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# *Offspring of Vipers: the attitude of the ‘eastern’ literati towards their ‘ὁμογενεῖς’ of the ‘west’ under the new socio-political conditions of the late Byzantine period*

*Pantelis Papageorgiou*

The dissolution and the fragmentation of the Byzantine empire in 1204 by the Crusaders resulted in a redefinition of the Byzantines’ self-identification on account of their juxtaposition to the Latin invaders.<sup>1</sup> At this historical turning-point, a reevaluation of Byzantium’s classical heritage had begun which led in a general use of the term “Hellene” among Byzantine intellectuals.<sup>2</sup> As a result, this late Byzantine period that started with the Latin domination of Romania is strongly connected to the origins of modern Hellenism by prominent historians.<sup>3</sup>

In these new post-1204 geopolitical terms, new Latin political entities were created in the former imperial territory; In addition, there were also three states, unrelated to each other in their origin, whose leaders claimed the continuity of the Byzantine empire. Two of them, Nicaea and Trebizond, were established in Asia Minor and the third in the Greek northwestern frontiers, in Epirus. It should be noted that those three Byzantine states fought against the western conquerors separately. Moreover, they were often in a conflict not only in the battlefield but also in ideological and political matters on account of their common

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<sup>1</sup> Angelov 2005, 300; Gounarides 1986, 254; Laiou 1974, 17; Malamut 2014, 167-168.

<sup>2</sup> Angelov 2019, 205; Angold 1975, 65; Beaton 2007, 94; Mergiali 2018, 120; Page 2008, 126; Vryonis 1999, 32-33.

<sup>3</sup> Chatzis 2005, 170, 225; Svoronos 2004, 63, 69-70.

goal, i.e. Constantinople's recovery from the Latins. It is also worth highlighting that the Greek national and the European romantic historiography have considered the controversy between the "Greek" states of Nicaea and Epirus as the main cause for the survival of the Latin Empire of Constantinople for more than half a century.<sup>4</sup>

The collective self-definition of the Byzantines and its social aspects is an issue that has recently generated a great deal of heated debate among scholars.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the varying meanings of key terms, such as *Ρωμαῖος*, *Ἕλληνας*, *Γραικός* in Byzantine sources of the late period have been interpreted through different points of view by academics in particular papers and scholarly congresses.<sup>6</sup>

In this paper we are not concerned with the aforementioned terms in connection with the formation of a neo-Hellenic national consciousness at its incipient stage. The purpose is to focus upon Byzantine learned works originated in the primary "eastern" centers of power, the Nicaean court and after 1261 among the circles of Constantinopolitan literati,<sup>7</sup> in order to reconstruct their point of view of their "western" kindred people (*ὁμογενεῖς*), primarily the Epirotes. Specifically, this paper will examine exemplary works such as historical texts, orations and autobiographies in order to detect the formal perception of "eastern" erudite of the leading family, the ruling elites and the inhabitants of the state of Medieval Epirus.

To begin with, it is necessary to note that in the post-1204 geopolitical conditions, the traditional meaning of many historical terms had been modified. Significant transformations were clearly illustrated in the writings of the educated elites of Nicaea and Constantinople, where the state of Medieval Epirus (commonly known as "Despotate" in the modern bibliography) was described in geographical terms such as *δύσις*

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<sup>4</sup> Miller 1908, 83, 96; Paparrigopoulos 1887, 57-58, 67.

<sup>5</sup> Kaldellis 2017, 174, 207; Stouraitis 2014, 175-220.

<sup>6</sup> Kioussopoulou 2000, 135-142; Papadopoulou 2014, 157-176; Mergiali 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Mergiali 2018b, 61-62, where a commentary of the term "intellectual" related to the Byzantine reality and its uses in the modern bibliography and p. 81, where a classification of representative *types* of literati is detected in Constantinople during the Palaiologan era.

or “ἑσπέρα” (west) in contrast to the “ἕω” (east) which was considered to be the legal center of power.<sup>8</sup>

Niketas Choniates by referring to the splitting of the former imperial territory after 1204, included among the “tyrannies” (*τυραννίδας*) that were formed in the western parts of the Greek mainland (*ἑσπέρα*), the state of Medieval Epirus. In effect, he used the verb “usurp” (*ιδιώσατο*) in order to describe the way that power had been acquired by Michael I Komnenos.<sup>9</sup> It is conspicuous that by choosing this particular terminology, the historian aimed to delegitimize the existence of the state of Epirus and its ruler’s power. For this reason, Choniates included Michael among other powerful members of the Byzantine local elites, such as Sgouros and Chamaretos in Peloponnesus, who expressed centrifugal tendencies before Constantinople’s fall to the Latins and profited from the new political circumstances.<sup>10</sup>

According to the historian of the Nicaean empire, George Akropolites, the members of the leading family of Komenoι who took control of Epirus were just the rulers of the “western” parts (*τὰ δυτικά μέρη/ τὰ ἐν δυσμῇ*) which were occasionally defined by natural boundaries such as mountains or rivers.<sup>11</sup> The historian did not outline the nature of their political formation and their power was delineated with geographical terms only. He also denied them any share in imperial power, after the

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<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that in the sources of the period under study the geographical limits of the terms “δύσις” or “ἑσπέρα” (west) as also the meaning of the adjectives “δυτικός” and “ἑσπέριος” (westerner) vary depending upon the context of the text in which the terms are located. Thus, the terms cannot be limited only as definition of the territories of the state of Medieval Epirus, as it is possible to encompass also cities or fortresses of other “western” areas, such as Macedonia or the so-called “παλαιὰν Ἡπειρον” (Old Epirus), which were temporarily under the authority of the Byzantine emperors. A more detailed research would surely be a worthwhile undertaking for the future in order to separately clarify the geographical viewpoints of each historian or rhetorician.

<sup>9</sup> Choniates, *Χρονικὴ διήγησις* (ed. van Dieten), 638.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 638: *οἱ ἐκ τῶν Ρωμαίων τύραννοι.*

<sup>11</sup> Akropolites, *Χρονικὴ συγγραφή* (ed. Heisenberg & Wirth), 157: *καὶ τὰ ἐν δυσμῇ μέχρι καὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ Ναξειοῦ ποταμοῦ*; 166: *τῶν οἰκείων ὄρων, εἶπουν τῶν Πυρρηναίων ὄρων, ἃ δὴ διορίζει τὴν παλαιὰν τε καὶ τὴν νέαν Ἡπειρον τῆς Ἑλληνίδος καὶ ἡμετέρας γῆς*; 171: *τὰ Πυρρηναῖα ὑπερβάντες ὄρη.*

integration of the city of Thessaloniki, into their new extended territory whose eastern limit was the city of Adrianople. In this regard, Theodoros Komnenos, after his proclamation and coronation as emperor, was considered to be an usurper (*τῆς βασιλείας σφετερισάμενος*) who acted against the Nicaean political order: *μὴ θέλων μένειν ἐν τῇ οἰκείᾳ τάξει*.<sup>12</sup> The historian implicitly specified the office that the emperor of Thessaloniki should hold: he should be a Despot (*τῶν δευτερείων μετέχειν τῆς βασιλείας*), i.e. Nicaean emperor's territorial delegate in the "western" parts.<sup>13</sup> It is worthy of note that before succeeding his brother, Theodoros was a member of the Nicaean ruling elite and he served the emperor Laskaris as the rest of the "Rhomaic people" did (*ὡς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν Ῥωμαίων*).<sup>14</sup>

Akropolites, in order to serve the Nicaean ruler's purposes, expressed a derogatory perspective for Theodoros Komnenos; he was described as an irrelevant figure to the imperial tradition (*ἀφνωδῶς ἔχων περὶ τοὺς βασιλείας θεσμούς*) who handled political affairs as a "barbarian".<sup>15</sup> Moreover, there was a clear emphasis on his universalist pretensions to be the emperor of the "Rhomaic people".<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, it must be stressed that the historian, despite his hostility to the emperor of Thessaloniki, praised his victories over the Latins which were beneficial for the Byzantines.<sup>17</sup>

The initial deposition of the royal insignia by Theodoros' successors was followed by the integration of the city of Thessaloniki into the Nicaean territory. This fact gave the opportunity for Akropolites to clearly express his views on his emperor's rivals. Specifically, without defining them by any ethnonym, he presented them as adversaries (*ἐναντιόφρονες*) of the "Rhomaic people". He claimed also that Thes-

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 34. See Patlagean 2007, 305.

<sup>14</sup> Akropolites, *Χρονικὴ συγγραφή* (Heisenberg & Wirth), 24.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 34: *βαρβαρικότερον ταῖς ὑποθέσεσι προσεφέρετο*. See Page 2008, 130.

