

# RURAL FORTIFICATIONS IN WESTERN EUROPE AND BYZANTIUM, TENTH TO TWELFTH CENTURY

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In 1992—warmly encouraged by Cyril Mango—Hugh Barnes and I, plus a team of Oxford undergraduates, began what is planned in the first instance to be a five-year survey of five Byzantine castles in the Menderes region of western Turkey.<sup>1</sup> One basic goal of the project is to assemble material for a corpus of Byzantine castles that will contribute towards a more reliable chronology and typology of these sites, but the end of the exercise is not a study of Byzantine military architecture as such. Rather we see fortifications as a reflection of other aspects of the society which produced them. Byzantium is a relatively ill-documented culture, and castles are valuable evidence which we cannot afford to neglect.

In this we are following a lead set by historians of western Europe where for the last two decades and more the study of castles has been a key field of research. A seminal work was that of Pierre Toubert published in 1973 which showed how between about 920 and 1030 the settlement pattern of the Latium region of central Italy was radically transformed around a series of fortified villages, each focused on a seigneurial castle. That transformation, termed by Toubert *incastellamento*, in turn brought with it a fundamental reshaping of the region's social, political and economic structures.<sup>2</sup> The change from a previously dispersed pattern of settlement owed virtually nothing to outside threats. *Incastellamento* begins just when Saracen raiding

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<sup>1</sup>The five castles are as follows: Mastaura kalesi (near Bozyurt, in Aydın ili, Nazilli ilçesi, merkez bucağı); Yılları kalesi (on the side of the Boz dağ near Kemer in İzmir ili, Ödemiş ilçesi, Birgi bucağı); Çardak kalesi (near Çardak in Denizli ili, Çardak ilçesi, merkez bucağı); Yöre kalesi (near Yöreköy in Aydın ili, Kuyuçak ilçesi, Pamukören bucağı); and Ulubey kalesi (on the Kazancı deresi near Ulubey in Uşak ili, Ulubey ilçesi). Annual reports appear in *Anatolian Studies* and a monograph is in preparation discussing the five sites as a group: H. Barnes, M. Whittow, 'The Oxford University/British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara Survey of Medieval Castles of Anatolia (1992). Mastaura Kalesi: A Preliminary Report', *AnatSt* 43 (1993), 117-135; *idem*, 'The Oxford University/British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara Survey of Medieval Castles of Anatolia (1993). Yılları Kalesi: Preliminary Report and New Perspectives', *AnatSt* 44 (1994), 187-206.

<sup>2</sup>P. Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval*, 2 vols. (Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 221, Rome, 1973), I, 87, 338, 374-412.

stops.<sup>3</sup> Nor was it ever the result of a spontaneous regrouping of peasants on a new defensible site.<sup>4</sup> Instead, Toubert has been able to show how an increase in population, and the rising prosperity which came with it, encouraged and enabled the region's lay and ecclesiastical lords to gather peasant families on new fortified sites. The process was not entirely involuntary. Peasant families were probably more lured by offers of land (now in shorter supply with the rise in population) and the concession of favourable terms than compelled by violence.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless the end result of *incastellamento* was a society dominated by seigneurial lordship exercised from a network of castles now covering the landscape.<sup>6</sup>

At first sight *incastellamento* as a model might seem only to be applicable to certain areas of the Mediterranean world which shared Latium's distinctive pattern of fortified villages with a seigneurial castle inside the walls; but seen in less specific terms it has now been widely recognised that over the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries nucleation of settlement and the growth of local élites exercising a new control over rural society was a general phenomenon over most of western Europe. That control can be just as effective when the village is unfortified and the lord's castle is nearby and not inside.<sup>7</sup>

The chronology and degree of change varies enormously from area to area, as does the exact form it took. Much depended on the nature of the old order being transformed. In southern France the structures of the late Carolingian world fragmented towards the end of the tenth century as local lords built private castles and took rights of public justice for themselves. In Catalonia the crisis came in the mid-eleventh century. In both cases the landscape filled up with new stone towers often perched on rocky outcrops overlooking the rural world their owners exploited.<sup>8</sup> In northern France the

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<sup>3</sup>*Op. cit.*, I, 311.

<sup>4</sup>*Op. cit.*, I, 367.

<sup>5</sup>*Op. cit.*, I, 313, 322-325, 533-534.

<sup>6</sup>*Op. cit.*, I, 338; II, 1274-1313.

<sup>7</sup>A. Debord, in 'Les fortifications de terre en Europe occidentale du Xe au XIIe siècles (Colloque de Caen, 2-5 Octobre 1980)', *Archéologie Médiévale* 11 (1981), 72-117; R. Fossier, *L'enfance de l'Europe*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1982), I, 188-233, 364-421; J.-M. Pesez, 'Introduction', in *Habitats fortifiés et organisation de l'espace en méditerranée médiévale*, ed. A. Bazzana, P. Guichard, J.-M. Poisson (Travaux de la Maison de l'Orient 4, Lyon, 1983), 13-14.

<sup>8</sup>Debord, 'Les fortifications', 85-86; idem, *La société laïque dans les pays de la Charante xe au XIIe siècle* (Paris, 1984), 125-138; J.-P. Poly, *La Provence et la société féodale, 879-1166*

authority of counts, dukes, and to some extent even that of the king, proved more enduring, but everywhere by the end of the eleventh century at the latest the changing pattern of settlement and the hundreds of new castles—the majority built of earth and wood—show the same forces at work.<sup>9</sup> In England while the powerful and well-organised late Anglo-Saxon state kept alive both the practice of royal justice and the public control of fortification, the tenth and eleventh centuries also saw much of the landscape transformed by the creation of nucleated villages—a process which English lords seem to have controlled and exploited just as effectively as their counterparts in France and Italy. Private fortifications in pre-conquest England do not seem to have been as formidable as those common in mainland Europe, but the difference seems essentially to have been one of degree, and after 1066 castles on the French model proliferated rapidly.<sup>10</sup> Recognisably similar developments can be seen in Germany, and by the twelfth century in Scandinavia, Scotland and Ireland too.<sup>11</sup> The common experience of western Europe was a new pattern of settlement with local power, whether delegated or illegally seized, exercised by a land-owning élite who lived in fortified houses—the classic seigneurial castle.

