
 4. Irene Palaiologina was forced to leave the throne, after the opposition organised in Lazia by Anna and the people's rage after the fire in Trebizond following the attack of the Turkomans on 4 July 1341. See Ahrweiler-Γλύκατζη, Ε., «Η αυτοκρατορία της Τραπεζούντας», in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους Θ': Υστεροβυζαντινοί χρόνοι (1204-1453)* (Athens 1980), pp. 325-364, 333.
 5. The failed attempt of Michael Grand Komnenos to overthrow Anna Anachoutlou resulted in his arrest and was limited in the area of Oinaion and then at Limnia. See Βλ. Χρυσάνθος Φιλιππίδης, μητροπολίτης Τραπεζούντος, «Η Εκκλησία Τραπεζούντος», *Αρχαίον Πόντου* 4-5 (1933), p. 242.
 6. Niketas Scholaris helped Michael escape in March 1344 and to return to Trebizond (3 May 1344) in order to overthrow his son John III Grand Komnenos, who was exiled to the cave-temple of St Sabbas. See Χρυσάνθος Φιλιππίδης, μητροπολίτης Τραπεζούντος, «Η Εκκλησία Τραπεζούντος», *Αρχαίον Πόντου* 4-5 (1933), pp. 243-244.
 7. This opinion is expressed by A. Bryer: see Bryer, A., "The Estates of the Empire of Trebizond. Evidence for their resources, products, agriculture, ownership and location", *Αρχαίον 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 the arrest of members of the Doranites family in June 1351: see Bredenkamp, F., "The Doranites family of the 14th century Byzantine Empire of Trebizond", *Βυζαντιακά* 19 (1999), p. 246.
 8. The emperor bestowed upon Theodore Doranitis the title of *protobestiarios* after the conspiracy of the former *protobestiarios* Leon Kabasitis. See Λυμπερόπουλος, Β., *Ο Βυζαντινός Πόντος. Η αυτοκρατορία της Τραπεζούντας* (Athens 1999), p. 165.
 9. F. Bredenkamp believes that Alexios III's mother Eirene of Trebizond remained in the house of Doranitis in 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 :

	chrysobull
(gold seal) Imperial document of the Byzantine state which was so named because it bore the gold seal of the emperor.	
	kephalatikeuon
There were two <i>kephalatikeuontai</i> of the capital, Byzantine officials who assumed from the 14th century the responsibilities of the eparch of the city.	
	megas doukas
The commander of the Byzantine fleet (from 1092 onwards). In the Late Byzantine period, the title of the <i>megas doukas</i> was assigned to the highest officials of the imperial administration/army.	
	megas oikonomos
High-ranking official of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. In the 11th century the epithet <i>megas</i> was attached to the title of <i>oikonomos</i> , who was responsible for managing the economics of the Great Church of Constantinople.	
	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.

protopapas

Ecclesiastical officer with ecclesiastical duties. He was second head priest in command after the bishop.

protovestiarios

(and protovestiarites) Honoric 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

1340: The Doranites support the Scholarioi against Eirene Palaiologina. The rebels are defeated in the monastery of St Eugenios.

1341: The Doranites take part in the efforts for the overthrow of Anna Anachoutlou.

1341: The Doranites support Michael Grand Komnenos. The rebels are exiled to Constantinople.

1342: The Doranites support the Scholarioi in favour of John III Grand Komnenos.

1344: The Doranites support Michael Grand Komnenos.

1352: Failed revolt of Constantine Doranitis against Alexios III Komnenos. The rebels flee to the acropolis of Trebizond but are finally imprisoned in the castle of Kegchrinas.

1353: Execution of the rebels of Koulas (the acropolis of Trebizond)

Before 1390: Members of the Doranites' family occupy high offices of the court and Church.

Auxiliary Catalogs

1. List of known Doranites

Doranitis, under Alexios III Grand Komnenos (1204-1222)

Doranitis, John, *pinkernis*, under Michael Grand Komnenos (1344-1349)



Doranitis, Constantine, *protobestiarios* under Michael Grand Komnenos (1344-1349), *kephalatikeuon* of Limnia under Alexios III Grand Komnenos (1349-1390)

Doranitis, Theodore (Pilelis), *megas stratopedarches* under Alexios III Grand Komnenos (1349-1390)

Doranitis, George, *oikeios, amyztantarios, krites* of the imperial court, *megas oikonomos* of the Great Church under Alexios III Grand Komnenos. (1349-1390)

Doranitis, John, *protopapas* under John IV Grand Komnenos (1429-1458)

2. List of the emperors of Trebizond

Alexios I (1204 -1222)

Andronikos I (Gidon) (1222 - 1235)

John I (Axouchos) (1235 -1238)

Manuel II (1238 -1263)

Andronikos II (1263 -1266)

George (Planos) (1266 - 1280)

John II (1280 -1285)

Theodora (1285)

John II (again 1285 - 1297)

Alexios II (1297 -1230)

Andronikos III (1330 -1332)

Manuel II (1332)

Basil (1332 -1340)

Eirene Palaiologina (1340 - 1341)

Anna (Anachoutlou) (1341-1342)

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)

Alexios I (1204 -1222)

Andronikos I (Gidon) (1222 - 1235)

John I (Axouchos) (1235 -1238)

Manuel II (1238 -1263)

Andronikos II (1263 -1266)

George (Planos) (1266 - 1280)

John II (1280 -1285)

Theodora (1285)

John II (again 1285 - 1297)

Alexios II (1297 -1230)

Andronikos III (1330 -1332)

Manuel II (1332)

Basil (1332 -1340)

Eirene Palaiologina (1340 - 1341)

Anna (Anachoutlou) (1341-1342)

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)