<sup>16</sup> Akropolites, *Χρονικὴ συγγραφή* (ed. Heisenberg & Wirth), 40: *ἐβούλετο γὰρ ὡς βασιλέα ἐκεῖνον πάντας ἔχειν Ῥωμαίους*.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 26: *μέγα Ῥωμαίοις ἐγγόνει βοήθημα* (Latin emperor Peter of Courtenay's defeat in *Ἄλβανον*); 40: *παρέσχε τοῖς Ἰταλοῖς πράγματα*; 41: *πτοίαν πολλὴν τοῖς Λατίνοις ἐνέβαλε*.

saloniki finally came under the rule of the Byzantines. After that, in his eyes, the former occupants of the city, the Epirote rulers, were just dominants (*κρατοῦντες*).<sup>18</sup> By mentioning that in the year 1246 the city came under the Byzantine sovereignty, it seems that the historian equated the period of the Latin domination of Thessaloniki to the period that the city was under the dominion of the rulers of Epirus. Thus, he considered them as foreign as the Latins.

The opposition of the Despot of Epirus Michael II to the Nicaean emperor was emphasized by the use of proverbs, which were verified by the ruler's intolerance and treacherous disposition.<sup>19</sup> Deliberately, the Epirote ruler was compared to a black man who cannot turn white (*ὁ Αἰθίοψ οὐκ οἶδε λευκαίνεσθαι*) and to a piece of wood that once it is warped cannot be straight (*τὸ στρεβλὸν ξύλον οὐδέποτε ὀρθόν*).<sup>20</sup> On account of their unreliable behavior and their infidelity, the leading family of Epirus was considered by the Nicaean emperor as the primary opponent of the "Rhomaic power" after Constantinople's fall to the Latins: *οὐκ ἄλλους οἰόμενος εἶναι ἐναντίους τῇ τῶν Ρωμαίων ἀρχῇ... ἀλλ' ἢ τούτους*.<sup>21</sup>

Akropolites' negative views were not limited to the members of the principal family of Epirus. He went further by creating derogatory stereotypes for the inhabitants of the "western" parts (*οἱ τῶν δυτικῶν οἰκήτορες*) in a way that reminded the audience of the stereotypes corresponding to the Latins. The "western" subjects were represented, like the Epirote rulers before, as being unreliable and opportunists due to their tendency to surrender to every potential sovereign in order to avoid catastrophes and to maintain their properties.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, he portrayed them as having the natural characteristic of incompetence over guarding their cities and as cowardly.<sup>23</sup> It is clear that the historian distinguished

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 83: *ἡ μὲν πόλις Θεσσαλονίκη οὕτως ὑπὸ τὸν βασιλέα γέγονεν Ἰωάννην, μᾶλλον δὲ ὑπὸ Ρωμαίους. οἱ γὰρ αὐτὴν κρατοῦντες ἐναντιόφρονες Ρωμαίοις ἐτέλουν.*

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 143: *ὁ ἀντάρτης Μιχαὴλ· ὁ ἀποστάτης Μιχαὴλ;* 163, 165.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 167: *ῥαδίως πᾶσι τοῖς δυναστεύουσι ὑποπίπτοντες. ἐντεῦθεν τοὺς ὀλέθρους ἀποφυγάνουσι καὶ τὰ πλείω τῶν σφετέρων περιουσιῶν διασώζουσι.*

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 167: *φύσει γὰρ ὑπάρχει τὸ δυτικὸν γένος πρὸς φυλάξεις ἄστεων μαλθακώτερον.*

the “western” inhabitants from the Byzantines not only by creating the aforementioned pejorative stereotypes but also by delineating the former as a different nation, i.e. as “δυτικὸν γένος” (western nation) having specific natural negative aspects.

The Nicaean historian continued to consider the rulers and the inhabitants of the “western” parts as enemies of the Byzantines throughout his historical work. This is clearly illustrated by the fact that, after the battle of Pelagonia, the recovery of the city of Arta and the refutation of the siege of the city of Ioannina by the “westerners”, i.e. the Epirotes, were unfortunate actions for the “Rhomaic affairs” (*ἀρχὴν κακῶν τὰ τῶν Ρωμαίων εἴληφε πράγματα*). For this reason, Alexios Strategopoulos was sent to the “western” territories to confront their adversaries (*τῶν Ρωμαίων ὑπεναντίοις*) just before recapturing Constantinople.<sup>24</sup>

Nikephoros Gregoras, referring to the new post 1204 geopolitical terms, presented the rulers of Trebizond and Epirus as the only figures who did not recognize the Nicaean emperor’s power. Certainly, the historian considered their territories’ natural fortification, remoteness and distance from the royal city as the main reasons for the development of an illegitimate and hereditary power.<sup>25</sup> The members of the leading family of Epirus, the Angeloi, were usually described as one misfortune (*κακὸν*) for the Nicaean empire. The historian focused upon those figures who challenged the Nicaean authority, starting with Theodoros Angelos, who became emperor after the deliverance of the “western” cities (*ἐσπέριαι πόλεις*) from the Latins and the integration of the city of Thessaloniki to his territory.<sup>26</sup> The “tyrant” Theodoros was portrayed as a man of action, a rapacious man who plundered the cities of Macedonia and Thrace on his way to Constantinople.<sup>27</sup> His actions were compared to the actions of other “nations” (*ἔθνη*) in the area, the Latins and the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 172, 181.

<sup>25</sup> Gregoras, *Ρωμαϊκὴ ἱστορία* (ed. Schopen), vol. 1, 13-14: *οὔτοι γὰρ ... τῆς Ρωμαϊκῆς ἡγεμονίας τὰ πέρατα λαχόντες ἐκ διαμέτρου, καὶ ἅμα τοῖς τῶν τόπων ὄχυρώμασι σφόδρα τεθαρρήκότες, τυραννικώτερον ἐπεπήδησαν τῇ ἀρχῇ, καὶ ... καθάπερ τινὰ πατρῶον κλῆρον, αὐτὴν παραπέμψαντες.*

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 26: *αὐτίκα δὲ καὶ βασιλείας ἑαυτῷ περιτίθησιν ὄνομα.*

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 26: *ἀνὴρ δραστήριος καὶ καινὰ δεινὸς ἐπινοῆσαι πράγματα, καὶ ἀεὶ τοῦ πλείονος ἐφιέμενος.*

Scythes, whose behavior towards the local inhabitants was characterized as very brutal. For this reason, his defeat by the Bulgarians, before invading Constantinople, was considered to be a punishment not only for his contempt for the legitimate imperial power of the Byzantines' and the usurpation of it, but also for his merciless behavior towards people of the same race (*ὁμοφύλους*), who had already suffered from the Latins and the Bulgarians.<sup>28</sup>

Michael II Angelos was a political figure who also preoccupied the historian. He was defined as the illegitimate son of the first ruler of Epirus, the first “apostate” Michael Angelos. The former’s power was presented in terms which reflected the exercise of power in the Latin West; for instance, he seemed to be the inheritor of his relatives’ territories after their deaths and thus the ruler of Aitolia, Thessaly and their environs.<sup>29</sup> After breaking a peace treaty with the emperor John Vatatzes, Michael aimed at the conquest of the “western” cities (*τῶν δυτικῶν πόλεων*) which were subjects to the “Rhomaic emperors” (*τοῖς Ρωμαίων βασιλεῦσιν*).<sup>30</sup> This offensive strategy required the emperor’s campaign against the apostate (*ἀποστάτου*) Michael in order to recover the temporarily lost “western” cities. Gregoras, by characterizing cities such as Kastoria and Prespa or fortresses such as Prilep and Velessos as “Rhomaic cities” (*δυτικαὶ τῶν Ρωμαίων πόλεις*), intended not only to limit the “apostate” ruler into a specific territory but also to present him as an outsider, as an enemy of the Byzantines who had no historical rights in those areas.<sup>31</sup>

The “apostate” Michael capitalized on various conjunctures, continued to attack and to plunder neighboring cities (*Ρωμαίοις ὑπήκοοι*)

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 27, 28: *τῆς δίκης ὡς περιελθούσης αὐτόν, ὧν τε τὴν νόμιμον περιεφρόνησε τῶν Ρωμαίων βασιλείαν ... καὶ ὧν τοὺς ὁμοφύλους κακοπραγοῦντας ... οὐκ ἤλέησεν, ἀλλὰ δυστυχήμασι δυστυχήματα προσετίθει καὶ φόνους φόνους.*

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 47: *τελευτησάσης γὰρ τῆς ἄλλης συγγενείας ἐκείνου πάσης, περιήλθεν ἤδη πᾶσα ἡ τῶν χώρων ἐκείνων ἀρχὴ εἰς ἓνα τουτονὶ τὸν νόθον Μιχαήλ.*

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 48: *τοὺς οἰκείους ὑπερέβαινε χώρους ἐπὶ πονήρῳ τῶν δυτικῶν πόλεων, αἱ τοῖς Ρωμαίων βασιλεῦσιν ὑπῆρχον ὑπήκοοι.*