Until Alexander Kazhdan drew the attention of Byzantinists to the virtual disappearance of copper coinage in the Byzantine provinces between the seventh and ninth centuries, and Clive Foss demonstrated that Byzantine cities did not represent the continuation of the urban culture of the ancient

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(Paris, 1976), 127-156; F. Cheyette, 'The castles of the Trencavel: a preliminary aerial survey', in *Order and Innovation in the Middle Ages. Essays in Honor of Joseph R. Strayer*, ed. W.C. Jordan (Princeton, 1976), 255-272; P. Bonnassie, *From Slavery to Feudalism in South-Western Europe* (Cambridge, 1991), 104-148; M. Riu i Riu, 'L'aportació de l'arqueologia a l'estudi de la formació i expansió del feudalisme català', *Estudi General* 5-6 (1985-6), 27-45.

<sup>9</sup>Debord, 'Les fortifications', 83-85, 90; R. Fossier, 'Étapes de l'aménagement du paysage agraire au pays de Montreuil', *Revue du Nord* 62 (1980), 97-116; M. Bur, *Vestiges d'habitat seigneurial fortifié en Champagne centrale* (Cahier des lettres et sciences humaines de l'Université de Reims 3, 1987); J.C. Bestermann, 'Mottes in the Netherlands', *Château Gaillard* 12 (1985), 211-224; J. le Meulemeester, 'Mottes castrales du Comte de Flandre', *Château Gaillard* 11 (1983), 101-115.

<sup>10</sup>R. Higham, P. Barker, *Timber Castles* (London, 1992), 36-61; R.K. Morris, *Churches in the Landscape* (London, 1989), 250-256, 258-261; A. Williams, 'A Bell-house and a Burh-geat: Lordly Residences in England before the Norman Conquest', in *Medieval Knighthood* 4, ed. C. Harper-Bill, R. Harvey (Woodbridge, 1992), 221-240.

<sup>11</sup>Debord, 'Les fortifications', 87, 88, 92; Higham, Barker, *Timber Castles*, 66-77, 79-84, 88-90; T.B. Barry, *The Archaeology of Medieval Ireland* (London, 1987), 37-55; for a recent coverage of work in Germany and north-eastern France see the papers in *Burgen der Salierzeit*, ed. H.W. Böhme (Sigmaringen, 1991).

world, it was possible to believe that Byzantium in the early Middle Ages was on a completely different economic trajectory to that of the contemporary West.<sup>12</sup> However, it is now clear that in very broad terms the Byzantine world and the West were on similar paths. Recession had begun earlier in the West but had struck Byzantium too by the seventh century. A recovery, made possible by relative security and fuelled by population growth, was under way in both areas by the tenth century. Some of the factors which lay behind the rise of the castle in the West were therefore also present in the Byzantine East.

There are further similarities. The tenth and eleventh century in Byzantium saw the rise of military and civilian families keen to exploit the profits to be made in an Asia Minor no longer ravaged by annual Arab raids. The tenth-century land legislation shows emperors alarmed lest these developments led to the creation of a tied peasantry akin to that being created by *incastellamento* in contemporary Italy.<sup>13</sup> It is tempting to wonder whether in these years Byzantium too saw the creation of a more concentrated pattern of rural settlement. (Unfortunately, outside eastern Macedonia which is partially revealed by the archives of the monasteries of nearby Mount Athos, there is not the documentary evidence to answer such a question; and, as usual in Byzantine studies, the necessary archaeological work has yet to be done. In eastern Macedonia there are signs of a shift from a more dispersed to a nucleated settlement pattern, but the Athos documents do not begin until the tenth century and what happened before is therefore highly obscure. Further, eastern Macedonia, conquered by the Slavs in the seventh century and not fully restored to imperial control until the ninth, is hardly a very typical case.<sup>14</sup>)

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<sup>12</sup>A. Kazhdan, 'Vizantijskie goroda v VII-IX vekach', *Sovetskaja Arkheologija* 21 (1954), 164-188; C. Foss, 'Archaeology and the "Twenty Cities" of Byzantine Asia', *AJA* 81 (1977), 469-486.

<sup>13</sup>M. Kaplan, *Les hommes et la terre à Byzance du VIe au XIIe siècle* (Paris, 1992), 326-331, 421-444; R. Morris, 'The Powerful and the Poor in Tenth-Century Byzantium: Law and Reality', *Past and Present* 73 (1976), 3-27.

<sup>14</sup>J. Lefort, 'Radolibos: population et paysage', *TM* 9 (1985), 195-207; idem, 'En Macédoine orientale au Xe siècle: habitat rural, communes et domaines', *Occident et Orient au Xe siècle*, (Publications de l'Université de Dijon 57, Paris, 1979), 254-256. Kaplan, *Les hommes et la terre*, 115-117 argues that a nucleated settlement was always the norm in the Byzantine world, but the tenth-century Fiscal Treatise (ed. F. Dölger, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der byzantinischen Finanzverwaltung besonders des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts* [Berlin, 1927], 115) recognises the existence of areas of longstanding dispersed settlement, and it may be that a more diverse pattern varying from region to region and over time would be revealed by archaeology.

