THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

POLITICAL FAMILIES IN BYZANTIUM:

THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GENOS AS KIN GROUP,

C. 900-1150

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

NATHAN LEIDHOLM

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

JUNE 2016

To my parents, Jan and Dwayne

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the generous support of many institutions and individuals. Over the past several years I have had the opportunity to interact with numerous excellent scholars and staff at several different universities, research institutes, and libraries, all of whom have made valuable contributions in one way or another.

Junior fellowships at the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Koç University's Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations provided me with the wonderful opportunity to focus on my research and writing. The generous staff and fellows at both of these institutions contributed a great deal both to this study and to my professional development more broadly. I am also indebted to the Dumbarton Oaks Greek Summer School, which I attended in 2010. It was a rare opportunity to focus squarely on the language of Byzantine sources under the direction of excellent tutors. Without this experience, the process of reading and analyzing the many sources included in this study would have been much more difficult and time consuming. I was fortunate to have received a William Rainey Harper Fellowship from the Social Sciences Division of the University of Chicago in order to finish the final stages of the dissertation, and I owe a debt of gratitude to the University of London's Institute of Historical Research, whose staff so graciously welcomed me and whose facilities served as a vital academic base for me while living in London.

The faculty, staff, and facilities at the University of Chicago have all proven to be immensely helpful throughout my graduate career. One could scarcely ask for a better place to

complete a PhD, and I will always look back on my time there with great fondness. I would also like to thank all those who have been or are currently involved in The Workshop on Late Antiquity and Byzantium. The workshop is a unique strength in the University of Chicago's program of study, and I hope that it continues to be recognized as such well into the future.

I have benefited immensely from the guidance and support of Walter Kaegi. I am extremely grateful for the time and effort he has expended on my behalf. Jonathan Lyon and Leonora Neville have been no less instrumental in the development of my research and much more. My interest in the Byzantine world was first sparked by Bill Caraher, whose enthusiasm for all things Byzantine proved contagious and set me on my current path. Tessa Murphy deserves a special word of thanks. Much of my growth over the past several years is due to her influence. I have learned more about what it means to be a professional historian from her example than perhaps any other source.

A great many others have contributed to this study, as well as to my professional and personal development, in their various capacities as professors, colleagues, and friends. This includes, but is by no means limited to, Margaret Mullett, Stratis Papaioannou, Alice-Mary Talbot, Michael Allen, Jonathan Hall, Rachel Fulton Brown, Margaret Mitchell, Anita Skarpathiotis, Jordan Pickett, Foteini Spingou, AnnaLinden Weller, Ivan Drpić, John McCluskey, Chris Fletcher, Daniel Larison, Jason Banks, Pınar Aykaç, and many others who have made my time as a graduate student such a fulfilling and productive experience. Any shortcomings in the following study are my own, but its successes are certainly due in large part to the contributions of those mentioned here. For that, I can only say a heartfelt thank you.

Of course none of this would have been possible without the love and encouragement of my parents, Jan and Dwayne. No matter what strange course my life has taken, they have never

stopped providing me with their unwavering and unconditional support. It is to them that I

dedicate this work.

Abbreviations

Actes de Lavra	22 vols. Series editor Gabriel Millet. Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1937-.
Actes d'Iviron	Lefort, Jacques, Nicolas Oikonomidès, Denise Papachryssanthou, and Hélène Métrévéli, eds. 4 vols. Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1985-95.
BMGS	*Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*
BZ	*Byzantinische Zeitschrift*
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
GRBS	*Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*
LBG	Trapp, Erich. *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität, besonders des 9.-12. Jahrhunderts*. Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996.
LSJ	Liddell, H.G. and P. Scott. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Ninth Edition with Revised Supplement. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
ODB	*The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander Kazhdan. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
PG	Migne, J.P., ed. *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Graeca*. 161 vols. Paris: J.P. Migne, 1857-89.
REB	*Révue des études byzantines*
Rhalles and Potles	Rhalles, G.A. and M. Potles, eds. Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱέρων κανόνων. 6 vols. Athens: G. Chartophylakos, 1852-56.
Zepos and Zepos	Zepos, Ioannes and Panagiotes Zepos, eds. *Jus graecoromanum*, 8 vols. Aalen: Scientia, 1962.

Introduction

"Basil Vatatzes [d. 1194], the scion of an undistinguished family (γένους μὲν ἀσήμου), had been honored with the office of *domestic of the East* and girded with the ducal command of the Thrakesion theme because he was married to the emperor's second cousin on his father's side."[1] With these words the Byzantine historian Niketas Choniates describes the beginnings of the meteoric rise of the family of Vatatzes. Within a single generation, Basil's descendants could be counted among the most politically and socially influential people in Byzantium and its successor states after 1204. By the first few decades of the thirteenth century, the name of Vatatzes appeared alongside those of Komnenos, Doukas, and others, whose impeccable nobility had been established and celebrated since the eleventh century. Basil's marriage was, according to Choniates, enough to raise his family (*genos*) out of obscurity in a single moment. By joining his family to that of the emperor, however distantly, Vatatzes immediately associated himself,

---

[1] Niketas Choniates, *Annals*, ed. Van Dieten, p.400; Harry J. Magoulias, trans. *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), p.220. The translation is that of Magoulias. Μετ᾽ οὐ πολὺ δὲ ὁ Βατάτζης Βασίλειος, γένους μὲν ἀσήμου βλαστῶν, διὰ δὲ τὸ εἰς γυναῖκά οἱ γαμετὴν συναφθῆναι τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως πρὸς πατρὸς ἐξανεψιὰν δομέστικος τῆς ἀνατολῆς τιμηθεὶς καὶ τὴν δουκικὴν ἀρχὴν τῶν Θρακησίων ἀναζωσάμενος…

1

his relatives, and his descendants with the most powerful elements of Byzantine society and politics.