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 48: *ὡς ἀνάγκην εἶναι ἢ τὸν βασιλέα Ἰωάννην στρατεύειν ἐπ’ ἐκείνον, ἢ κίνδυνον εἶναι πάσας ὑπὸ τῷ Μιχαήλ τὰς δυτικὰς γενέσθαι πόλεις.*



to his territory.<sup>32</sup> It is worth mentioning that after his son's marriage with the emperor's granddaughter, the title of Despot was assigned to him by Vatatzes as a result of their affinity.<sup>33</sup> After Lakaris' death, his in-law (*συμπένθερος*), the suzerain of Epirus Despot Michael, having no "Rhomaic people" to confront (*μηδὲ γὰρ ἔχειν Ῥωμαίους ὅπως αὐτὸν ἀποσοβήσωσι*), took advantage of the power vacuum in the Nicaean empire. He entered into an unsuccessful coalition with his sons in law, the prince of Achaia and the king of Sicily, in order to extend his territory to Macedonia and Thrace.<sup>34</sup> The Despot Michael and his Latin allies were defined as adversaries (*πολέμιοι*) of the Byzantines by the historian who also observed the weakness of their coalition in the different origins of the Latins from the ruler of Epirus: *ἑτεροφύλων ὄντων καὶ οὐχ ὁμογενῶν τῷ Ἀγγέλῳ*.<sup>35</sup> Despite this difference, Gregoras avoided clearly naming the suzerain of Epirus as "Ῥωμαῖος": he included him among the adversaries (*πολεμίων*) and always determined him according to the territory over which he exercised his power. In spite of the defeat of the coalition, the "apostate" Michael, compared to a "thorny and malicious sprout of a malicious root" (i.e. the Angeloï family), was again presented as pursuing an "anti-Rhomaic policy" (*κακῶς τὰ Ῥωμαίων διατιθεμένῳ πράγματα*). It was he who finally defeated their armed forces under the leadership of Caesar Strategopoulos.<sup>36</sup>

Gregoras' views of the nature of the Epirote rulers' power were once again clearly expressed in terms of possession and heredity after the death of the Despot Michael II, who was portrayed as sharing his territory in two parts and bequeathing it between two of his sons.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, after the death of the Latin Despot of Epirus John II Orsini and the integration of his territories in the Byzantine empire his juvenile son rebelled against the emperor because he was deprived of his hereditary

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 49: *διὰ τὰς τοῦ κήδους μνηστείας*.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 71: *ἤλπισε μικρὰ πονήσας μεγάλης ἀρχῆς γενήσεσθαι κύριος*.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 83: *καὶ τῆς πονηρᾶς ἐκείνης ρίζης πάλιν ὑπεφύοντο πονηρὰ καὶ ἀκανθώδη βλαστήματα*; 90.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 110: *σχίζει μέντοι καὶ τὴν ὅλην αὐτοῦ ἐπικράτειαν εἰς δύο μερίδας ὧν τὴν μὲν μίαν... ἀφίησι Νικηφόρῳ τῷ δεσπότη ... τὴν δὲ ἑτέραν ... Ἰωάννῃ τῷ νόθῳ παιδί*.

patrimony.<sup>38</sup> After the revolt's failure, the region of Epirus was submitted to the "Rhomaic authority" (*ὑποχείριος ἐγγόνει τῆ τῶν Ρωμαίων ἡγεμονία*) and according to the historian, there was not any chance for Nikephoros to recover the power in his father's territories.<sup>39</sup>

According to George Pachymeres, Michael II Angelos was alternately described either as the Despot *of* the "western" parts (*δεσπότην τῶν δυτικῶν*) or as the Despot *in* the "western" parts (*ὁ ἐν τῇ δύσει δεσπότης*).<sup>40</sup> Pachymeres' last editor, A. Failler, has shown in one of his papers that the terms "west", "western" and "westerner" in the former's history were exclusively used as a description for the inhabitants of the western parts of the former Byzantine imperial territory and not for the Latins.<sup>41</sup> In this context, Michael II Angelos was presented, like his uncle the emperor Theodoros before him, as claiming the "Rhomaic kingship" under suitable circumstances. Specifically, the historian explained that Theodoros Angelos, whose royal power was limited to the "western" parts (*προβεβασιλευκότος ἐκεῖσε*), took advantage of the political disorder after 1204 and became emperor by recapturing territories from the Latin conquerors.<sup>42</sup> The Despot Michael II followed his uncle's example and profited from the political situation in the eastern parts (*τῶν πραγμάτων ἀρρώστως ἐχόντων*), i.e. the power vacuum after Laskaris' death and the weakness of the Latin Empire of Constantinople. He decided to besiege the historical center of the empire and become himself the emperor considering that his noble origin gave him a fundamental

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<sup>38</sup> Gregoras, *Ρωμαϊκὴ ἱστορία* (ed. Schopen), vol. 2, 545, 546: *ὁ μὲν παῖς τοῦ τῆς Ἠπείρου κρατοῦντος πρότερον κόντου Κεφαλληνίας ... ἐπειδὴ τὸν μὲν πατρῶον κληρὸν ὑπὸ τῶ βασιλεῖ γενόμενον εἶδε ... ἀποστασίαν ἐπινοεῖ.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 553-554: *μηδεμίαν ἔχων ἔτι προσδοκίαν ἐπανελθεῖν ἐς τὴν πατρῶαν τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ κληρὸν διαδοχὴν.*

<sup>40</sup> Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι* (ed. Failler & Laurent), vol. 1, 37.

<sup>41</sup> Failler 1980, 116.

<sup>42</sup> Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι* (ed. Failler & Laurent), vol. 1, 115: *τῆς πρώτης ἐκείνης συγχύσεως ζυμπεσοῦσης Ρωμαίοις, ἑαυτὸν ἀναλαμβάνει καί, πλείστοις ὄσοις τοῖς κατ' Ἰταλῶν πολέμοις ἐνανδραγαθήσας, τῆς βασιλείας ἐπέληπτο*, and 191: *ὃς καὶ βασιλικῆς ἀναρρήσεως κατὰ δύσιν ἠξιώθη, τοῦ Ἀχριδῶν ταινιώσαντος Ἰακώβου, ἰδρῶσι πλείστοις καὶ σπάθη ἐκσπάσας τῶν Ἰταλῶν, τοῖς ἰδίους προσεποιήσατο.*

advantage: *εὐγενῆ γε ὄντα καὶ τῶν Ἀγγέλων*.<sup>43</sup> The alliance, established for the aforementioned purpose, with his Latin sons in law (the king Manfred of Sicily and the prince Guglielmo of Achaia) failed owing to internal conflicts (*οἱ εἰς ὁμαιχμίαν κληθέντες κατ' ἀλλήλων συνίσταντο*). Inevitably, the Byzantines took control of the “western” parts for a short time because soon after this, the Despot Michael II defeated them and captured their leader Caesar Strategopoulos.<sup>44</sup> Oddly enough, this is the only section of the Pachymeres’ history in which the “eastern” Byzantines are called “Nicaeans” (*τῶν Νικαέων*) and not “Rhomaic”.<sup>45</sup>

The loss of “western” territories and fortresses, which after being detached from the Latins formed the Angeloi’s family heritage, could not be accepted by the Despot Michael II. He profited from the changeable nature of the “western” inhabitants (*τὸ ... τῶν δυτικῶν εὐρίπιστον*) and led them to revolt (*ἀποκλίνειν*) against the Byzantine power.<sup>46</sup> Besides, the unstable political behavior of the “western” inhabitants was noted by the historian on several occasions, particularly when they rebelled against the Byzantine authority.<sup>47</sup> Thus, it is clearly illustrated, that every military expedition for the submission of the “western” areas jeopardized the empire’s eastern frontiers.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 115, 117: *Ταῦτα τοίνυν ὁ Μιχαὴλ ἐν νῶ θέμενος καὶ καταλαζονευθεὶς ... βουλὴν βουλευέται ... τῇ πόλει προσσχόν, περικαθίσαι καὶ πειραθῆναι κατασχεῖν, καὶ οὕτως βασιλεὺς ἀναγορευθῆναι Ῥωμαίων.*

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 121: *κατοχυρώσαντες ὡς οἷόν τε πρότερον καὶ τοὺς κατὰ δύσιν τόπους.*

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 125, 127: *πλείστους τε πεσεῖν τῶν Νικαέων παρεσκεύασε, πλείστους τε καὶ ἄλλους οὓς μὲν φονεύσας, οὓς δὲ περισχόν καὶ αὐτὸν αἰρεῖ καίσαρα.*

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 191: *τούτων μὴ φέρων ὁ Μιχαὴλ στερούμενος... τοὺς κατὰ δύσιν ὑποποιούμενος, εὐχερῶς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν διὰ τὸ καὶ ἄλλως τῶν δυτικῶν εὐρίπιστον ἔπειθεν ἀποκλίνειν αὐτίς.*

