The imperial government over the central provinces of the Byzantine Empire was both sovereign and apathetic, dealing effectively with a narrow set of objectives, chiefly collecting revenue and maintaining imperial sovereignty. Outside these spheres, action needed to be solicited from imperial officials, leaving vast opportunities for local people to act independently without legal stricture or fear of imperial involvement. In the absence of imperial intervention provincial households competed with each other for control over community decisions. The emperors exercised just enough strength at the right times to prevent the leaders of important households in the core provinces from becoming rulers themselves. Membership in a successful household, wealth, capacity for effective violence and access to the imperial court were key factors that allowed one to act with authority. This book examines in detail the mechanisms provincial households used to acquire and dispute authority.

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1 Seal of Pardos, c. 950–1050  21

2 Seal of John, c. 1000–1100  21

3 Ring of Michael Attaleiates  75
   Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC. Photo credit: Joe Mills.
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At one point in the composition of this work my husband Stephen inspired further progress by likening Byzantine provincial society to a platypus. While I am not prepared to defend the analogy, the book is dedicated to him for this insight as well as his unfailing encouragement.
Abbreviations

**AD**  Archaiologikon Delton

**BCH**  Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique

**BMGS**  Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies

**BF**  Byzantinische Forschungen

**BSA**  Annual of the British School at Athens

**BZ**  Byzantinische Zeitschrift


**DOP**  Dumbarton Oaks Papers


**JOB**  Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik

List of abbreviations


Citations to Kekaumenos include the paragraph numbers assigned by Litavrin, which are reprinted in Tsougkarakes, and the page numbers of Wassiliewsky and Jernstedt’s edition.

Lavra

Life of Lazaros

Life of Luke

Life of Nikon

Marcian Treatise
List of abbreviations

**Pantocrator**  

**Saint-Pantélémôn**  
*Actes de Saint-Pantéléïmon*, edited by Paul Lemerle, Gilbert Dagron, and Sima M. Cirkovic.  

**Typika**  
John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero.  

**Vatopedi**  

**REB**  
*Revue des Études Byzantines*

**TM**  
*Travaux et Mémoires*

**Xenophon**  