Basil's story is emblematic of the way in which Byzantine politics had become family politics by the late twelfth century. Over the course of the previous few centuries, imperial authority had merged with the system of social hierarchy and cultural values of the Byzantine aristocracy, which had themselves been transformed in that same time. Within this system, the *genos* emerged as the cornerstone of aristocratic identity and factional politics.

The Byzantine aristocratic *genos* (γένος, pl. γένη/*genē*) is alternately treated by modern scholars as a western European-style lineage, some kind of nebulous "clan," or is simply left untranslated. Most scholars have viewed it as a kind of amorphous, poorly defined Byzantine "extended family," and have contrasted the *genos* with the *oikos*/household or nuclear family. Despite the fact that it was foundational to the social and political structure of the Byzantine aristocracy from at least the eleventh century, the precise nature of the *genos* as a distinct form of kin group remains relatively unexplored among modern scholarship.

This study will show that the *genos* was a strictly consanguineous kin group (or at least imagined as such), whose members were thus linked through bonds of shared descent and whose membership was limited to the seventh degree of consanguinity (at least in issues of legal marriage).[2] It was largely immune to change beyond the reproductive act, and adults maintained their identities as members of their natal *gene*, even after marriage. It came to be marked by a surname (family name), at least among the elite, over the course of the eleventh century, by the

---

[2] This is following the Roman tradition of calculating degrees of kinship.

end of which the *genos* had become perhaps the single most important marker of collective identity and source of social prestige within the Byzantine aristocracy.

What follows is a study of the *genos* as both a social group and, importantly, a concept. Its purpose is to ascertain the role and function of the Byzantine aristocratic *genos* as a distinct entity, particularly its political and cultural role, as it appears in a variety of sources between the tenth and twelfth centuries. The analysis focuses primarily on the elites because of the nature of the sources, and because many of the structures and ideals associated with the *genos* as kin group pertained primarily, if not exclusively, to them. Even if some aspects of the *genos* were shared by all people in the empire, a central argument of this dissertation, the average peasant farmer probably had a more restricted view of his lineage and extended kin than a member of the Constantinopolitan court in the eleventh century. As in contemporary Western Europe, for the lower social orders in Byzantium, the household most probably reigned supreme.[3]

The chronological scope of the investigation covers the period in which the *genos* clearly emerged as one of the defining characteristics of the Byzantine aristocracy. It makes no attempt to trace the origins of the *genos* as kin group or of the aristocracy of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as such a study would inevitably need to extend far earlier in time than the tenth century. Numerous studies in recent decades have demonstrated that the powerful aristocratic families that so dominate the history of the empire from the late tenth century onward were not an entirely new phenomenon to be contrasted with an earlier Byzantine period defined by upward mobility and the possibilities of social advancement within dominant state structures.[4]

---

[3] Martin Aurell, "Society," in *The Central Middle Ages*, ed. Daniel Power (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.47.

[4] Christine Angelidi, "Family Ties, Bonds of Kinship (9th-11th Centuries)," in *Authority in Byzantium*, ed. Pamela Armstrong (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), pp.155-66; Claudia Ludwig, "Social Mobility in Byzantium? Family Ties in the Middle Byzantine Period," in *Approaches to the Byzantine Family*, ed. L. Brubaker and S. Tougher

Instead, the focus is on the tenth through twelfth centuries, during which time the *genos* as a

social and cultural phenomenon is clearly visible in the sources, thereby allowing for a more

thorough analysis.[5]

The Byzantine Aristocracy, ca. 900-1150: An Overview

The development of the *genos* as a distinct form of kin group is inextricably linked with

broader developments in the nature of social structures and political power in tenth and eleventh-

century Byzantium. The concept of a clearly defined lineage or extended kin group (i.e. *genos*),

according to the prevailing model, (re-)appeared in Byzantine aristocratic society around the year

1000 and, by at least the mid-twelfth century, the group began to form the basis of political

organization. Prior to the year 1000, it is argued, there is "no evidence of the concept of lineage

as a community based on kinship and mutual support."[6] Even then, following this model, the

Byzantine *genos* remained a "loose social grouping," lacking in such things as patrilinear descent

and communal property holding, and elaborate genealogies tracing shared descent to more

distant founders, real or imagined, remained in an "incipient phase."[7]

This model, as it currently exists, fails to grasp the full nature of the aristocratic *genos*,

which is the subject of the following chapters. In order for this investigation to be successful,

however, the aristocratic kin group must be placed in its proper, historical context. Hence, what

---

(Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), pp.233-46; Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca. 680-850): A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.573-624.

[5] Jean-Claude Cheynet, "L'aristocratie byzantine (VIIIe-XIIIe siècle)," *Journal des Savants* 2 (2000), p.284: "It is scarcely possible to analyse in detail family origins, relationships and functions exercised by their members before the end of the tenth century, when hereditary family names multiplied and consequently are found increasingly frequently in the narrative sources and on official seals."

[6] *ODB* "Lineage," pp.1230-31.

[7] *ODB* "Lineage," p.1231.

follows is a brief survey of the major developments within the Byzantine ruling class from the late ninth through the twelfth centuries.