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 45: *εὐρίσκει δὲ τὰ τῆδε συγκεχυμένα καὶ πρὸς ἀπιστίαν κλίναντα,* and 283: *Τότε τοίνυν καὶ πάλιν ἀπεπειρᾶτο τῶν δυτικῶν· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἦν, οὐκ ἦν, ἐπὶ ταύτῳ μένειν ἐκείνους.* Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι* (ed. Failler & Laurent), vol. 2, 399: *καὶ ἐπεὶ πάλιν ἀνοιδάινειν ὄρμων τὰ δυτικά.*

<sup>48</sup> Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι* (ed. Failler & Laurent), vol. 1, 283: *καίτοι τῶν κατ' ἀνατολήν πονούντων, ἅμα δυνάμεσι πλείσταις τὸν δεσπότην ἐκπέμπει;* 317: *ἀσχολουμένου τοῦ βασιλέως τοῖς δυτικοῖς, ὡς δῆθεν ἀνακαλουμένου τῇ βασιλείᾳ τὸ λεῖπον, ἡσθένει τὰ καθ' ἑω.*

After Constantinople's recapture, the emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos laid claim to the western parts of the former imperial territory. In his opinion, there was not any reason for the Despot Michael to maintain his rulership in the "western" territories, given that the emperor was already master of the empire's capital City (*τῆς πατρίδος*).<sup>49</sup> Pachymeres analyzed the Despot Michael's argumentation about his rights on his lands (*τὰ κατὰ δύσιν*) during the Latin domination and after the recapture of Constantinople. In effect, during the period before the City's recapture he represented the Despot Michael as arguing that the emperor should have claimed Constantinople rather than the "western" territories.<sup>50</sup> After the recapture the Despot was portrayed by the historian as claiming that his parents took control over those lands by cutting them off from the Latins and not from the Byzantines, so they bequeathed them to their children. The historian highlighted the Despot's views about a hereditary combination of territory and power, and noted his denial to surrender control despite the recognition of the emperor's rightful claims.<sup>51</sup> The Despot Michael was depicted as repenting his unstable behavior (*τὰς προτέρας παλιμβολίας*) towards the Byzantines and asking for a peace that he was not willing to respect: *πάλιν τὸν δόλον ἔκρυπτεν*.<sup>52</sup>

Of particular interest are also the Patriarch Arsenios Autoreianos' views on the leading family of Epirus and the "western" inhabitants. Pachymeres included in his text a Patriarch's short address to the emperor after his return to Constantinople from a campaign in the "western" parts; in this Arsenios Autoreianos expressed his opposition to civil wars (*ἐμφυλίους πολέμους*), i.e. wars among Christians. For this reason, he advised the emperor not to aim at any civil war and criticized his campaign against the Despot Michael, a fellow Christian.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 271: *ἔξω που τῆς πατρίδος ὄντος τοῦ βασιλέως, δικαιοῖτ' ἂν κάκεῖνος τὰ μέρη κατέχειν.*

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 275: *ἀπαιτητέα γὰρ εἶναι μᾶλλον τὸν θρόνον τοὺς Ἰταλοὺς ἢ ἐκεῖνον τὰ κατὰ δύσιν.*

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 275: *χώραν ἣν οἱ γονεῖς ἐκείνου...προσεκλήσαντο καὶ κληρὸν κατέλιπον τοῖς παισὶ, πῶς ἂν καὶ δικαίως ἀπαιτούμενος ἀποδῶη;*

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 315: *Οὐ τοὺς ἐμφυλίους πολέμους ἀπέλεγον μὴ ζητεῖν ... Αἱ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν εὐχαὶ καὶ ὑπὲρ ἐκείνων πάντως, ἐπειδήπερ καὶ μιᾶς μάνδρας ἐστὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ.*

Patriarch implied that the “westerners” were not enemies as the emperor thought.<sup>54</sup> From the Patriarch’s exposition, it is clear that in his eyes the word “φυλή” had religious overtones.

The perception of a hereditary power inscribed in a specific territory was expressed by Pachymeres as it related to the rulers of the “western” parts. For instance, after Despot Michael II’s death his power and his territories were divided, although unequally, among his sons.<sup>55</sup> Yet, after the Despot Nikephoros’ death (ὁ ἐν δύσει δεσπότης) his widow Anna, afraid of various enemies, offered her power and her territories to the Byzantine emperor in exchange for a matrimony to the royal family. It is worth mentioning that Anna (ἡ κατὰ δύσιν βασίλισσα) was represented as accepting that her territories could have been integrated, through the proposed matrimony, to the “Rhomaic” imperial territory as a former part of it (ἀρχαῖα ἐλλείμματα Ρωμαΐδος).<sup>56</sup> However, the prohibition of the matrimony on account of the already existing family ties between the two parts made Anna turn to Philip d’ Anjou, offering him “western” cities and territories as her daughter’s dowry.<sup>57</sup>

According to the emperor and historian John Kantakouzenos, after the empire’s dissolution in 1204 whilst the “Rhomaic kingship” was restricted in the east (πρὸς ἑω) by the Latins, some local rulers had profited from the circumstances by usurping the power in “western” provinces (τῶν ἐσπερίων ἐπαρχιῶν). Among them were the Angeloi who had appropriated the power in “Ἀκαρνανία”.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, with the term “Akar-

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 315: οὓς μὲν ὡς ἐχθροὺς ἐζήτει, οὐκ ἐχθραντέοι πάντως δικαίως.

<sup>55</sup> Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι* (ed. Failler & Laurent), vol. 2, 399: τοῦ δεσπότη Μιχαὴλ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων γεγονότος καὶ τὸν μὲν Νικηφόρον ἐπὶ τῇ ἰδίᾳ ἀρχῇ καταλείψαντος, τῷ δὲ γε νόθῳ Ἰωάννῃ χώραν οὐκ ὀλίγην διανενηκτότος ἰδίᾳ; 559: Δημήτριος μὲν ... μοῖρα τῶν τοῦ πατρὸς χωρῶν προσκεκληρωμένη οὐκ ἀποχρῶσα τῷ μεγέθει τῆς κατ’ αὐτὸν ἀξίας.

<sup>56</sup> Pachymeres, *Συγγραφικαὶ ἱστορίαι* (ed. Failler & Laurent), vol. 3, 225, 227: ἀποστέλλειν πρὸς βασιλέα ... ὥστε τὸν νέον βασιλέα γαμβρὸν ἐκείνη γενέσθαι, καὶ πᾶσαν χώραν καὶ ἑαυτὴν καὶ παῖδα ὡς ἀρχαῖα ἐλλείμματα Ρωμαΐδος ἐγχειρίζειν.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 450: τὸν τοῦ Καρούλου υἱὸν ἐπεγαμβρεύσατο Φίλιππον ... καὶ πόλεις ἦσαν καὶ χωρᾶι τὰ εἰς προῖκα δοθέντα.

<sup>58</sup> Kantakouzenos, *Ἱστορίαι* (ed. Schopen), vol. 1, 520-521: βασιλεία μὲν ἡ Ρωμαίων ὑπεχώρησε πρὸς ἑω· Ἀκαρνανίας δὲ τὴν ἀρχὴν Ἄγγελοι προσεποιήσαντο ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ἄλλοι ἄλλας τῶν ἐσπερίων ἐπαρχιῶν, ὧν ἕκαστοι ἔτυχον ἐπιτροπεύοντες.

nania” Kantakouzenos seems to designate the large region of Medieval Epirus, which was a section of the “ἑσπέραν”, i.e. the western parts of the empire.<sup>59</sup> At a critical juncture (ca 1337-1340), when some cities of “Akarnania” rebelled against the Byzantine authority, Kantakouzenos, as *meGas domestikos* still, reminded the leaders of the rebels that this region was unjustly (ἀδίκως) cut off from the empire in 1204 by the first apostates (ἀποστησάντων), the Angeloi.<sup>60</sup> He drew special attention to the fact that the Angeloi did not liberate Epirus from the barbarians but usurped the power of a region submitted to the “Rhomaic emperors”.<sup>61</sup> In addition, despite the recapture of Constantinople in 1261 and the operations of the two first Palaiologan emperors, “Akarnania” was not integrated into the restored empire; on the contrary, the Byzantine emperors had many losses fighting against the “Akarnanians” (Ἀκαρνάσι).<sup>62</sup> By using this term or the wider term “westerners” (ἑσπερίους) the historian defined the inhabitants of Epirus. For instance, he used the term “Akarnanians” in order to describe the ruling elites of the cities of Epirus and a division between them at a critical juncture of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It is clearly illustrated that they were divided in those who supported the independence of their cities and those who preferred to integrate them into the imperial territory.<sup>63</sup> The inhabitants of the cities of Epirus and of other “western” cities were described by Kantakouzenos with an alternative but more general term: they were the “westerners” (ἑσπεριοί). For example, the emperor Andronikos III led a campaign in the “western” parts