These similarities come to an end, however, when one looks at the pattern of rural fortification. Whether Byzantine villages were recent creations or not, they were certainly not walled in the same way as Toubert's central Italian settlements.<sup>15</sup> The same admittedly applies to most western European villages too, but in Byzantium the pattern of rural castles from which the western élite exercised their authority is missing as well. This conclusion is not contradicted by the presence of either towers (*pyrgoi*) or aristocratic houses (*oikoi*) in the Byzantine countryside. To deal with towers first, a number of these small fortifications, for the most part late medieval or early modern in date, still survive. At first sight they appear rather similar to many small castle towers in southern France; however, the documentary evidence, most of it from Mount Athos but also from the monasteries of western Asia Minor and the Aegean islands, and the survey work that has been done, is enough to show that in the tenth and eleventh century towers like this were very rare.<sup>16</sup> Only two are mentioned in the Athos archives.<sup>17</sup> Even in the thirteenth century many more monastic estates had a church and a few simple rectangular unfortified houses than had a tower.<sup>18</sup> It is also worth noting that in at least two cases where we are given enough detail to judge, the tower is specifically stated not to have been used as a residence. At Bolbos in eastern Macedonia the five-storey tower with arrow slits is described as serving as a granary.<sup>19</sup> On the Iviron monastery's estate of St. Nicholas, near Hierissos on the eastern coast of the Chalkidike peninsula, a tower was built after the village was destroyed by pirates to provide a refuge

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<sup>15</sup>J. Lefort, 'Population et peuplement en Macedoine orientale, IXe-XVe siècle', in *Hommes et richesses dans l'empire byzantin*, ed. V. Kravari, J. Lefort, C. Morrisson (Paris, 1991), II, 66.

<sup>16</sup>A. Arel, 'Foça bağ evleri ve kule-ev geleneği', *VII. Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı Antalya, 18-23 Mayıs, 1989* (Ankara, 1990), 43-71; M.E. Weaver, 'A Tower House at Yeni Foça, İzmir', *BalkSt* 12 (1971), 253-266; P. Lock, 'The Frankish Towers of Central Greece', *BSA* 81 (1986), 101-123.

<sup>17</sup>*Actes de l'Iviron*, ed. J. Lefort, 3 vols. (Archives de l'Athos 14, 16, 18, Paris, 1985-94), II, 134, l. 73, 241, II. 434-436.—I, 256, l. 10 is almost certainly an ancient field tower used as a boundary mark; *Actes de Xenophon*, ed. D. Papachryssanthou (Archives de l'Athos 15, Paris, 1986), 73, l. 138-139.

<sup>18</sup>See for example the list of the properties of the Nea Monē confirmed by Michael VIII Palaiologos in 1259: K.N. Kanellakis, *Χιακὰ Ἀνάλεκτα* (Athens, 1890), 569-574; F. Miklosich, J. Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*, 6 vols. (Vienna, 1860-90), V, 10-13, 448-449; or the references to towers in J. Lefort, *Villages de Macedoine. 1. La Chalcidique occidentale* (TM monographies 1, Paris, 1982).

<sup>19</sup>*Iviron*, II, 241, l. 434-435.

in case of further attacks from the sea.<sup>20</sup> An extensive programme of field survey in either Greece or Turkey would almost certainly come up with more towers than are known at present, but so far there is nothing to justify seeing these *pyrgoi* forming a network of private rural fortifications to match the castles of the West before the late fourteenth century, if at all.

Byzantine aristocrats did not live in *pyrgoi* but, as Paul Magdalino has usefully emphasised, in *oikoi*.<sup>21</sup> The term *oikos* was used in the general sense of 'household'—the community of family, servants and retainers but it was also the usual term for a great aristocratic house. Although most of those that we hear about were in Constantinople,<sup>22</sup> there were also great numbers of rural *oikoi*. Constantine Doukas, for example, had an *oikos* in Paphlagonia to which his wife was exiled after the bloody failure of his 913 coup attempt.<sup>23</sup> Leo Phokas fled to his *oikos* in Cappadocia when the eastern armies abandoned him in favour of Romanos Lekapenos in 919.<sup>24</sup> Eustathios Maleinos had an *oikos* in the eastern theme of Charsianon where Bardas Phokas was proclaimed emperor on 15 August 987, and which the emperor Basil II visited on his return from Syria in 995.<sup>25</sup> The caesar John Doukas had at least two: one near Sabanca gölü in Bithynia which the Caesar used as a base for hunting;<sup>26</sup> and a second at Moroboundos in Thrace where he spent the years from 1074 to 1081 in political disgrace.<sup>27</sup> The future emperor Nikephoros Botaneiates had an *oikos* in the eastern district of the Menderes region where he too spent part of the 1070s, an exile from Constantinople, power and office.<sup>28</sup> A fairly long list could be compiled.

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<sup>20</sup>*Op. cit.*, II, 9.

<sup>21</sup>P. Magdalino, 'The Byzantine Aristocratic *oikos*', in *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX-XIII Centuries*, ed. M. Angold (BAR International Series 221, Oxford, 1984), 92-111.

<sup>22</sup>Magdalino, *op. cit.*, 92; J.-C. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)* (Byzantina Sorbonensia 9, Paris, 1990), 200-201.

<sup>23</sup>Georgius Monachus continuatus, *Vitae recentiorum imperatorum*, ed. I. Bekker (CSHB, Bonn, 1838), 877.

<sup>24</sup>Theophanes continuatus, *Chronographia*, ed. I. Bekker (CSHB, Bonn, 1838), 394.

<sup>25</sup>Ioannes Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. I. Thurn (CFHB 5, Berlin, 1973), 332, 340.

<sup>26</sup>Nikephoros Bryennios, *Historiarum libri quattuor*, ed. P. Gautier (CFHB 9, Brussels, 1975), 145, 173, 179: Bryennios in fact uses the expression τὰ βασιλέα τοῦ καίσαρος (173, l. 7-8), but evidently he means what would elsewhere be called an *oikos*.

<sup>27</sup>Anna Komnena, *Alexiad*, 3 vols., ed. B. Leib (Paris, 1937-45), I, 81.

<sup>28</sup>Michael Attaleiates, *Historia*, ed. W. Brunet de Presle, I. Bekker (CSHB, Bonn, 1853), 186, 242, 253.

