

= Gabras =

Gabras or Gavras ( Greek : ?????? ) , feminine form Gabraina ( ??????? ) , is the surname of an important Byzantine aristocratic family , which became especially prominent in the late 11th and early 12th centuries as the semi @-@ independent and quasi @-@ hereditary rulers of Chaldia .

The Gabrades are attested for the first time in the late 10th century , when Constantine Gabras participated in the revolt of Bardas Skleros . The general Theodore Gabras captured Trebizond and ruled it and the theme of Chaldia as a virtually autonomous state ( ca . 1081 ? 1098 ) . He was celebrated for his martial exploits , and was later venerated as a saint in the region . His son , Constantine Gabras , also became governor of Chaldia ( ca . 1119 ? 1140 ) and ended up ruling it as a quasi @-@ independent prince . Several members of the family entered service with the Seljuk Turks in the 12th and 13th centuries , and in the 14th century , several Gabrades are attested in administrative positions in Byzantium , most notably the official and scholar Michael Gabras , known for his extensive correspondence with the main Byzantine literary and political figures of his day , and his brother John . A branch of the family also became rulers of the Principality of Theodoro in the Crimea .

= = Origins and first members = =

The family first appears in the northeastern corner of the Byzantine world , the province of Chaldia , centred on Trebizond . The family 's ethnic origin is unknown . Some scholars like Alexander Vasiliev and Alexander Kazhdan suggested an Armenian origin , as with many other aristocratic families of the time , but the surname " Gabras " is neither Armenian nor Greek . Persian and Aramaic origins for the name have been suggested , including a suggestion by Konstantinos Amantos that it is a corruption of the name " Gabriel " . The historian Anthony Bryer , however , considers more likely that the name is a cognate of the Arabic kafir , Persian gabr or Turkish gavur , terms meaning " infidel " or " unbeliever " , which is appropriate for the Christian ? Muslim borderlands where the Gabrades first appear . It seems that the Gabrades arose from the Inner Pontus , a region with its own distinct identity : a mountainous area , it was scarcely affected by Hellenization and preserved a traditional and archaic societal structure , with tiny lordships centred on mountain strong @-@ holds .

The first known member of the family , Constantine Gabras , participated in the 976 ? 979 revolt of Bardas Skleros , and was killed in battle in 979 . A patrikios Gabras appears in 1018 , who was blinded for plotting along with the Bulgarian Elemag to restore the recently subdued Bulgarian Empire ; it is unclear , however , what his relation with the Chaldian Gabrades is , or whether he might be a Bulgarian noble . In 1040 , a Michael Gabras was one of the leaders of a failed aristocratic conspiracy against the Domestic of the Schools Constantine , a brother of Emperor Michael IV ( r . 1034 ? 1041 ) . He too was blinded along with his fellow conspirators .

= = The Gabrades as autonomous rulers in Chaldia = =

The first important member of the family was Saint Theodore Gabras . A native of Chaldia , he was an energetic and valiant man . He recaptured Trebizond from the Turks in 1075 , and was appointed governor ( doux ) of Chaldia by Alexios I Komnenos in 1081 . Gabras ruled Chaldia as a virtually independent ruler , and until his death in battle in 1098 , he fought with success against the Danishmend Turks and the Georgians . He became a heroic figure in both Pontic Greek and Turkoman poetry , and was recognized by the Orthodox Church as a martyr and saint . By his first wife , Irene ( possibly a Taronitissa ) , Theodore had a son , Gregory Gabras , who was kept as a hostage in Constantinople , where he was initially betrothed to one of the daughters of the sebastokrator Isaac Komnenos and later to Maria Komnene , daughter of Alexios I . Theodore tried to kidnap him in 1091 , but failed . Nothing further is known of Gregory Gabras , but he may be identical to Gregory Taronites , who as doux of Chaldia in 1103 ? 1106 also led a rebellion against Alexios . Another member of the family , Constantine Gabras , whose exact relation to Theodore is

unknown , was also appointed doux of Chaldia by John II Komnenos ( r . 1118 ? 1143 ) ca . 1119 . He ruled it practically independently from 1126 until 1140 , when John II subdued him . His exploits also formed part of an extensive oral tradition in the Pontus , but the so @-@ called " Song of Gabras " , written down ca . 1900 , has been shown to be a modern work drawing from other medieval sources .