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 496: πρὸς τὴν ἑσπέραν, ἐλπίσαντα Ἀκαρνανίαν ὑποποιήσειν ἑαυτῶ.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 502: τῶν πρώτως αὐτὴν ἀποστησάντων αὐθαδεία καὶ ἀγνωμοσύνη τῇ πρὸς βασιλέα εἰς ἰδίαν ἑαυτοῖς ἀρχὴν περιποιησαμένων καὶ κρατυναμένων.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 520: Ἀγγέλους γὰρ οὐκ ἀπὸ βαρβάρων Ἀκαρνανίαν ἐλευθερώσαντας κτήσασθαι συνέβη τὴν ἀρχὴν, ἀλλ’ ὑποχειρίους ὄντας Ῥωμαίων βασιλεῦσι ... σφετερίσασθαι τὴν ἀρχὴν διὰ τὸν ἐπενεχθέντα τότε παρὰ Λατίνων Ῥωμαίους πόλεμον.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 504.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 499: λόγος Ἀκαρνάσι πολὺς ἐγένετο ... οἱ μὲν μὴ δέχεσθαι ὑπὸ βασιλεῖ ὑποχειρίους γίνεσθαι ... οἱ δὲ ἀντέλεγον; 509: οἱ παρὰ Ἀκαρνάσι μὴ βουλόμενοι δουλεύειν βασιλεῖ ... καιρὸν ἑαυτοῖς πρὸς νεωτερισμὸν εἶναι; 519: οὔτε δίκαια οὔτε συμφέροντα οὔθ’ ἑαυτοῖς οὔτε τοῖς ἄλλοις Ἀκαρνάσιν. For the political orientations of the leading family and the ruling elites of cities of Medieval Epirus during the critical years 1337-1340, see Papageorgiou 2021 (under publication).

(*έσπέρας*) against the Albanians in 1337 because they plundered Byzantine cities and provoked problems for the “westerners”: *τοὺς έσπερίους άδικεῖν*.<sup>64</sup> Remarkable is the fact that the Albanians were described as politically unstable and rebels, i.e. with the same characteristics in which the “westerners” were represented.<sup>65</sup> In effect, during the civil war between the emperor Andronikos II and his grandson (1321-1328), Kantakouzenos suggested to Andronikos III and to his proponents that before invading Constantinople, they had to submit the “western” parts (*τὴν έσπέραν*), given the fact that the “westerners” (*έσπέριοι*) were by nature apostates (*αὐθόρμητοι πρὸς τὰς άποστασίας*) and revolutionaries (*χαίροντες πρὸς τοὺς νεωτερισμούς*); That is to say, they could easily have supported them against the old emperor.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, during Kantakouzenos’ reign in the middle of 14<sup>th</sup> century, when John V Palaiologos was appointed governor of Thessaloniki, his mother Anna of Savoy expressed fears for her son’s exposure to dangerous influences. Certainly, she was afraid of the malice of the “westerners” (*τῶν έσπερίων τὴν μοχθηρίαν*) and their preparedness for revolution (*έτοιμότητα πρὸς νεωτερισμούς*).<sup>67</sup> She pointed out that in such an environment John V could be deceived by the “westerners” and a new civil war could have started.<sup>68</sup>

Returning to the subject of the revolution of some cities of Epirus (*άποστάσας πόλεις*) against the Byzantine authority at the end of the fourth decade of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, it is worth noting that the viewpoints of the leaders of the rebels are given in *speeches* apart from the main narration, a salient feature of Kantakouzenos’ distinguishing his work from many other Byzantine histories.<sup>69</sup> For instance, Kabasilas, the leader of the revolution at Rogoi, was portrayed as having devel-

<sup>64</sup> Kantakouzenos, *Ιστορίαι* (Schopen), 495, 498: *Άλβανοὶ πρότερον τοὺς έσπερίους ήδίκουν*.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 495: *Άλβανοί, εύχερεῖς όντες πρὸς μεταβολὰς καὶ φύσει νεωτεροποιοί*.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 104: *οἱ τε γάρ έσπέριοι...προσχωρήσουσι ράδιως τῷ νέῳ βασιλεῖ*; 106: *ή τε γάρ έσπέρα πολλή καὶ πόλεις έχουσα πολλὰς καὶ περιφανεῖς ... καὶ ράδιως προσχωρήσει*.

<sup>67</sup> Kantakouzenos, *Ιστορίαι* (Schopen), vol. 3, 112-113.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 113: *μη, ύπ’ εκείνων έξαπατηθέντος τοῦ νέου βασιλέως, στάσις αὐθις καὶ πόλεμος μεταξὺ Ρωμαίων έξαφθῆ*.

<sup>69</sup> Angelou 2013, 263-267.

oped and prioritized a local patriotism as he was determined to avoid conversing with the “Rhomaic people” (*ἀφίστασθαι Ρωμαίων*) and to act according to what could be beneficial for himself and the other “Akarnanians” aiming at their liberation from the “Rhomaic servitude” (*τῆς δουλείας Ρωμαίων*).<sup>70</sup> He expressed in public his emphatic anti-Byzantine feelings by claiming that he preferred to die rather than to be subject to the emperor.<sup>71</sup> The rebels of Arta also explained in their speech as constructed by the historian the reason for their defection (*ἀποστασίαν*) by presenting their historical rights in the area. In their opinion, “Akarnania” had been under the power of the Angeloi for a long time and not a part of the “Rhomaic authority”: *ἐκ πολλῶν ἤδη βασιλέων μὴ προσοῦσαν τῇ Ρωμαίων ἡγεμονία γῆν*.<sup>72</sup> For this reason, they tried to restore Despot Nikephoros to his patrimonial legacy.<sup>73</sup> It is also of great importance to note an offer that Kantakouzenos made to the tutor of the Despot Nikephoros, Richard, in order to persuade the rebels of the fortress Thomokastron to surrender. He proposed a matrimony between the young Despot and his daughter which would have resulted in the former’s accession to the “Rhomaic” political system on account of the emperor’s favor towards him: *περιφανῆ παρὰ Ρωμαίοις θήσει*.<sup>74</sup>

The sources on which this study is based are not limited only to the historical works of prominent Byzantine intellectuals; furthermore, this paper aims to combine the evidence presented so far with data as given by late Byzantine imperial orations, *ekphrasis* of cities and autobiographies. This is important in order to detect the viewpoints of the Nicaean and Palaiologan rhetoricians towards their “western” kindred people (*ὁμογενεῖς*), given the fact that the encomiasts through their speeches propagandized the imperial policy.

<sup>70</sup> Kantakouzenos, *Ιστορίαι* (ed. Schopen), vol. 1, 513, 514: *ὡς λυσιτελοῦντα δράσειεν ἑαυτῷ τε καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις Ἀκαρνάσι τῆς δουλείας αὐτοῦς ἐλευθερῶν Ρωμαίων*.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 516: *μᾶλλον ἂν ἀποθανεῖν εἰλόμην, ἢ ἐκείνῳ ὑποχείριος γενέσθαι*.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 523.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 523: *Νικηφόρῳ πρὸς τὴν κληρονομίαν τοῦ πατρῷου κλήρου, τὸ ἔργον ὑπέστημεν τουτὶ καὶ τὰς πόλεις βασιλέως ἀπεστήσαμεν*.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 532: *ἐγὼ γὰρ αὐτῷ τὴν ἐμὴν κατεγγυήσω θυγατέρα ... καὶ βασιλεὺς τῆς εἰς ἐμὲ εὐνοίας ἔνεκα τιμαῖς τε καὶ πολλαῖς εὐεργεσίαις περιφανῆ παρὰ Ρωμαίοις θήσει*.