## Rural Fortifications in Western Europe and Byzantium

However, it is clear that such rural *oikoi* were not fortresses. There is no mention of anyone willingly standing siege in such a place. In 1073, the Komnenoi brothers, Isaac and Alexios, were returning from a failed campaign against the Turks. Both had already had to flee for their lives as the Byzantine army broke up in face of Turkish attack, and they were lucky to have escaped death or captivity. Crossing Bithynia in the last stretch before Constantinople, they accepted an invitation to turn aside to stay at a friend's rural *oikos*. A Turkish raiding party was mistaken by a neighbouring peasant for more guests who needed directions to the feasting, and shortly afterwards the Komnenoi and their host found themselves heavily outnumbered and trapped. The Turks, by Nikephoros Bryennios' account, rather than launch a direct assault surrounded the *oikos* and watched the exits. Clearly the *oikos* had a courtyard wall for security, and gates that could be closed. For the time being, the Turks were reluctant to waste lives on storming the compound. But the whole story takes it for granted that there was no possibility of sitting tight and sending for help. The *oikos* was not a stronghold and once the Turks did decide to attack there would only be one outcome. The household servants escaped as quickly as possible, and those remaining gathered their arms and debated what to do next. One possibility was to open negotiations, but eventually the decision was taken to fight their way out. With archers climbing on to the roof to provide covering fire—there was evidently no tower or wall-walk from which they could shoot—the Komnenoi charged out, and just managed to break through the Turkish lines and make their way eventually to Constantinople.<sup>29</sup>

Other episodes confirm the point that *oikoi* had little military potential. Leo Phokas in 919 left his Cappadocian *oikos* and moved to the *kastron* of Ateos as soon as Romanos Lekapenos sent troops against him.<sup>30</sup> Constantine Doukas' father, Andronikos, took refuge at Kabala, a well-sited fortress near Ikonion in 906,<sup>31</sup> and two other Doukai held out against Basil II in 979-981 at the fortresses of Armakourion and Plateia Petra in the hill

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<sup>29</sup>Nikephoros Bryennios, 157-161.

<sup>30</sup>Theophanes continuatus, 396.

<sup>31</sup>Theophanes continuatus, 372; K. Belke, *Galatien und Lykaonien* (TIB 4, Vienna, 1984), 182-183.

country which lies just to the north of the Menderes region.<sup>32</sup> None of these fortresses could be confused with the family's *oikoi*. Close to the caesar John Doukas' *basileia* in Bithynia was a fortress called Metabolē. When, probably in 1075, the Caesar's grandchildren were handed over as hostages to the Norman adventurer, Roussel of Bailleul, they were held there rather than in the nearby *oikos*.<sup>33</sup> Failed rebels and political outcasts might be allowed to remain in impotent retirement in their *oikoi*, but only because they had no military potential; to hold out in a fortress was defiance that had to be crushed.

For the Menderes region there survives one of the rare descriptions of an *oikos* which gives a clear idea of what these country houses were like. At the beginning of 1073 Andronikos Doukas, the Caesar's elder son, was rewarded for his services to the regime of his cousin, the emperor Michael VII Doukas, by a substantial block of lands taken from the imperial estates near Miletos close to the mouth of the Büyük Menderes. Adam, a patriarchal notary serving in the office responsible for the imperial estates in the east, drew up an inventory of what was being handed over which amongst other details describes the *oikos* of the estate of Baris τοῦ Βαρσακουντινοῦ.<sup>34</sup>

Andronikos Doukas was taking over a house that had presumably been built by a member of the Parsakoutenos family<sup>35</sup> before falling into imperial hands. It consisted of 'a church built of mortared masonry, with a dome supported by eight columns...a narthex and a place for catechumens, and with a pavement floor'. The church was furnished with a number of bronze crosses, icons, candelabra, books and other items necessary for the performance of the liturgy. As well as the church there was 'a

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<sup>32</sup>Skylitzes, 328; D.I. Polemis, *The Doukai: A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography* (London, 1968), 26-27.

<sup>33</sup>Nikephoros Bryennios, 173, 179; Polemis, *The Doukai*. 64.

<sup>34</sup>Βυζαντινὰ ἔγγραφα τῆς μονῆς Πάτμου, 2 vols. (Athens, 1980) II, ed. M. Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, 7-9.

<sup>35</sup>The brothers Theodore, Nikephoros and Bardas, the sons of Theodoulos Parsakoutenos, backed their cousin, Bardas Phokas in his rebellion of 970 against John Tzimiskes; in 978 Bardas Parsakoutenos successfully commanded an imperial fleet at Abydos against pro-Skleros forces; in 980-981 Nikephoros Parsakoutenos acted as an intermediary between Basil II and the members of the Doukas family still holding out at Plateia Petra and Armakourion: Skylitzes, 291-292; Leo Diaconus, *Historiae libri decem*, ed. C.B. Hase (CSHB, Bonn, 1828), 112-113, 170. The family name seems to come from that of the bishopric of Parsakouta which can probably be identified with the village of Bağyurdu (formerly known as Parsa) 40 km. east of İzmir on the road between Nymphaion (modern Kemalpaşa) and Sardis: Leo Diaconus, 112; H. Ahrweiler, 'L'histoire et la géographie de la région de Smyrne entre les deux occupations turques (1081-1317) particulièrement au XIIIe siècle', *TM* 1 (1965) 71-72.

*staurotriklinos*—literally a cross-shaped dining room—‘built of mortared masonry, domed, and with four bedchambers’. The dome was supported by four columns. A veranda ran round the outside of the building. Nearby was a bath-house, again built of mortared masonry, whose interior was partly faced with marble. The other buildings were completely ruined and hence not worth Adam’s time to describe, save for a rectangular stone and mortar farm house which had a tiled roof. Beyond the *oikos* itself were a vineyard, an olive grove, some fruit trees and a meadow.<sup>36</sup>