Though the aristocratic *genos*, with all of its defining features, would not appear in its mature form until the mid-eleventh century, recent work has shown that many of the characteristics associated with the kin group and the aristocracy in which it flourished can be traced at least into the ninth century.[8] The eighth and early ninth centuries, dominated by the first and second periods of Iconoclasm (ca. 727-787 and 814-843), typically appear as something of a break in political and, especially, social historical narratives of the Byzantine Empire. The period functions as a convenient *terminus ante* or *post quem* in Byzantine studies, not only because of the significant religious, political, and social upheaval it witnessed, but also because of the relatively small corpus of written sources to survive from the era. By the second half of the ninth century, at which time sources begin to reappear in substantial numbers, Byzantine society predictably looks substantially different than it had previously.[9]

Though the ninth century is sometimes portrayed as a period in which a largely service aristocracy remained fluid and open to new members, emperors from as early as the 820s ruled, at least in part, through the cooperation of key elements within the provincial aristocracy, especially those originating in central and eastern Anatolia.[10] The Amorian dynasty (r. 820-867)

---

[8] Some scholars have even suggested that the origins of the eleventh-century aristocracy should be sought as early as the eighth century, but such claims are difficult to prove. Brubaker and Haldon offer a good review of this scholarship in their exhaustive study of Byzantium in the Iconoclast era. Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca. 680-850): A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[9] The question of possible continuities between the aristocracy of the pre- and post-Iconoclast eras in Byzantium in many ways runs parallel to similar issues surrounding the early and late years of the Carolingian period in Western Europe. For a recent treatment of the issue, see Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*, esp. pp.573-624.

[10] For an excellent discussion of the supposed meritocratic nature of the Byzantine elite in this period, and some of the problems with this characterization, see Ludwig, "Social Mobility in Byzantium? Family Ties in the Middle Byzantine Period," pp.233-46.

consistently favored a group of aristocratic families, mainly of Armenian origin and stemming from Paphlagonia (northeastern Anatolia). These included the Doukai, Kourkouai, and Skleroi, families whose names would become well known by the early tenth century.[11]

With the appearance of Basil I on the throne in 867, marking the establishment of the long-lived "Macedonian" dynasty, the families of Phokas, Maleïnos, and Argyros, all originating in Cappadocia and/or Charsianon, were, in turn, lifted to the heights of power within the aristocracy in an effort to consolidate imperial power and to gain a foothold of support in the east. The pattern was maintained throughout the tenth century, with both factions of the aristocracy alternately benefiting from imperial support. This created a rivalry between these two factions within the aristocracy, which would last well into the eleventh century.

These families rose to power, in part, through the support of the imperial government and the titles, offices, and other privileges that such service entailed. In turn, the emperors relied on the influence of these families to secure their rule in the more distant provinces. The relationship was reciprocal, and the extent to which either group could have exercised their authority without the support of the other continues to be debated. Certainly many of the aristocratic families could boast of wealth and power that was completely independent from the imperial government's influence, and the history of the tenth century is replete with examples of antagonism, including violence, between one or more families and the emperor in Constantinople. Nevertheless,

---

[11] Vasiliki Vlysidou, Αριστοκρατικές οικογένειες καί εξουσία (9ος-10ος αι.): Έρευνες πάνω στα διαδοχικά στάδια αντιμετώπισης της αρμενο-παφλαγονικής και της καππαδοκικής αριστοκρατίας (Thessaloniki: Ekdoseis Vanias, 2001).

numerous studies have shown that the support of the imperial government, or lack thereof, could and did make or break the fortunes of even the most powerful families.[12]

For much of the tenth century, a small group of powerful families held a near-monopoly on many of the most important military posts in the empire. While several scholars have cautioned against the idea that these families could field private armies of any significant size, members of families like Phokas and Skleros did enjoy widespread support within the military. They were probably aided by the fact that many of the soldiers they commanded (at imperial behest) originated in the same regions as the aristocrats themselves, as well as by the militaristic and pious reputations many of these families had earned. Regional ties were important both in securing the loyalty of troops and in the formation of factions within the aristocracy itself, something that would remain true throughout the eleventh century as well. Most of the time, emperors were able to prevent these divisions from threatening the unity of the empire by incorporating members of the most powerful families within the still robust imperial administration.

By the last quarter of the tenth century, the Anatolian aristocracy had reached new heights in its power and influence, even providing the empire with two rulers, Nikephoros II Phokas (r.963-69) and his nephew, John I Tzimiskes (r.969-76). Of course, relations between the Anatolian aristocracy and the imperial government were not always cooperative or even peaceful. A flurry of imperial edicts issued between 900 and 996, aimed at curtailing the increasing ascendancy of the so-called "powerful," suggests that these same families increasingly

---

[12] Catherine Holmes, "Political elites in the reign of Basil II," in *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, ed. Paul Magdalino (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp.35-69; Stephen Arnold Kamer, "Emperors and aristocrats in Byzantium 976-1081." Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1983; Vlysidou, Αριστοκρατικές οικογένειες καί εξουσία.

subjugated the provincial peasantry, to the detriment of the imperial fisc.[13] The independent strength of the Anatolian aristocracy was showcased in the successive revolts of Bardas Skleros and Bardas Phokas between 978 and 989, which nearly brought the imperial government to its knees. The two men and their allies were sometimes enemies, sometimes allies during this turbulent decade, exemplifying the complex web of familial politics that so defined the aristocracy of the period. Emperor Basil II was only able to restore order with the help of troops sent by the Kievan Rus'.[14]