The Gabrades ' success in creating a more or less autonomous domain is not surprising : northeastern Asia Minor , including Chaldia , had had a long history of disaffection with the central Byzantine government in the 11th century , helped by its mixed Greek and Armenian population ? the latter introduced in the early 11th century and quickly coming to dominate the Pontic hinterland . Already before the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 , the renegade Frankish mercenary Robert Crispin had made the fortress of Koloneia the centre of a separate domain , and was succeeded in 1073 by Roussel de Bailleul . Thus , when Theodore Gabras appeared at Trebizond in 1075 and again in 1081 , he was seen as a native leader for the Pontic Greeks of the coastlands , and his regime relied on local forces , i.e. the old thematic levies of the province . The Gabrades ' Turkish counterpart and main rivals were the Danishmendid emirs of Neokaisareia and Sebasteia . On the other hand , as Bryer comments , " although rivals , the Gabrades and the Danishmendids probably had more in common with each other than they had with the Komnenoi of Constantinople or the Seljuks of Konya " ; the two often allied with each other , especially against efforts by their respective suzerains to bring them to heel , and the Gabrades are remembered as gallant foes in Turkoman heroic poetry .

= = Service under the Komnenoi and the Seljuks = =

Following the collapse of their independent power , many of the Gabrades came to serve under the new Seljuk Sultanate at Konya , while others went to serve the Komnenoi emperors at Constantinople and mostly lost their ties to the Pontus .

Already in the 1140s , a nameless member of the family fought on the side of the Seljuks and was captured and executed by Manuel I Komnenos ( r . 1143 ? 1180 ) in 1146 . Another Gabras , possibly the son of the former , defected from Byzantium to Kilij Arslan II ( r . 1155 ? 1192 ) and became one of his leading advisors . He may be identical with , or the father of , Kilij Arslan 's vizier during the last part of his reign ( ca . 1180 ? 1192 ) , Ikhtiyar al @-@ Din Hasan ibn Ghafras . Other members of the family in Seljuk service include Constantine Gabras , possibly the son of the doux Constantine , who " betrayed " the emperor while on a diplomatic mission in 1162 / 3 ; an unnamed Gabras who was accused of poisoning Kilij Arslan II in 1192 ; John Gabras ( " Giovanni de Gabra " ) , who was sent to a diplomatic mission in Europe on behalf of Sultan Kayqubad I in 1234 ? 1236 ; and a Michael ( " Mikhail bar Gavras " ) who was a physician at Malatya ca . 1256 .

On the other hand , the pansebastos sebastos Michael Gabras was a general of Manuel I Komnenos , fighting against the Hungarians and the Seljuks , and became related to the imperial dynasty as a son @-@ in @-@ law of Andronikos Komnenos .

= = In late Byzantium and the Empire of Trebizond = =

The surname of Gabras is still attested in the Byzantine world during the 13th and 14th centuries , but the family had lost its prestige . Some of the Gabrades of this period were peasants who adopted the surname of their masters , and most of the family members attested in government service were lowly officials .

Under the Empire of Nicaea , the Gabrades appear in Macedonia and western Asia Minor . A pansebastos sebastos Ioannakios or Ioannikios Gabras is mentioned in the ca . 1216 ; a megaloeiphanestatos Gregory Gabras is mentioned as governor of a village near Prilep in the 1220s , and the latter 's relative , the pansebastos sebastos Stephen Gabras , was active near Ohrid ; a John Gabras sold land near Miletus in 1236 ; and a Constantine Gabras was protopapas ( " senior priest " ) of the Metropolis of Miletus ca . 1250 . In the Palaiologan period , the pansebastos sebastos Christopher Gabras died as a monk ca . 1264 / 5 ; Manuel Doukas Komnenos Gavras is

attested as benefactor of a monastery in 1300 / 1 ; other members of the family are occasionally mentioned in legal documents , epigrams or correspondence as active in Constantinople and Macedonian cities like Serres or Veroia . Gabras Komnenos , of unknown first name , held the post of " judge of the army " ( krites tou phossatou ) and is recorded by Manuel Philes as a " slayer of the barbarians " ; a John Gabras Kaballarios was hetaireiarches at Serres ca . 1348 ; another family member held a pronioia estate at Kalamaria before 1347 . Other Gabrades were serfs ( paroikoi ) , attached to large estates : Michael Gabras at Leros ca . 1263 ; Demetrios and his sons Michael and Philotheos , as well as a probably related Basil Gabras , as paroikoi of the Esphigmenou monastery at Rentina ca . 1300 ; finally , Demetrios Gabras Chrito [ u ] s and George Gabras were paroikoi of the Xeropotamou monastery at Rebenikeia in the early 14th century .