By the time the notary Adam came to compile his inventory, the *oikos* of Baris had fallen into some decay—presumably it had been somewhat neglected since the local officers of the imperial estates had been left in charge. But it was not a complete ruin and the main features of such a house are still clear from Adam’s description: a church, the *staurotriklinos*, the bath-house, and a range of outbuildings which must have included further accommodation for the household, a kitchen and stables. The inventory also records stocks of grain in the *oikos*,<sup>37</sup> but these would more likely have been kept in large earthenware *pithoi*, either free-standing or buried in the ground, rather than in a purpose-built granary. All these are features that can be paralleled elsewhere. Constantine Doukas’ *oikos* near Serres in Macedonia had a bath-house;<sup>38</sup> St. Philaretos the Merciful had an ancient dining-room in his *oikos* at Amneia in Paphlagonia,<sup>39</sup> when Eustathios Boïlas settled in the east in the mid-eleventh century a private church was among the first things he built;<sup>40</sup> and the so-called ‘*oikos* of Botaneiates’ in Constantinople was made up of the same elements but included two chapels as part of the complex.<sup>41</sup> As important, however, are the items that Adam does not mention. The Baris *oikos* did not include either a tower, or a gate-house, or even an enclosure-wall worth mention. It was an open, unfortified site, where rents could be collected in cash and kind, and from which some of the estate might be directly farmed. It could certainly have served as the setting

<sup>36</sup>Βυζαντινὰ ἔγγραφα τῆς μονῆς Πάτμου, II, 9-10, II. 103-119.

<sup>37</sup>*Op. cit.*, II, 10, 119-121.

<sup>38</sup>*Alexiad.*, II, 171.

<sup>39</sup>M.-H. Fourny, M. Leroy, ‘La vie de S. Philarète’, *Byzantion* 9 (1934), 135, 137.

<sup>40</sup>P. Lemerle, ‘Le testament d’Eustathios Boïlas (avril 1059)’, in *Cinq études sur le XIe siècle byzantin* (Paris, 1977), 22, l. 53.

<sup>41</sup>M. Angold, ‘Inventory of the So-Called Palace of Botaneiates’, in *The Byzantine Aristocracy*, 254-262.

from which a degree of social control might be exercised, both as a potential religious centre for the estate's tenant farmers, and as a place where guests could be feasted, but it was not a site from which to threaten or resist violent attack. Its lack of defences would appear to imply that its builders considered any threat from seaborne raiders no longer likely, and any danger of local disturbance—and there certainly were violent disputes in the Byzantine countryside<sup>42</sup>—could be settled by the law. It all appears to show a rather different rural world to that of the West.

However, the *Baris oikos* did not of course lie in a landscape without fortifications. The walled settlements of Miletos and Priene both lay within a radius of about fifteen kilometres, and there may be other fortified sites in the hills to the north. The territories of the Byzantine empire, particularly in Asia Minor, contained an inherited network of ancient city sites, almost all of which had either had new walls built or old circuits repaired in the late Roman period, and a number, including Ankara, Smyrna and Ephesos, had been refortified since. From the seventh century onwards, as the Empire battled for survival, more fortifications were built, ranging from permanent fortified settlements and frontier fortresses to look-out points and refuge centres. Greece and to an even greater extent Turkey are countries with a huge number of medieval fortified sites. Could some of these have been the private rural fortifications of the Byzantine elite?<sup>43</sup>

Literary and legal sources provide material to test this hypothesis. Fortifications appear under various guises; in more formal texts, such as the *Alexiad*, at least the larger ancient city sites are likely to be referred to as *poleis*, smaller defended settlements as *polichnia*, and specifically military

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<sup>42</sup>See, e.g., Lemerle, 'Le testament d'Eustathios Boilas', 11, l. 64-68: Eustathios was forced by violence to sell the *proasteion* of Barta to the magistros Basil; Iviron, II, 102, l. 2-9: report of a complaint, dated to shortly before August 1062, brought by the monks of Iviron against the inhabitants of the *kastron* of Ezoba and their bishop who had attacked the monastery's possessions, destroyed trees and buildings, and either killed or wounded some of the monastery's tenants; Skylitzes, 427: during the 1030s Romanos Skleros was forced to evacuate his *oikos* in the theme of the Anatolikon in the face of the attacks of his neighbour, George Maniakes.

<sup>43</sup>For what is known, in addition to the volumes of the *Tabula imperii byzantini* 1- (Vienna, 1976-), see C. Foss, D. Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications. An Introduction* (Pretoria, 1986), 15-23, 131-159; C. Foss, 'The Defences of Asia Minor against the Turks', *GOThR* 27 (1982), 145-201; idem, *Survey of Medieval Castles of Anatolia. I: Kütahya* (BAR International Series 261, Oxford, 1985); idem, 'Byzantine Malagina and the Lower Sangarius', *AnatSt* 40 (1990), 161-183.

fortresses as *phrouria*, but in general use the standard term for all fortified sites of any consequence was *kastron*. As mentioned already, the various tenth- and eleventh-century rebels are not described as looking for security in their *oikoi*, instead they are said to have turned to nearby *kastra*, some of which appear to have been very closely associated with individual magnate families. In the *Alexiad* Alexios Komnenos is described in 1074 as stopping at Kastamonu: 'the *polis* of his grandfather';<sup>44</sup> and Nikephoros Bryennios explicitly mentions that this was where Isaac Komnenos had had his *oikos*.<sup>45</sup> Also in the *Alexiad*, in her account of the Anatolian campaign of 1116, Anna Komnena describes how Alexios arrived at Kedrea (38 kilometres north-east of Afyon and in the theme of the Anatolikon<sup>46</sup>) to be told that there were great numbers of Turks in the nearby *polichnia*, which she specifies as, 'the *polichnia* of the once famous Bourtzes'.<sup>47</sup> It is not exactly clear which of the Bourtzes family she has in mind and at least three members of the family can be linked to the same area. The first Michael Bourtzes was a leading military figure in the second half of the tenth century, famous as one of the generals who took Antioch in 968.<sup>48</sup> Describing the revolt of Bardas Skleros against Basil II in 976, the historian Yahā b. Sa'id, writing in Arabic, gives an account of Michael Bourtzes fleeing from his defeat by the rebels and 'fortifying himself in one of the *husūn* (fortresses) of his province of the Anatolikon'.<sup>49</sup> Since Michael Bourtzes was *doux* of Antioch at the time, and not *strategos* of the Anatolikon, the 'his' cannot refer to his current command, and therefore, Jean-Claude Cheynet has argued, the fortress was his personal property.<sup>50</sup> The second Michael Bourtzes was the grandson of the first and is described in 1056 as one of the major figures in the revolt against Michael VI who had their *oikoi* in the theme of the Anatolikon.<sup>51</sup> What would appear to be a third Michael Bourtzes is known from an inscription found as part of a gateway at

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<sup>44</sup>*Alexiad*, I, 16.