Contrary to some older arguments, Basil II did not wage a systematic war against the Anatolian aristocracy as a whole.[15] He did find himself at odds with both the Phokades and the Skleroi, two of the most powerful families of the era, but their loss of power and prestige did not signify the end of the provincial aristocracy writ large. Instead, the work of Catherine Holmes and Stephen Kamer (among others) has shown that his reign is better understood as a kind of changing of the guard within the aristocracy. Those families who were raised to positions of influence during the reign of Basil II, often at the expense of those who had been powerful in the second half of the tenth century, became the serious players of the mid-eleventh century.[16] The long reign of Basil II thus marks a turning point in the fortunes of several families within the Byzantine aristocracy, but his one-time reputation as an autocrat bent on the destruction of non-imperial power in the empire has been proven to be an illusion.

---

[13] This is the so-called "Macedonian" legislation. See: Eric McGeer, *The Land Legislation of the Macedonian Emperors* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2000).

[14] This famously led to the conversion of the Rus' to Orthodox Christianity, at least officially, and the birth of the Varangian Guard, a corps that would act as imperial bodyguards for the following centuries.

[15] Jean-Claude Cheynet, "Bureaucracy and Aristocracies," in *Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Jeffreys, Haldon, and Cormack. (Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), p.522.

[16] Jean-Claude Cheynet, "Bureaucracy and Aristocracies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, ed. E. Jeffreys, J. Haldon, and R. Cormack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.522; Kamer, "Emperors and aristocrats in Byzantium 976-1081."

Between the death of Basil II in 1025 and the ascension of Alexios I Komnenos in 1081, the empire was faced with generally ineffective rulers in Constantinople, the loss of territory to outside forces (especially the Seljuq Turks), and internal disruptions within the aristocracy. No fewer than eleven men (and two women) sat on the imperial throne in just over fifty years. In that same time, one scholar has counted more than ninety episodes of revolt or internal rebellion, often involving the ascendant aristocracy.[17] Prior to 1056, imperial legitimacy was earned through marriage or other bonds with Zoe and/or Theodora, the last remaining scions of the Macedonian dynasty after the death of Constantine VIII in 1028. After 1056, reigns were secured through a combination of factionalism within the aristocracy and the courting of good will among the masses. Henceforth, imperial legitimacy ceased to be earned by marriage or adoption into the Macedonian dynasty, and instead rested upon the prestige and "nobility" of the new emperor's own *genos*. In this atmosphere, the politics of reputation and effective marriage alliances were essential.

By the mid-eleventh century, not only was the Byzantine aristocracy saturated by the values of the Anatolian elite, including the almost universal employment of family names, this aristocracy also began to close itself off through claims of nobility by blood. Although nobility of blood was never enshrined in Byzantine law, and the ranks of the social and political elite remained open to upward mobility, at least to some extent, until the end of the empire, members of the aristocracy of this period display an increasing awareness of illustrious lineage, a trait that would become vital to social standing and celebrated in numerous forms by the end of the century. A quickening economy in the eleventh century, especially in urban centers, led to the rise of a wealthy merchant class who, from the middle of the century, were also eligible for

---

[17] Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996), pp.38-90.

9

imperial office and titles for the first time. This encouraged the aristocracy to further differentiate itself from the rest of Byzantine society and to reinforce its internal cohesion through carefully orchestrated marriage strategies.[18] In this increasingly interconnected class, solidarities and rivalries were built upon kinship networks, which functioned precisely because of the solidarity and cohesiveness within the *genos*.

Several scholars have described what they call the "aristocratization" of Byzantine culture in this period.[19] The rise of a powerful, Anatolian aristocracy and its increasing influence in imperial politics was accompanied by the transformation, more or less gradual, of elite culture that reflected the particular values of this provincial, largely military aristocracy. The most prevalent aspects of this aristocratic culture were the celebration of martial virtues and battlefield prowess, a particularly ascetic brand of Christian devotion, and the importance of the family, in particular the extended family (*genos*), which maintained a unique identity over several generations.

It was once common to describe the politics of the eleventh century in terms of a dichotomous rivalry between the provincial, military aristocracy on the one hand and a younger, largely urban class of civil servants and *nouveaux riches* on the other. Even emperors of this period have been ascribed origins and affiliations in either the "military aristocracy" (e.g. Isaac I Komnenos, Romanos IV Diogenes) or the "civil aristocracy" (e.g. Constantine X and Michael VII Doukas). In reality, such a division seems never to have existed. Nearly every prominent

---

[18] Angeliki Laiou, "Family Structure and the Transmission of Property," in A Social History of Byzantium, ed. John Haldon (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p.59. "…matrimonial strategy became a fine art in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, by which time vast networks of aristocratic families had been created."
[19] A.P. Kazhdan and Ann Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Alexander Kazhdan and Michael McCormick, "The Social World of the Byzantine Court," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997), pp.167-97.

family in this period could boast of members who held positions in the military, civil administration, and the church. Certainly many different factions did exist, but these were largely based around geography (e.g. Adrianople) and nearly always built upon ties of kinship and/or marriage alliances.[20] In these circumstances, one's *genos* became a kind of calling card, a declaration of one's loyalties, and a cornerstone of identity, both individual and collective.