Theodoros II Laskaris, in his oration for the emperor John Vatatzes, praised his father's victories over multiple enemies (Latins, Persians, Scythes, Bulgarians, Serbians, Tatars) and he referred also to a particular "anti-Rhomaic feeling" (*μερικὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν δύσνοιαν*).<sup>75</sup> It is very likely that Laskaris implied in this section of his panegyric the hostile standpoint of the "western" inhabitants and the rulers of Epirus towards the emperor. It should also be noted that the emperor Vatatzes was deliberately compared with the historical figure of Alexander the Great. In effect, as Alexander was the king of all the Hellenes (*βασιλείαν Ἑλλήνων...όλόκληρον...παραλαβών*), the Nicaean ruler was the emperor of all the "Rhomaic people" owing to his achievement in unifying under his rule a large part of the former imperial territory (*τὴν Ἀύσονίτιδα γῆν...εἰς ἓν συνήγαγε*) including parts of the territory of the Angeloi.<sup>76</sup>

Besides, his oration for the city of Nicaea clearly illustrated the primacy (*πρωτεῖα*) which was given to the city during the period of Latin domination. That is to say, Laskaris distinguished Nicaea from other cities which escaped the submission to the Latins and remained under Byzantine authority (probably Arta, Thessaloniki, Trebizond).<sup>77</sup> He emphasized the revitalizing and connective role of this imperial city which succeeded not only in saving the Byzantine political system but also in ending the disunity with the rulers of the "west" (*τῆς οἰκειακῆς ἀρχῆς*) and finally unifying the "Rhomaic people".<sup>78</sup> It should also be said that, despite this deceptive reconciliation, Laskaris characterized the rulers of the "western" parts (*τῶν δυτικῶν ἀρχῶν*) as "offspring of vipers" (*γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν*) in order to remind his audience of their

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<sup>75</sup> Laskaris, "Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ τὸν ὑψηλότατον βασιλέα κυρὸν Ἰωάννην τὸν Δούκαν" (ed. Tartaglia), 27.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>77</sup> Laskaris, "Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὴν μεγαλόπολιν Νίκαιαν" (ed. Tartaglia), 79: *πολλὰ νῦν πόλεις ... τὴν τοῦ οἰκείου γένους ἀρχὴν ἐστερέωσαν.*

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 82: *τούτων ἐκ σοῦ ἠύμοίρησεν ἡ ἀρχή, τὸ μὲν φυλαχθεῖσα τὸ πρὶν ἐκ τῆς λύμης τῆς ἐθνικῆς, τὸ δ' ὅτι καὶ πᾶσαν διχόνοιαν τῆς οἰκειακῆς ἀρχῆς ἐκκόψασα καὶ ἐνώσασα τὰ διηρημένα τὸ πρὶν.*

negative aspects.<sup>79</sup> After all, he considered the emperors of Nicaea as the only legitimate emperors.<sup>80</sup>

The anonymous writer of John Vatatzes' encomium praised the emperor Laskaris' achievements over the barbarians (*τοῖς βαρβάροις*) not only in the eastern areas of the empire, which were called "Hellenic" (*τῶν ἐλληνικῶν ὀρίων*), but also in the European parts (*τῆς Εὐρώπης*). Among the emperor's enemies (*τῶν ἐναντίων*) in the European parts, were, according to the encomiast, the so-called "Illyrians, Thessalians, Akarnanians" (*Θετταλῶν, Ἰλλυριῶν, Ἀκαρνάνων*) and the "Macedonians" (*Μακεδόσι*) who rebelled against him.<sup>81</sup> It is worth noting that in the text as edited by Heisenberg there is not a comma among the three first above mentioned local groups of inhabitants. Therefore, it is likely that, in the writer's eyes these groups formed a territorial front against the emperor, which could coincide with the territories of the state of Medieval Epirus during the period under consideration.<sup>82</sup>

Jacob of Bulgaria, the ex-Archbishop of Ohrid, in his panegyric to the Nicaean emperor John Vatatzes, praised him for his accomplishment in unifying the Byzantines under his ideal rulership. He pointed out that Vatatzes succeeded in ending the fragmentation in different powers by becoming the sole emperor according to the admissible Byzantine political ideology.<sup>83</sup> It is very likely that the Archbishop Jacob implied that Epirus, an area remote from the east, was one of those unusual political formations (*ἐκτόποις ἐξουσίαις*), which actually divided and weakened the Byzantines against the Latins.<sup>84</sup>

Nikephoros Blemmydes, Laskaris' tutor, in his autobiography mentioned that during the Latin occupation, the synod of eastern bishops, in a letter, asked, the usurper emperor Theodoros at Thessaloniki (*τῷ τὴν βασιλείαν ἐν τῇ Θετταλῶν σφετερισσαμένῳ*) to resign from his

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 79: *ἐπειδὴ πολλαχῶς ἢ Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴ μερισθεῖσα παρὰ τῶν ἐθνικῶν στρατευμάτων καὶ ἠττηθεῖσα ... ἐν σοὶ μόνῃ ἠδράσθη καὶ ἐστηρίχθη τε καὶ ἐπαγιώθη.*

<sup>81</sup> *Βίος τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου βασιλέως τοῦ Ἐλεήμονος* (ed. Heisenberg), 209.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>83</sup> Jacob of Bulgaria (ed. Mercati), 92.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 92-93: *οὐ λιμαγχοσύμεθα ὡς τὸ πρὶν ταῖς ἐκτόποις ἐξουσίαις μεριτευόμενοι. νῦν γὰρ ὡσπερ ἓνα θεὸν οὕτω καὶ δεσποτεύοντα κοσμικῶς μονώτατον σεβαζόμεθα.*

imperial claims. The bishops argued that it was neither proper nor beneficial for their common interests as kindred people (*ὁμογενεῖς*,) to have two emperors and two patriarchs.<sup>85</sup> According to the rhetorician, this strange deviation, which promoted a model of bipolar authority in secular and ecclesiastical affairs, was developed in the usurper's mind: *τοῦτο γὰρ ἐκεῖνος διενενόητο*.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, Blemmydes by narrating a trip in search of books to Athos, Thessaloniki, Larissa and the “western” parts (*τοῖς δυσμικοῖς*) praised the amiable behavior of the rulers of the “western” cities towards him, although they were not subjects of the Nicaean empire. In effect, he explained that neither was their power given by the Nicaean emperor nor were they politically orientated towards him. For this reason, there was no need for them to obey the emperor's authority as they independently exercised their power (*ἀυθέκαστοι καὶ ἀυθαίρετοι*).<sup>87</sup>

The emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos in his autobiography referred to a crucial campaign in Epirus (*τὰ πρὸς δύνοντα ἥλιον*) before he became emperor, which strengthened his relationship with the emperor Vatatzes, owing to the defeat of their adversaries (*τὸ δυσμενὲς καὶ ἀντικείμενον*), the inhabitants of “western” parts.<sup>88</sup> In addition, he emphasized his victory in the battle of Pelagonia (1259) during the first years of his reign. More precisely, he pointed out the defeat of a Latin coalition in which the ruler of Epirus, Michael II Angelos, participated. In this context, he designated the rulers and the inhabitants of Epirus as “Rhomaic apostates” (*ἀποστάτας Ῥωμαίους*), for many years, who were worse than their natural adversaries, the Latins (*τῶν φύσει πολεμίων*).<sup>89</sup> It is conspicuous that the Epirotes were considered to be internal enemies

<sup>85</sup> Blemmydes, “Περὶ τῶν κατ’ αὐτὸν διήγησις μερική λόγος πρῶτος” (ed. Munitiz), 14: *τῷ μὴ συνοίσειν τοῖς ὁμογενέσι μὴ δ’ ἐπιπρεπῶς ἔχειν, αὐτοκράτορας εἶναι δύο καὶ πατριάρχας δύο*. See Stavridou-Zafraka 1990, 165.

<sup>86</sup> Blemmydes, “Περὶ τῶν κατ’ αὐτὸν διήγησις μερική λόγος πρῶτος” (ed. Munitiz), 14.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 33: *οὐδὲ γὰρ ἦν αὐτοῖς ἀνάγκη, τοῖς βασιλέως ὑπέκειν θεσμοῖς, ὅτι μὴ ἐξ’ αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀρχὴν εἶχον, ἢ νεύουσαν πρὸς αὐτόν, ἀλλ’ ἦσαν αὐτὴν ἀυθέκαστοι καὶ ἀυθαίρετοι*.

<sup>88</sup> Palaiologos, “De Vita Sua” (ed. Grégoire), 451: *καὶ πέμπομαι ... τὰ πρὸς δύνοντα ἥλιον εἶχε νικῶντα μὲν σὺν θεῷ τὸ δυσμενὲς καὶ ἀντικείμενον*.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 455: *καὶ ἐνίκων ... τοὺς τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῆς πολλῶν ἐτῶν ἀποστάτας Ῥωμαίους πολλῶν χαλεπωτέρους τῶν φύσει πολεμίων τοῖς ἡμετέροις ἐπιφνομένους πράγμασιν*.

because they also claimed a share in the Byzantine imperial power in contrast to the Latins who sought the dissolution of the Byzantine power. Inevitably, the emperor made a distinction between the Latins which were his natural enemies and the Epirotes which were clearly included among the “Rhomaic people”. His victory resulted in the annexation to the Nicaean empire of a large territory, which included Medieval Epirus and other cities of the Greek mainland.<sup>90</sup>

The rhetorician Manuel Holobolos in his first oration to Michael VIII, although he described the defeat of the Latins in the battle of Pelagonia, actually remained silent about the participation of the Epirotes in this anti-Byzantine coalition. Nevertheless, it is likely that he labeled as “apostacy” the Despot Michael II’s rebellion against the emperor Michael VIII, when he criticized the catastrophic accession of the “Franks” of Peloponnesus on his side against the Byzantine emperor: *πρὸς τὴν σύντροφον αὐτοῖς ἀποστασίαν ἐχώρησαν*.<sup>91</sup> In his second panegyric to Michael VIII, by describing Constantinople’s recovery from the Latins, he noted the General’s Strategopoulos initial mission before recapturing the historical City. He mentioned that the Caesar Strategopoulos was the head of an “eastern” troop (*ἐῶν στρατεύμα*) sent against the ruler of the “west” (*τοῦ ἐς δυσμὰς ἄρχοντος*), the Despot of Epirus Michael II.<sup>92</sup> Holobolos clarified that Strategopoulos set apart for a short time the campaign in the “western” parts (*τὰ πρὸς δυσμὰς*) owing to his decision to turn to Constantinople in order to frighten the Latins.<sup>93</sup>

It is also worth noting that the scholar Nikephoros Choumnos in his oration to Andronikos II, although he listed the participants of the Latin anti-Byzantine coalition in the battle of Pelagonia, maintained his silence about the participation of the Epirotes in it.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 455: *Ἀκαρνανίαν Αἰτωλίαν ... ὑπεποιησάμην καὶ τὴν ἐκατέραν Ἥπειρον καὶ Ἰλλυριῶν ἐκράτησα· καὶ μέχρις Ἐπιδάμνου προῆκον.*

<sup>91</sup> Holobolos, “Λόγος Α’” (ed. Siderides), 184.