<sup>45</sup>Nikephoros Bryennios, 197.

<sup>46</sup>K. Belke, N. Mersich, *Phrygien und Pisidien* (TIB 7, Vienna, 1990), 297.

<sup>47</sup>*Alexiad*, III, 200.

<sup>48</sup>J.-C. Cheynet, J.-F. Vannier, *Études prosopographiques* (Byzantina Sorbonensia 5, Paris, 1986), 18-24.

<sup>49</sup>Yahyā b. Sa'id, *Histoire*, ed. and trans. J. Kratchkovsky, A. Vasiliev, 2 vols (PO 18, 23, Paris, 1924-32), II, 373.

<sup>50</sup>Cheyenet, Vannier, *Études*, 16, n. 6.

<sup>51</sup>*Op. cit.*, 32-33; Skylitzes, 488.

Orkistos (a walled site and bishopric lying 40 kilometres north-east of Kedrea, and also in the Anatolikon<sup>52</sup>) which records that a section of the wall '401 feet to the right as far as the gate was made new by the *hypatos* and *topoteretes*, Michael Bourtzes of Laptoukometes'.<sup>53</sup> Laptoukometes has been identified as a village in the same general area.<sup>54</sup> Obviously it is tempting to associate Orkistos with one of the *husūn* where the first Michael Bourtzes took refuge in 976, and the *husūn* with the *polichnia* mentioned in Anna's account of the events of 1116.

Another piece of evidence which appears to show a Byzantine magnate with a *kastron* as his private possession is the *typikon* which Gregory Pakourianos drew up for the monastery of Petritzos in 1083. Gregory was one of an Armeno-Georgian family whose career as an imperial general took him from fighting the Turks in Armenia in the 1060s to defending the Balkans against Pecheneg and Norman attack in the 1080s. Shortly after the coup which brought Alexios Komnenos to power, and in the midst of the struggle to drive Bohemond from the Balkans, Gregory was rewarded for his loyalty to the new regime by the concession of huge estates in southern Bulgaria for which he was granted full fiscal immunity. Since Gregory had no immediate heirs he left the bulk of these properties to his monastery and in the *typikon* for Petritzos he sets out what these were.<sup>55</sup> Included in the list, as well as twelve villages and twelve separate estates, are six *kastra*. Among these were two in the commune of Stenimachos 'that Pakourianos had built there', and the *typikon* also mentions a chrysobull granting fiscal immunity for the improvements that he had carried out on the estates, improvements that specifically include 'building of *kastra*'.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, there is the novel of Michael VII (1071-1078), known only by its title, which decrees that 'anybody receiving *kastra* in any way...is to possess

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<sup>52</sup>Belke, *Galatien und Lykaonien*, 211.

<sup>53</sup>MAMA, VII, 75; W.H. Buckler, 'Two gateway inscriptions', *BZ* 30 (1929/30), 464-466.

<sup>54</sup>W.M. Ramsay, 'The Tekmoreian Guest-Friends: An Anti-Christian Society on the Imperial Estates at Pisidian Antioch', in *Studies in the History and Art of the Eastern Provinces of the Roman Empire*, ed. W.M. Ramsay (Aberdeen, 1906), 332-333.

<sup>55</sup>P. Lemerle, 'Le *typikon* de Grégoire Pakourianos (décembre 1083)', in *Cinq études*, 158-175.

<sup>56</sup>P. Gautier, 'Le *typikon* du sébaste Grégoire Pakourianos', *REB* 42 (1984), 35-37, 127.

them for one lifetime'.<sup>57</sup> The law is referred to a few years later when the *kastron* of Pantelion on the Aegean island of Leros was given to the monastery of St. John Theologos on Patmos. Half the *kastron* was granted to the monks by Alexios I in 1087; the other half was handed over by Alexios' mother, the acting regent Anna Dalassena, in the following year.<sup>58</sup>

Alexios' chrysobull of 1087 specifically states that although 'donations of *kastra* as irrevocable property must be considered as valid for one life' in this case the grant is to be perpetual.<sup>59</sup> Michael's law and Alexios' chrysobull show both emperors treating the private possession of *kastra* as a widespread phenomenon.

In noting the relative rarity of towers in the Byzantine countryside and the lack of fortifications in the rural *oikoi* of the Byzantine aristocracy, is one therefore simply looking in the wrong place for Byzantium's private rural fortifications? Should we envisage a landscape with undefended rural *oikoi* which acted as estate centres and where Byzantine aristocrats might live when not in Constantinople or serving in some official post, but in the background a network of private *kastra* which could provide a fortified redoubt in time of danger? In the specific case of the Bourtzes family was their *oikos* at Laptoukometes, and Orkistos their private *kastron*?

On balance, the answer to this question must be 'no'. In the first place, the Byzantines clearly regarded most *kastra* as essentially imperial or public fortresses. Michael VII's novel, for example, presumes that *kastra* were not like other pieces of property, and that they remained in some sense imperial possessions even after donation. Similarly, from the late tenth century onwards there are a number of imperial grants which mention *kastroktisia*, 'the building of *kastra*', as a public obligation to be listed in exemption clauses along with other burdens imposed by the state.<sup>60</sup> Of course, as in tenth- and

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<sup>57</sup>J. Zepos, P. Zepos, *Jus graecoromanorum*, 8 vols. (Athens, 1931), I, 282; N. Oikonomides, 'The Donations of Castles in the Last Quarter of the 11th Century (Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 1012)', in *Polychronion, Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag* (Heidelberg, 1966), 413-417.

<sup>58</sup>*Βυζαντινά ἔγγραφα τῆς μονῆς Πάτμου*, I, ed. E. Branouse, 45, 334.