The ascension to the throne of Alexios I Komnenos in 1081 has sometimes been viewed as the victory of the (military) aristocracy.[21] Though the existence of a separate, military aristocracy at this time is doubtful, Alexios did succeed in attaining power by virtue of the support of a coalition of aristocratic families, many of whom were connected to the Komnenoi through marriage. Alexios instituted a series of reforms in the imperial administration, in which members of the extended family (i.e. the *genos*) played an increasingly vital role. Thanks to a number of strategic marriages and an unusually large family, the Komnenoi also changed the very nature of the Byzantine aristocracy. For most of the twelfth century and beyond, the *genos* of the Komnenoi and their affines constituted the highest social stratum of the empire.

While the extent to which the governmental reforms of Alexios and his successors might be considered truly revolutionary and the speed with which they were enacted continues to be debated, there is no question that by the reign of Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180), the entire system of administration and imperial offices and titles had been remade. Under the Komnenian system, emperors effectively ruled through family connections. To be a member of the extended

---

[20] Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp.267, 476-77.

[21] Paul Magdalino has singled out the role of the genos in the Komnenian reforms of imperial politics. "The ideal of the common good," says Magdalino, "was not enough to reconcile the private interest of the provincial military commander with that of the emperor in Constantinople. The Comnenian [sic] system identified those interests more closely by bringing the empire's military command structure within the imperial *genos*, the extended imperial family, and by giving all who belonged to the imperial *genos* a vested interest in the imperial oikos and its domain, now less distinguishable than ever from the empire as a whole." Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-80* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.185.

family of the Komnenoi was to be a participant in both the imperial government and in the highest level of the Byzantine aristocracy. Closeness to the ruling couple, either through genealogical or marriage ties, largely determined the internal hierarchy within this imperial elite. Ruling the empire had become a family affair. At the core of the system's effectiveness and cohesion was the *genos*.[22]

Family and Aristocracy in Byzantium: The State of the Field

Alexander Kazhdan once described the family as "the one form of association that flourished in Byzantium."[23] This view, which remained dominant for decades, privileged the nuclear family or household, leading many to the conclusion that Byzantine society was atomized and generally individualistic, at least before the eleventh or twelfth century. Since Kazhdan published these words, there has been an understandable tendency among scholars to move away from kinship as the only important social bond in Byzantium. This move, including claims that the importance of the family in Byzantium was overstated, has been beneficial in many ways, but it should not be taken too far. There were certainly a wide range of other social groups and bonds (notably friendship) that played a vital role within Byzantine society and deserve scholarly attention. Yet, much remains to be discovered and analyzed concerning the Byzantine family and kinship, and the fact remains that kinship was among, if not the single, most important and ubiquitous social bond at any period of Byzantine history. One need only look at the language of kinship employed by emperors, monks, and friends to discover the

---

[22] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, p.187.
[23] Alexander Kazhdan and Giles Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium* (Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), pp.32-3.

importance Byzantines themselves placed on ties of kinship.[24] Patron-client relationships, teacher-student relationships, and even friendships operated through the constant repetition of kinship terms (most often "father," "son," or "brother") precisely because of the strength of such bonds, which the use of these terms evoked.

The study of the family, in all its forms, in Byzantium is still underdeveloped compared with the fields of Ancient Greek, Roman, or Medieval European history, though recent years have seen a renewed interest in the study of the Byzantine family from a multitude of perspectives.[25] Beyond the nuclear family or household, those who have examined Byzantine kinship are typically drawn to the variety of forms that kinship could take in the eastern Roman Empire.[26] In addition to the more standard bonds of consanguinity and affinity, bonds of kinship could be formed through spiritual means (e.g. baptismal sponsorship) or legal adoption, including the adoption of brothers (*adelphopoiia*).[27] Household archaeology and the analytical categories associated with "household societies" (pioneered by Lévi-Strauss) are relatively recent phenomena in anthropology and archaeology, seeking to bring new perspectives to the much older tradition of kinship studies. The changing nature of the aristocracy and its relations with the central government have long been topics of debate in Byzantine studies, yet the *genos* has received comparatively little attention from scholars of the Byzantine family.

---

[24] Rosemary Morris, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium, 843-1118* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Alice-Mary Talbot, "The Byzantine family and the monastery," *DOP* 44 (1990), pp.119-29.
[25] Leslie Brubaker, "Preface," in *Approaches to the Byzantine Family*, ed. L. Brubaker and S. Tougher (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), pp.xx-xxi.
[26] Evelyne Patlagean, "Families and Kinships in Byzantium," in *A History of the Family, vol. 1: Distant Worlds, Ancient Worlds*, eds. Burguière, Klapisch-Zuber, Segalen, and Zonabend (The Belknap Press of Harvard U Press: Cambridge, MA, 1996), pp.467-88.
[27] The adoption of an adult as one's "brother," which had its origins in classical Roman law, continued to be practiced throughout the period covered by this dissertation and beyond, even if the practice was frowned upon by many jurists and, especially, clergy.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, scholarship on the Byzantine aristocracy and the family has closely paralleled developments in the related field of medieval studies. George Ostrogorsky proposed a model in which Byzantine society began to exhibit many features of Western European feudalism, including the emergence of a more or less closed noble class, around the eleventh century.[28] This model was taken up by several important scholars, most notably Alexander Kazhdan, who added nuance to Ostrogorsky's argument and softened the severity of the social and cultural change supposedly taking place around the turn of the second millennium.[29] Even after Kazhdan's intervention, however, the model closely resembled those for the so-called "feudal revolution" of *l'an mil* in the West.