The most famous of the Palaiologan @-@ era Gabrades , however , is Michael Gabras , a sakellarios of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and " the most prolific of all Byzantine letter writers " ( A. Bryer ) , whose correspondence spans the period 1305 ? 1341 and includes most of the major political and literary figures of his day . He also had a brother John , who wrote a theological treatise against the doctrines of Gregory Palamas .

A few Gabrades also remained in the Pontus , where they entered the service of the Empire of Trebizond , established by the exiled Komnenoi shortly before the dissolution of the Byzantine Empire by the Fourth Crusade in 1204 : most notably , a member of the family was governor of Sinope during the brief period when it was reclaimed from the Turks by Trebizond ( ca . 1254 or 1258 / 9 ? 1265 or 1267 / 8 ) . Other family members are mentioned as landholders , mostly in the bandon ( province ) of Matzouka , south of Trebizond : Andronikos Gavras , probably in the 13th century ; a George Gabras ca . 1344 / 5 ; Kosmas , a military leader ( polemarchos ) in the bandon of Matzouka ca . 1378 ; and Theodore Gabras in Gemora in the early 15th century .

= = In Crimea and the Principality of Theodoro = =

A branch of the Gabras family is commonly identified by scholars with the family known from Russian sources as " Khovra " . This family ruled the small Principality of Theodoro , which was founded in the mid @-@ 14th century in the southwestern Crimea ( in the area of " Gothia " ) and survived until conquered by the Ottoman Turks in 1475 . The southern Crimea had been part of the Byzantine Empire until the late 12th century , and then came under the control of the Empire of Trebizond for a generation , but retained close links with the Pontic coast long after . While several hypotheses have been put forward as to how , when , and which branch of the Gabrades relocated there , none can be conclusively proven .

The first Gabras of Theodoro to be mentioned is Stephen ( " Stepan Vasilyevich Khovra " ) , prince of Gothia , who emigrated to Moscow in 1391 or 1402 along with his son Gregory . The two became monks , and Gregory later founded the Simonov Monastery there . The Russian noble families of Khovrin and Golovin claimed descent from them . Stephen 's son , Alexios ( " Alexis " ) I , ruled Gothia after his father 's departure until 1444 / 5 or 1447 . He was succeeded briefly by John , possibly his son . John 's son Alexios died young ca . 1446 / 7 , and his epitaph was composed by John Eugenikos . Another son of Alexios , Olubei , succeeded as prince ca . 1447 and ruled until ca . 1458 , while a daughter of Alexios , Maria of Gothia , became in 1426 the first wife of the last Trebizondian emperor , David .

After the disappearance of Olubei from the scene ca . 1458 , no princes are known by name until Isaac in 1465 , possibly Olubei 's son . Isaac was overthrown in 1475 by his brother Alexander due to his pro @-@ Ottoman stance . His reign was brief , as the Ottoman Empire laid siege and conquered Theodoro itself in December . Alexander and his family were taken captive to Constantinople , where the prince was beheaded , his son was forcibly converted to Islam , and his wife and daughters became part of the Sultan 's harem .

= = Later Gabrades = =

The last notable members of the family are mentioned in Constantinople during the early centuries

of the Ottoman Empire , as with Michael or Mozalos Gabras , active ca . 1555 ? 65 , or Cyril Gabras , megas skeuophylax of the Patriarchate in 1604 . Other family members are attested in Crete and the Aegean islands . Thus an unnamed Gabras held lands in Santorini in the early 17th century ; and numerous Gabrades are to be found at Chios and in Crete , especially around Siteia , until the early 19th century . For Crete in particular , it has been often supposed , although with no definitive evidence , that the local Gabrades came directly from the Pontus .