<sup>59</sup>*Op. cit.*, I, 45, l. 49-51.

<sup>60</sup>E.g. Iviron, I, 154, l. 13 (995); *Βυζαντινά ἔγγραφα τῆς μονῆς Πάτμου*, I, 26, l. 36 (1079); *Actes de Lavra*, ed. P. Lemerle et al. (Archives de l'Athos 5, 8, 10-11, Paris, 1970-82), 218, l. 38 (1079). See also Theophylact of Ohrid's complaints about *kastroktisia* in the 1090s: Theophylact d'Achrida, *Lettres*, ed. P. Gautier (CFHB 16/2, Thessalonica, 1986), 237-239; S. Trojanos, 'Kastroktisia. Einige Bemerkungen über die finanziellen Grundlagen des Festbaues im byzantinischen Reich', *Byzantina* 1 (1969), 41-57.

eleventh-century France, the legal theory that the building and possession of fortresses was a regalian right might have been maintained long after it had become highly equivocal in practice.<sup>61</sup> But in France the reality of private control of fortifications is revealed in the narrative sources, and if Byzantine magnates had had their own private fortresses then successive emperors in the tenth and eleventh century would hardly have been so willing to exile potential rebels to their native provinces, and somewhere we would have heard of a rebel being stripped of his *kastra*.

Secondly, far from being indications of what was normal practice in the tenth and eleventh century, Michael VII's legislation, Gregory Pakourianos' *kastra* and the donation to Patmos are all the product of two exceptional decades. The 1070s and '80s were a period of crisis for the Byzantine empire when existing institutions were visibly failing in the face of military defeat. The regimes of both Michael VII and Alexios I were desperate for political support and almost bankrupt. The only resource they did have in good supply was land, and that they gave away to their supporters on unprecedented terms.<sup>62</sup> Just as the extraordinary fiscal immunity that Gregory Pakourianos enjoyed did not reflect precedent before 1071, it is not likely that his control of *kastra* did either. Similarly, Michael VII's legislation and Alexios' grant of Pantelion to the monastery of St. John Theologos both have to be seen in the context of imperial inability to provide security for their subjects. As Asia Minor slipped beyond imperial control, the emperors' willingness to accept the private control of *kastra* may simply have been the desire to put a legal fig-leaf on the inevitable.

The Bourtzes case also falls apart on close examination. Despite Cheynet's just deduction that the 'his' in Yahyā b. Sa'id's account must mean that the Anatolikon was Michael Bourtzes' homeland, nothing proves that the *hisn* where he took refuge was not a public *kastron* rather than his private possession. The first Michael Bourtzes was a very high ranking general, as far as anyone knew at that stage loyal to the emperor, and fleeing defeat by a rebel. Under those circumstances any imperial fortress was bound to let him in. Once inside with his armed supporters, he was in control, and when he then chose to rebel the small garrison could hardly have expelled

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<sup>61</sup>Debord, 'Les fortifications', 81-83.

<sup>62</sup>See also *Βυζαντινὰ ἔγγραφα τῆς μονῆς Πάτμου*, I, 5-8; *Λαυρα*. I, 255-259; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, 359-361.

him. As in many other cases in the tenth and eleventh century, a rebel's seizure of a fortress does not imply that it had previously been in his private possession. Nor is the inscription from Orkistos any more informative. It is a normal building inscription for the repair of a fortification by an imperial official.<sup>63</sup> The site of Laptoukometes can only be placed broadly in this region of Anatolia, but it does suggest that the third Michael Bourtzes was a native of the Anatolikon. However, since apart from the *strategos*—who in theory had to be an outsider<sup>64</sup>—that would probably have been true of any of the theme officers likely to be sent to carry out this kind of repair work on a public *kastron*, Michael Bourtzes' presence says nothing at all about the status of Orkistos. Anna Komnena's mention of 'the *polichnia* of the once famous Bourtzes' might be significant if the Bourtzes was the first or second Michael Bourtzes, but the reference is just as likely to be to the Bourtzes who exercised what seems to have been an effectively autonomous command in Anatolia in spring 1081.<sup>65</sup> If so, then once again the context for these remarks is the break-up of imperial authority in Asia Minor during the decade following the battle of Manzikert.

Even when *kastra* were given into private hands, it always seems to have involved places of minimal military significance. The *kastron* of Pantelion actually appears as a *kastellion* (the diminutive of *kastron*) in the more formal Patmos documents, and it seems to have been no more than a place of temporary refuge, containing a small church, a single house, a few huts and a cistern, but no permanent settlement of any importance.<sup>66</sup> The fortification built by the monks on the island of Kos is also described as a *kastellion*,<sup>67</sup> as is the fort owned by the Iviron monastery at Libysdos on the east coast of the Chalkidike peninsula north of Mount Athos.<sup>68</sup> The latter was

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<sup>63</sup>E.g. H. Grégoire, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques-chrétiennes d'Asie-Mineure*, fasc. 1 (Paris, 1922), 74, 104-105.

<sup>64</sup>P. Noailles, A. Dain, *Les Nouvelles de Léon VI le sage* (Paris, 1944), 283-285; H. Ahrweiler, 'Recherches sur l'administration de l'empire byzantin aux IXe-XIe siècles', *BCH* 84 (1960), 45.

<sup>65</sup>J.-C. Cheynet, 'Toparque et topotèrètès à la fin du XIe siècle', *REB* 42 (1984), 221-224.

<sup>66</sup>*Βυζαντινὰ ἔγγραφα τῆς μονῆς Πάτμου*, I, 45, l. 32-33, 47-48; 329, l. 330; 333, l. 5, 14; II, 51, l. 18; 53, l. 44-45.

<sup>67</sup>Miklosich, Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca*, VI, 88.

<sup>68</sup>*Iviron*, II, 233, l. 184-185.

probably built in the 990s as a refuge against Bulgar raiders,<sup>69</sup> but its existence does not alter the general picture. It is the only such site to be mentioned in the Athos archives and like the *kastellia* on Leros and Kos, it was little more than a fortified animal fold: a place where people and property could see out an enemy raid, but not where a rebel might defy imperial troops, or whence a magnate might dominate the surrounding countryside.