Scholars of medieval Europe, especially of medieval France, have long relied on the conclusions of Georges Duby, who himself drew heavily from the works of Marc Bloch and Karl Schmid, to provide a narrative of social change that includes a seismic shift in dominant family structures among the elite. According to this model, as part and parcel of the widespread political and social shifts occurring in Western Europe around the year 1000, the dominant form of the family among the nobility shifted from a nebulous clan structure (*Sippe*) to a closely defined lineage (*Geschlecht*).[30] These lineages, the argument goes, increasingly favored male-line, primogeniture inheritance, severely limiting the importance of both younger sons and women in

---

[28] George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, revised edition, (New Brunswick, NJ : Rutgers University Press, 1969); eiusdem, *Pour l'histoire de la féodalité byzantine*, trans. Henri Grégoire (Brussels: Éditions de l'Institut de Philologie de l'Histoire Orientales et Slaves, 1954).

[29] Alexander Kazhdan and Giles Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982); Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*; Alexander Kazhdan, *L'aristocrazia bizantina: dal principio dell'XI alla fine del XII secolo*, trans. Silvia Ronchey (Palermo: Sellerio editore Palermo, 1997).

[30] Karl Schmid, "Zur Problematik von Familie, Sippe und Geschlecht, Haus und Dynastie beim mittelalterlichen Adel," *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 105 (1957), pp.1-62; Georges Duby, *La société aux XIe et XIIe siècles dan la région mâconnaise* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1953); Georges Duby and Jacque LeGoff, eds., *Famille et parenté dans l'Occident médiévale*. Collection de l'École française de Rome 30 (Rome: École française de Rome, 1977).

general. At the same time, the European aristocracy gradually closed itself off to the lower social orders through its emphasis on nobility by blood. By the twelfth century, a more or less closed nobility defined itself by its unique legal and social privileges and chivalric, distinctly militaristic culture.

Since the 1990s, there has been a general movement away from ideas of the *mutation de l'an mil* (alternately imagined as a transformation, revolution, or something less drastic), or at least a softening of its theses. Rather than a rapid and thorough transformation, scholars have argued that social and cultural change occurred more gradually and unevenly over time and space.[31] Some have even contended that the changes described in Duby's model are little more than a change in the way in which documents were produced and in the nature of their contents.[32]

The historiography covering the Byzantine aristocracy and kinship in the tenth through the twelfth century displays remarkable similarities to its western medieval counterpart. In both fields, the eleventh century looms large as the period in which a supposed transformation of aristocratic family structures, among other things, took place. In Byzantium, as in medieval France, it is argued, weak central government allowed for the expansion of the independent power of the aristocracy, who were able to mold the dominant political culture in their favor. Militarism came to the fore, as did notions of nobility by blood and the importance of family connections among a continuously shrinking circle of elites. The transition from *Sippe* to *Geschlecht* is ostensibly (and perhaps superficially) mirrored in the development of the Byzantine *genos*. As is the case for Duby's thesis for Western Europe, in Byzantine studies the

---

[31] The work of Constance Bouchard is an excellent example of the softening of Duby's arguments and a move toward greater stability and more gradual change. See Constance Bouchard, *Those of My Blood: Creating Noble Families in Medieval Francia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).
[32] Daniel Power, "Introduction," in *The Central Middle Ages*, ed. Daniel Power (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.24.

thesis proposed by Kazhdan and, before him, Ostrogorsky, has been softened and amended, but not replaced.[33] Importantly, these similarities have often led scholars to treat the Byzantine aristocratic *genos* as a western-style lineage without questioning the validity of the comparison. This investigation approaches the *genos* without any such assumptions.

There are, of course, several important differences between Byzantium and Western Europe (even leaving aside the obvious issues in treating Latin Europe as a monolith). Among the most important, as far as family structures among the elite are concerned, is the nature of the Byzantine government. Byzantium did eventually see some powerful individuals (and, by extension, their families) collecting revenue that would otherwise have been bound for the state (including, but not necessarily limited to, taxes) in the form of *pronoia* grants, but even these were granted only by the emperor, and if they were sometimes heritable from one generation to the next (though this was not usually the case), they could still be revoked. Members of the Byzantine aristocracy never achieved the kind of legal authority and independence that characterized the nobility in some parts of the West, even in the twelfth century.

To say that the *genos* played a central role in the Byzantine aristocracy of the eleventh century and later is not a controversial statement. The histories, hagiographies, orations, poetry, and lead seals of the late tenth century onward are full of references to "noble lineages" (εὐγενεῖς γένη). Praise is consistently lavished on individuals for their famous and wealthy family members, past and present. Heritable surnames, as markers of one's *genos*, become ubiquitous already by the eleventh century. The political maneuvering and civil unrest that so dominated

---

[33] The similarities between some parts of Western Europe and Byzantium may have become deeper and more widespread at the very end of the twelfth century and, especially, after 1204, but that is an issue beyond the scope of this dissertation. Évelyne Patlagean has produced an excellent study comparing Byzantine society to its western medieval counterpart by analyzing the Byzantine case using methods and models produced by scholars of medieval Western Europe. See Évelyne Patlagean, *Un Moyen Âge grec: Byzance IXe-XVe siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2007).

Byzantine politics in the late tenth and eleventh centuries consisted of factions largely divided along family lines and built upon family ties. Under the Komnenoi, the *genos* formed the very basis of both the government and of the aristocracy as a whole. All of this has long been recognized by researchers. Still, while the *genos* has played an important role in many studies, the field continues to suffer from a lack of clarity concerning the precise nature and role of the *genos* in medieval Byzantine society. The following chapters attempt to address this lacuna in the scholarship using several different approaches.