<sup>92</sup> Holobolos, “Λόγος Β’” (ed. Treu), 66.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 66: *παλίνορσα τούτοις ἐτίθει τὰ τοῦ σκοποῦ καὶ βραχὺ μὲν παρῶσαι τὰ πρὸς δυσμὰς.*

<sup>94</sup> Choumnos: “Εγκώμιον” (ed. Boissonade), 11: *τὰ δὲ τοῦ κράτους ὄδινε πρὸς ἐσπέραν δεινὸν τινὰ πόλεμον ... πάντα τὰ ἐσπέρια, πλῆθος οἰονεὶ σύμπαν, τῶν σφετέρων ἐξαναστάντες, ἐδόκουν πανοικεσία καθ’ ἡμῶν ἐκστρατεύεσθαι, πρίγκιψ Ἀχαΐας, Ἀλαμάνοι,*

Besides, the Patriarch Gregory II of Cyprus in his encomium to Andronikos II, believed that the emperor's birth had coincided with the most significant victory over the Latins, implying the Byzantine triumph in the battle of Pelagonia; Remarkable is the fact that neither the Patriarch, as Choumnos before, mentioned the Latins' alliance with the ruler of Epirus Despot Michael II.<sup>95</sup>

The scholar Nikolaos Lampenos in his imperial oration to Andronikos II provided information on an attack sustained by the "Rhomaic people" from the "apostates" of the "western" parts (*τῶν γὰρ πρὸς ἐσπέραν ἀποστατῶν*) during the first years of his reign.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, while the emperor was at the "eastern" parts confronting the advance of the Ottomans, he sent prominent generals of the army to defy an attack in the "western" parts in an expedition which ended victoriously.<sup>97</sup> By combining some chronological data and the emperor's presence in Asia Minor during the years 1290-1293, we could assume that Lampenos implied in this section of his oration the aggressive policy toward the Byzantines, which was followed by the Despot Nikephoros and a part of the ruling elites of Epirus who supported the independence from Constantinople and for this reason were called "apostates".<sup>98</sup>

According to Theodoros Metochites, the emperor Andronikos II's birth coincided with the restoration of the empire. In his first oration to Andronikos II, he praised emperor Michael VIII's victories over his enemies. By using the term "enemies" (*ἐχθρῶν*), Metochites delineated not only the Latins but also some Byzantine local rulers (*τῶν ἄλλων*) who had benefited from the empire's dissolution in 1204.<sup>99</sup> In his opinion, those rulers who sought their independence (*ἐπαναστάντες*) had created

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*Σικελοί, οἱ ἐξ Ἀπουλίας, οἱ ἐκ Βρεντησίου, τύραννοι Πελοποννήσου, Εὐβοίας, Ἀθηνῶν, Θηβῶν, πάσης Ἑλλάδος, ἕτεροι συχνοὶ μετὰ τούτων πανταχόθεν ἀνάστατοι.*

<sup>95</sup> Gregory II of Cyprus, "Εγκώμιον" (ed. Boissonade), 366: *Ἰταλῶν γὰρ ἦτται περιφανεῖς καὶ οἶμαι οὐπω πρότερον.*

<sup>96</sup> Lampenos, "Λόγος ἐγκωμιαστικὸς" (ed. Polemis), 47: *τῶν γὰρ πρὸς ἐσπέραν ἀποστατῶν Ῥωμαί[οις] ἐπιθεμένων καὶ περσικοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἐφάν συστάντος πολέμου.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>98</sup> See Laiou 1972, 76; Nicol 1984, 37-38.

<sup>99</sup> Metochites, "Βασιλικὸς πρῶτος" (ed. Polemis), 164: *νίκας τοσαύτας κατ' ἐχθρῶν, Ἰταλῶν τε καὶ τῶν ἄλλων.*

their own states by profiting from the uncommon political circumstances (*τῇ συγχύσει*). Moreover, they were accused of being “malicious” (*κακοὶ*) because they “had played” with “subjects that no one plays” (*ἐν οὐ παικτοῖς*) by usurping the power in various areas. For that reason, they were represented as adventurers who were interested in taking advantage of the common disaster only to serve their own ambitions.<sup>100</sup> Within this framework, it is permitted to assume that the rhetorician implied, among others, the ruling family of the state of Epirus, the Angeioli. In addition, he mentioned an unsuccessful attack on the Byzantines by those rebels; it is suggested by the editor of the text that this attack is identified with the defeat of the Epirote-Latin coalition in the battle of Pelagonia.<sup>101</sup>

Metochites in his second panegyric to Andronikos II, praised the emperor’s campaign in Asia Minor during the years 1290-1293 for the fortification of the Byzantine provinces from the Ottoman aggression. He brought out the successful results of the emperor’s presence in the eastern provinces, although he had with him only a small part of the Byzantine army because the largest part was in the “western” areas confronting other necessities (*ταῖς δυτικαῖς χρεῖαις*).<sup>102</sup> It is very likely that the rhetorician implied at this point the military operation against the rebel Despot Nikephoros of Epirus during the emperor’s campaign in Asia Minor. Metochites claimed that this division of the army into the eastern and western areas of the empire encouraged the Ottomans to continue their attacks against the Byzantine eastern provinces.<sup>103</sup> Emphasis was placed on the emperor’s concentration in his eastern campaigns against the Ottomans, despite the distractions from the “western” parts (*τὰ κατὰ δύσιν*), where a revolution against his authority was in progress.<sup>104</sup> Ac-

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 166: *κακοὶ κάκιστ’ ἐν οὐ παικτοῖς κατέπαιζαν καὶ κατορχήσαντο τὰλλότρια καὶ ὧν οὐδ’ ὅτιοῦν προσῆκε σφίσι, τῶ κοινῶ κλύδωνι τὸ καθ’ ἑαυτοῦς συμφέρον ἀρπάσαντες.*

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 166: *μετὰ τῶν καιρῶν ἐπαναστάντες, κακῶς ὁμῶς ἀπήλλαξαν,* 167, see fn. n. 39.

<sup>102</sup> Metochites, “Βασιλικὸς δεῦτερος” (ed. Polemis), 322: *στρατεύματα μὲν σχεδὸν ἅπαντα πρὸς ταῖς δυτικαῖς ἐκκεχωρήκει χρεῖαις ἐνασχολῆσθαι.*

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 324: *ἀπῆσαν τηνικαῦτα πάντες κοινὸν ἄεθλον. Ἔ καὶ μᾶλλον οἱ τάναντία φρονοῦντες, ἔοικεν, ἐνταῦθα βάρβαροι θαρροῦντες ἐκινουῦντο.*

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 324: *ἐπειδὴ τὰ κατὰ δύσιν τῆς ἀρχῆς κεκίνητο τηνικαῦτα μάλιστα καὶ δυσκολίας ἐπειρᾶτο καὶ πᾶν δεινὸν ἐνεωτέριζεν.*

According to the rhetorician, the “Rhomaic people” had to confront at the same time enemies from the “east” and the “west” where the major part of the army was gathered.<sup>105</sup> He reminded the emperor and his audience that the submission of the “western” areas was also the emperor Michael VIII’s priority (*ἡ μείζων ἀσχολία*) and he praised the current victories in the European provinces of the empire (in Epirus specifically) by distinguishing them as the most significant accomplishments.<sup>106</sup> After all, the emperor’s determinative contribution in facing simultaneous dangers in the eastern and western parts of the empire (*ἀμφοτέρα*) was clearly illustrated despite the fragmentation of the army and the resources.<sup>107</sup>

In conclusion, after a close reading of a combination of key texts of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, the eastern literati’s viewpoints of their “ὁμογενεῖς” of the “west” were detected and highlighted. In effect, their views of the Epirotes, under the constantly variable geopolitical terms of the late Byzantine period, were made clear. It should not be forgotten that a new historical period was inaugurated after Constantinople’s fall to the Latins and their claims to the “Rhomaic kingship”, which were manifested with the direct reproduction of the imperial Constantinian model of power in the Latin empire of the East.<sup>108</sup>