Finally, the physical evidence of Byzantine *kastra* suggests they were not private fortresses. Since no private fortress is known, this of course has the danger of turning into a circular argument, but not only do Byzantine *kastra* not look like the compact seigneurial castles of western Europe, neither do they resemble the fortified monasteries of Mount Athos which provide one model for such a hypothetical private *kastron* belonging to a Byzantine magnate.<sup>70</sup>

Bearing in mind the very large number of unrecorded and unstudied sites, we are still a long way from a coherent typology of Byzantine fortifications, but the main outlines are clear. Obviously the major urban centres like Amorion, Ankara, Caesarea, Ephesos, Küyühya or Nicaea were public rather than private.<sup>71</sup> So too were sites like Charsianon, despite the presence within its walls of a private monastery where members of the Argyros family were buried,<sup>72</sup> or Adrianople, a *polis* where the Bryennios family could rely on support.<sup>73</sup> Many of the fortresses built in western Turkey during the twelfth and thirteenth century also stand out as imperial projects.

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<sup>69</sup>The date of the *kastellion* is not known, but can be deduced. The site is first mentioned in a *praktikon* drawn up in 1104, by when it was uncertain whether the structure was the work of the monks of Iviron or one of the site's previous owners. Since Libysdos came into the monastery's hands in 979/80 it was evidently not believed that the *kastellion* was of great antiquity, but obviously it must have been older than a generation or two for its history to have been forgotten. The late tenth century, when the region suffered from Bulgar raids (referred to in another Iviron document of 996), provides a likely context: *Iviron*, I, 26-27, 83, 170, l. 18-19 (996); *Iviron*, II, 47-48, 233, l. 184 (1104).

<sup>70</sup>See A.K. Orlandos, *Μοναστηριακή Ἀρχιτεκτονική* (Athens, 1927), 5-9, 80-84.

<sup>71</sup>Belke, *Galatien und Lykaonien*, 112-115, 126-130; F. Hild, M. Restle, *Kappadokien* (TIB 2, Vienna, 1981), 193-196; C. Foss, *Ephesus after Antiquity: A Late Antique Byzantine and Turkish City* (Cambridge, 1979), 103-107, 111-112, 115, 117; Foss, *Kütahya*, 13; Foss, *Winfield, Byzantine Fortifications*, 79-81.

<sup>72</sup>Theophanes continuatus, 374; Hild, Restle, *Kappadokien*, 163-165.

<sup>73</sup>Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, 220; P. Soustal, *Thrakien* (TIB 6, Vienna, 1991), 161-163.

Some—such as Manuel I's Neokastra<sup>74</sup>—are explicitly mentioned in the sources as imperial work, and others share the same distinctive features.<sup>75</sup> However, apart from these relatively identifiable groups there are hundreds of other Byzantine fortifications. Some seem to be on ancient city sites, others were new in the early Middle Ages, but there is a general tendency for them to include relatively large areas (two hectares or more) and for there to be no sign of any fortified residential structure.<sup>76</sup> A private magnate would surely not have required such a large space, and as at Mount Athos, one would have expected a private *kastron* to have included a tower-house or similar, built with some architectural pretension to display its owner's status. These rural fortifications look much more like communal defence works, temporary refuges or the purely military structures of the Byzantine state.

This observation brings us back to a comparison with western Europe, this time with Islamic Spain. Through the 1980s a group of French historians and archaeologists headed by André Bazzana, Patrice Cressier and Pierre Guichard have been carrying out a coordinated programme of surface survey, excavation and documentary research on the Islamic fortifications of southern and eastern Spain. They have revealed a pattern—like Byzantium—very different to that in the Latin West. Broadly speaking, the sites they discuss can be classified as urban citadels, purely military fortresses (frontier-fortresses, forts and barracks), village towers, coastal watch-towers, and rural fortresses. The latter either served as permanent townships or as refuge centres only occupied in an emergency; in either case, the fortress acted as the centre for the population of a wider area living in mostly undefended villages or hamlets up to a distance of about two hours' journey from the site. On the basis of the archaeological evidence and in the case of Valencia, using James I's remarkable first-hand account of his conquest and documents from the vast royal archive at Barcelona, they have been able to show that although some of these rural fortresses might have an official from the caliph or one of his *taifa* successors in residence, they were essentially maintained and controlled by their local communities. Above all it is clear that none of these rural fortresses can be classified as a private seigneurial castle until after the

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<sup>74</sup>Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. J.L. van Dieten (CFHB 11, Berlin, 1975), 150; Foss, Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications*, 147.

<sup>75</sup>Foss, Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications*, 145-159.

<sup>76</sup>See, e.g., Foss, *Kütahya*, 86-121.

Christian conquest when, significantly, their previous plan as large walled enclosures was often modified by the addition of compact fortified residences to fit them for their new rôle.<sup>77</sup>

Aspects of this picture—the military fortresses built by the state, possibly the rôle of communal defences and refuge centres, and, as I have argued here, the lack of private seigneurial castles—seem to bear a striking similarity to the pattern of fortification in the Byzantine world. Whether or not that similarity is anything more than superficial, the work of Bazzana and his colleagues does suggest a new range of questions that Byzantine archaeologists could usefully ask of their sites. If the similarities prove to be close, their work may also point to the conclusion that the Byzantine world had fundamentally more in common with Islamic Spain than with the Christian society of the Latin West.

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<sup>77</sup> A. Bazzana, P. Cressier, P. Guichard, *Les châteaux ruraux d'al-Andalus* (Madrid, 1988), 18-21, 35-36, 75-139, 274, 287-292. The comparison with fortifications in Islamic Spain is further discussed, with specific reference to Yılanı kalesi, in Barnes, Whittow, 'The Oxford University/British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara Survey of Medieval Castles of Anatolia (1993). Yılanı Kalesi: Preliminary Report and New Perspectives', *AnatSt* 44 (1994), 187-206.