Chapter Summary

Chapter one sets forth a working definition of the aristocratic *genos* as a kin group by first describing various ways the Byzantines themselves defined "the family" in several different contexts and contrasting them with the *genos*. Then, using the available source material, especially legal and philosophical texts, it offers a definition that does not resort to a simple translation of the term *genos* into "clan," "lineage," or "family," which has sometimes served to obfuscate the Byzantine understanding of the concept when it appears in modern scholarship.

Chapter two situates the *genos* within the framework of the Byzantine vocabulary of kinship more broadly. By tracing changes in the frequency of the term's use relative to other indicators of "the family," this chapter demonstrates that the *genos* moved to the center of Byzantine thought regarding kinship. It also argues for a degree of conceptual overlap between the use of the *genos* as ethnic group and *genos* as kin group, which suggests that the term '*genos*' was perhaps the strongest marker of the "in-group" on any scale, particularly after the eleventh century. Among other things, there is a discernible change in the language utilized in surviving

sources over the course of the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, which suggests that the *genos* as kin group can be seen gradually usurping at least some of the role played by the concept of the "*genos* of the Romans" as the focus of certain idealized behaviors and the locus of an individual's primary loyalties.

The third chapter uses eleventh-century debates over the expansion of impediments to marriage in both canon and secular law to show that not only was the *genos* the primary form of the family concerned in marriage legislation, but also that such debates were envisioned as interrogations of the nature of consanguineous kinship itself and the outer limits of the singular *genos*. Later, twelfth-century debates over the union of man and wife as "one flesh" further demonstrate the ways in which the *genos* could or could not be altered through acts other than the birth of children. This had particular relevance for the status of women as members of both their parental *genos* and, potentially, that of their husbands. The *genos* consistently appears as the most common form of the family mentioned in marriage law and litigation, making such works some of the clearest and most important sources for a more complete understanding of the *genos* as a distinct form of kin group in medieval Byzantium.

Chapter four explores the Byzantine understanding of biological reproduction and its consequences for the heritability of physical and other traits passed from parent(s) to child, both as it is expressed by non-specialist authors in narrative or documentary sources and as it is found in more technical works, such as medical commentaries and philosophy. It contends that Byzantine individuals involved in legal interpretation, philosophy, and a surprisingly wide range of other intellectual activities believed that their particular understanding of human physiology and the reproductive act played a vital role in determining the culturally specific value placed on the concept of shared blood and the means by which it was reproduced (particularly gender-

18

specific contributions), which formed the basis of the bonds within the *genos*. This approach allows for an evaluation of such things as the role of gender differences in the construction of aristocratic lineages and the effect of such thinking on biologically inherited traits at a time when elite ancestry was increasingly valued and the ties of blood appear to become more important relative to other forms of kinship. It also introduces a class of sources not normally a part of the discourse concerning the Byzantine or medieval family, namely medical treatises and their use by other authors outside of the medical field.

Chapter five approaches the *genos* through the lens of heritable surnames, which acted as outward markers of individual *genos* affiliation. Reputation and public perception was of vital importance in the establishment and maintenance of social standing in tenth- and eleventh-century Byzantium, which is linked with the adoption of heritable surnames by aristocratic families in this same period. While chapter four explores the specifically Byzantine understanding of inherited traits passed on through biological reproduction and its consequences for the bond of shared blood, this chapter focuses on yet another aspect of the *genos* inherited by the individuals within it: the family name and the reputation embodied by it. Unlike biologically inherited traits, the reputation attached to a given family name could be manipulated by living members of the kin group, and there is ample evidence to suggest that Byzantine elites in the tenth through twelfth centuries were aware of this fact and, indeed, exploited it for their own, individual benefit and the collective benefit of the *genos* as a whole.

The final chapter consists of a series of case studies following certain individuals and their families in order to analyze how the changes in language, heritable surnames, and other phenomena associated with the crystallization of the concept of the *genos* affected the actions of individuals, at least inasmuch as they are visible in available sources. While previous chapters

19

will have focused on the *genos* as a cohesive social group and will have utilized a considerable amount of modern theory, this chapter is designed to ground the dissertation in specific, recorded events and a limited number of individuals in order to focus on the individual as a constituent part of their kin group.

Chapter One: Defining the Genos

Ἔοικεν δὲ μήτε τὸ γένος μήτε τὸ εἶδος ἁπλῶς λέγεσθαι.

"It seems that neither *genos* nor species is so called simply."
- Porphyry of Tyre, *Isagoge* 1.1.

In the preface to the collection *Approaches to the Byzantine Family*, Leslie Brubaker cites an oft-quoted passage from the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium's* entry on the family.[1] "Although the family was the fundamental unit of Byzantine society, there was no specific word for it in Byzantine Greek: the most common term *syngeneia* designated both the nuclear family and kinship in general."[2] The Byzantines, however, lacked a *single* word to designate "the family" only because they had *several*. This chapter uses a variety of sources from the tenth through thirteenth centuries to begin to answer one short, yet surprisingly complex question: how did Byzantine society define and understand the significance of what they termed the "*genos"* (γένος, pl. *genē*/γένη) as kin group?

Modern lexica offer many generalized definitions for the ancient and medieval Greek *genos*, including "family," "clan," "house," and even "race" or "offspring." This reflects the multiple uses to which the term was put over the several millennia for which written records survive. In a medieval Byzantine context, the *genos* was the most common expression of the consanguineous family. From at least the tenth century onward, the term denoted a much more

---

[1] Leslie Brubaker, "Preface," in *Approaches to the Byzantine Family*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Shaun Tougher (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), p.xix.
[2] Alexander Kazhdan, *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.776.

specific and carefully defined form of aristocratic kin group, which came to dominate social and political relations among the Byzantine elite by the end of the eleventh century.