In confrontation with the Latin pretensions, the eastern literati’s attitude towards their “western kindred people” was primarily connected to the geopolitical dynamics developed in the “western” areas after the empire’s territorial fragmentation in 1204. It should be clarified that the geographical limits of the term “west” to describe the European parts of the empire, vary according to the sources studied in this paper. But certainly, one thing is clear: the remoteness and the distance of the “western” areas from the empire’s historical Center was emphasized as a condition facilitating the development of separatist trends. Moreover, after

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 338: *καὶ δυοῖν οὕτω μεγίστων κινδύνων, τῶ μὲν ἦσαν Ῥωμαίων ἀντικρυς.*

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 340: *καὶ εἴ τις ἐκεῖνα δὴ κατὰ τὴν Εὐρώπην τῶν τότε χρόνων νομίζει κάλλιστα πεπράχθαι Ῥωμαίοις, ὡς καὶ αὐτὸς οἶμαι.*

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 342: *ἀλλ’ ἤδη νῦν ἔρρει Ῥωμαίοις τὰ πράγματα καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀντισχεῖν ἐφ’ ἐκάτερα, ἀλλ’ ἢ ἀμφοτέρα μερισθέντας, ἀμφοτέρα διολέσθαι, ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν ἀποχρώντως εἶναι;* 346: *καὶ παρῆλθον αἱ πρὸς ἀμφοτέρα τῶν πράξεων ἀποτελεστήσεις κρείττους συμπάσης ἐλπίδος.*

<sup>108</sup> Patlagean 2007, 289; Rapp 2008, 141-142.

Constantinople's recapture, an argument was developed in the eastern erudites' writings on the historical rights of the Palaiologan emperors in the "western" areas, now that they resided in Constantinople. On the other hand, the rejection of these "eastern" claims by the leading family of Epirus, the emergence of a local patriotism in the case of some "western" ruling elites and the opportunism of their subjects gave rise to sharp geopolitical separations constructed by the eastern literati in reference to the aforementioned "western" social groups. These distinctions prevailed, specifically among the historians, at the expense of any type of bonds, cultural, racial or otherwise, which tied the "westerners" to the "easterners".

In the light of evidence presented so far, one could plausibly argue that there are certain similarities as well as discrepancies between the historians on the one hand and the rhetoricians (or the emperor Michael Palaiologos himself) on the other concerning their perceptions of the "ὁμογενεῖς" of the "west". There are several common points among the historians regarding the "western" social groups. For these historians, the rulers of Medieval Epirus were the kind of political figures who had benefited from the dissolution of the Byzantine state in 1204 by usurping power in the "western" areas of the former imperial territory, and for this reason they are purposefully called "tyrants". It is worth noting that the Epirote rulers' opportunism and dishonesty became apparent in every occasion, in particular when the "eastern" centers of power faced internal problems or external enemies, such as the Latins and the Ottomans. Besides, owing to their frequent rebellions, the "western" rulers perpetuated the state of political fragmentation and for this reason they were considered the main cause of the empire's military enfeeblement at the eastern frontiers, especially in facing the Ottoman advance in Asia Minor.

In the eyes of the historians, Nicaea and Constantinople were the legitimate centers of power; thus the Epirote rulers, who exercised an illegitimate power and almost always rebelled against the "eastern" authorities, were "apostates". In addition, their power was exclusively delineated in geographical terms, and this not only as a means to limit it but in order to deprive it of any imperial claims and finally to delegit-



imize it totally, especially after Constantinople's recapture by the Nicaeans. It is remarkable also that, according to these "eastern" literati, a way for the Epirote rulers to enter the Byzantine political system without any military enforcement was intermarrying with Byzantine princesses, which resulted in the conferment of the title of Despot by the emperor.

The Epirote rulers were portrayed with negative and derogatory characteristics: they were malicious, perfidious, treacherous, unreliable, rapacious and dishonest. Moreover, special attention was drawn to their perception of power, which was represented in terms of possession and heredity, i.e. with terms that could be compared to aspects of the exercise of power in the Latin West.

Furthermore, negative stereotypes which were presented as natural, were created by the historians about the inhabitants of the "western" areas. Like their rulers before, they were also represented as rebellious, treacherous, unreliable, malicious, cowardly, unable to guard their cities, opportunists and politically unstable. These stereotypes reminded the audience of comparable stereotypes created by the Byzantine intellectuals for other hostile ethnic groups, such as the "Latins" and the Albanians. Of particular interest for us also is the fact that in the historical works under study neither the rulers and the ruling elites nor the inhabitants of the "west" are called "Ρωμαῖοι"; on the contrary, they were characterized, by geographical terms mostly, as enemies of the "Rhomaic people". For this reason, apart from "westerners", they were called "Akarnanians" or they were represented as a different nation, the "western nation".

We may say that the "eastern" historians had adopted a confrontational position towards the leading family, the ruling elites and the "western" inhabitants; they set out in their texts the reasons why the so-called "westerners" could not be "Ρωμαῖοι", neither politically nor culturally, even though their territories were historical parts of the empire for centuries.<sup>109</sup> They were censured for their disobedience to the political authority of the imperial office of Nicaea and Constantinople,

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<sup>109</sup> See Page 2008, 133-134, where is noted that Trebizond's very existence was as far as possible ignored by the historians of Constantinople and Nicaea, and when it is mentioned, it is deprived of its "Romaness".

their claims for independence and also the adoption of some aspects of the exercise of power in the Latin West: for example, their perception of a hereditary power in a specific imperial territory and other practices incompatible with the dominant political ideology, and thus had sufficient reasons to be deprived of the sense of belonging to the “Rhomaic” political order. In addition, the stereotypes created for all the “western” social groups were not only characteristic of their lack of political conduct, but reflected also deficiencies in their character and the negative impressions they had caused to the eastern urban literati. They were represented with features of people living in the provinces, brought together by the geographical proximity, and affinities of their character as well as by common local interests.<sup>110</sup> Sometimes they were plainly called barbarians.

On the other hand, in the imperial orations, a reliable material contemporary to events, and also in the autobiographies, the collective noun “Ρωμαῖοι” was not always denied to the Epirotes; despite the fact that they were called “apostates” or “enemies” in a political meaning, they could still be “Rhomaic people” by race, they were the kindred of Nicaeans: *ὁμογενεῖς, οἰκεῖον γένος*. Special attention should be given to the orations of some prominent Palaiologan rhetoricians, such as Holobolos, Choumnos and the Patriarch Gregory of Cyprus. In their discourses the Epirotes are noticeably absent from the anti-Byzantine coalition of the year 1259, even though the significant Byzantine triumph over the Latin leaders in the battle of Pelagonia was praised. It is very likely that the rhetoricians’ silence was a way to express contempt for their “western” kindred people.

The imperial encomiasts and the emperor Michael Palaiologos, by considering Nicaea and Constantinople as the legal centers of power, regarded the Epirote rulers as internal adversaries, actually worse than their natural enemies; their claims to the imperial power, as also their separatist trends and disobedience to the “eastern” emperors, excluded them of the “Rhomaic” political order. Besides, the “western” sov-

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<sup>110</sup> See Kiousopoulou 2013, 136-139, where similar defects are pointed out in the character of the mixed inhabitants and some toparchs of Peloponnesus during the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

ereigns were portrayed as malicious and opportunists who were after their own profit in the aftermath of the empire's collapse in 1204. That is to say, with characteristics of a degenerative behavior incompatible with the Byzantine political culture and with features that could not be compared with those of the Nicaean or Constantinopolitan urban elites. These rhetoricians highlighted the concern of the first two Palaiologan emperors in annexing the western provinces to their territory and in securing the fragile eastern frontiers against the need to suppress the revolts in the areas of the "west".

Oddly enough -and this is an important point- they did not create unfavorable stereotypes for other "western" social groups, as the historians before did. When they chose to volunteer information for their kindred people of the "western" areas of the empire, they focused upon the intolerable political actions of members of the leading family.

We should also keep in mind the condescending attitude of a "non-eastern" literary source for the Epirotes, which sheds light upon their treacherous disposition towards the Latins.<sup>111</sup> The anonymous writer of the *Chronicle of the Morea* gathers all the unfavorable traits of the "Ρωμαῖοι", heaps them on the Epirotes and calls them "Rhomaic people of the Despotate" (*Ρωμαῖοι τοῦ Δεσποτάτου*).<sup>112</sup> It is clear that the Latin enmity towards the Byzantines knew no distinctions between "easterners" and "westerners".

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<sup>111</sup> Shawcross 2009, 194.

<sup>112</sup> *Τὸ Χρονικὸν τοῦ Μορέως* (Kalonaros), ln. 3923.

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