It is commonly accepted that the *genos* as kin group formed a fundamental element of individual and group identity in Byzantium, particularly among the aristocracy beginning in the ninth or tenth century. It was inextricably linked to the concept of noble birth, *eugeneia*, which appears in the sources with increasing frequency from the late tenth century onwards. The *genos* also formed one of the basic building blocks of political factions in the same period as such factions were increasingly based around familial alliances forged through aristocratic intermarriage. References to a person's *genos* abound in the histories, court oratory, epigrams, and lead seals produced in Byzantium from the tenth century onward. As this and subsequent chapters will show, the *genos* was also the primary form of the family concerned in both marriage and inheritance law in Byzantium, two of the most ubiquitous and important social institutions in Byzantium for all of its inhabitants. Yet, despite its importance, the *genos* has suffered from a general lack of understanding among modern scholars, with no two researchers seemingly able to agree on a precise definition. Part of the problem lies in the nature of the term itself and the apparent multitude of uses to which it was put by Byzantine authors. Still, as this chapter will show, it is possible to produce something of a cohesive and (more or less) comprehensive definition of the *genos* as a singular social group based upon shared bonds of kinship, while still remaining true to the Byzantine sources.

Most studies of the Byzantine family have focused on the household (*oikos* in Byzantine Greek), which is not without justification. Numerous scholars have shown that the household should maintain its place as the single most fundamental unit of Byzantine society for the entire millennium of its existence, for peasant and emperor alike. It was the most important social

group for the socialization of children, economic production, and even served as the partial basis of Byzantine taxation. Anthropological models of household economies work well in a Byzantine context, where "balance and survival" are given higher priority than "increase and profit."[3] At its core, the *oikos*/household was a social unit comprising individuals whose cohesion was based upon common ties to a single, physical structure and the shared living space it provided, i.e. the house itself.

Byzantium likewise had a rich tradition of recognizing adoptive and spiritual kinship (collectively termed "fictive kinship"), which has been reflected in numerous studies. Byzantine scholars quickly picked up the advances in the study of friendship, a social bond intimately related with that of kinship, from the pioneering work of Gerd Althoff and other medievalists.[4] Despite these advances, much of Byzantine kinship remains poorly understood and poorly covered by the existing historiography. The Byzantine *oikos* often appears in modern studies as a near-synonym of the nuclear family (i.e. a married couple and their children), a concept for which Byzantine Greek had no word.[5] The nuclear family, as modern researchers recognize it, was certainly central in the social life of Byzantines whether in the fourth century or the fourteenth, despite the lack of a specific word to designate the family as such.[6] Yet its importance, like its association with the *oikos*/household, has perhaps been exaggerated in the

---

[3] Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones, "Introduction," in *About the House: Lévi-Strauss and Beyond*, ed. Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.5.

[4] Gerd Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers: Political and Social Bonds in Early Medieval Europe*, trans. C. Carroll (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) (first published in German in 1990); Margaret Mullett, "Byzantium: A Friendly Society?" Past and Present 118 (1988), pp. 3-24; Stratis Papaioannou, "Letter-writing," in *The Byzantine World*, ed. Paul Stephenson (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp.188-99.

[5] A notable exception to this shortcoming can be found in some of Évelyne Patlagean's work. In one article, for example, she argues that "The *oikos*...can refer to a family of two or three generations, plus an entourage...slaves, and servants in general (*oiketai*); hangers-on (*oikeioi*) and 'men' (*anthropoi*)." Patlagean, "Families and Kinships in Byzantium," in *A History of the Family, vol. 1: Distant Worlds, Ancient Worlds*, eds. Burguière, Klapisch-Zuber, Segalen, and Zonabend (The Belknap Press of Harvard U Press: Cambridge, MA, 1996), p.472.

[6] Dion Smythe, "Middle Byzantine Family Values and Anna Komnene's Alexiad," in *Byzantine Women: Varieties of Experience 800-1200*, ed. Lynda Garland (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), pp.125-40.

past, with twentieth-century ideals coloring otherwise excellent scholarship on Byzantine family ties.[7]

The *genos*, in contrast the *oikos*/household, has never been the subject of an entire study, whether journal article or monograph. This does not, however, mean that scholars have completely ignored it. On the contrary, the *genos* has made frequent appearances and has even formed an integral component of many arguments, most of them concerning the changing nature of the Byzantine aristocracy. Thus, the *genos* has appeared as central to the emerging sense of nobility by birth in the tenth and eleventh century,[8] the earliest appearances of heritable surnames on lead seals,[9] the governmental reforms of the imperial dynasty of the Komnenoi,[10] the acquisition and maintenance of personal and collective honor,[11] and the motivation and organization of rebellions and usurpations.[12]

In some modern work, the *genos* serves as a counterpart or foil to the *oikos*/household. If the *oikos* represents the dominant, small, nuclear model of the family in Byzantium, the *genos* is presented as the group of extended relatives that reached well beyond the individual household. The *oikos* thus appears as relatively small, well-defined, intimate, and fundamental, while the *genos* is imagined as large, amorphous, impersonal, and of secondary importance, at least prior

---

[7] Spyros Stavrakas, "The Byzantine Provincial Elite: A Study in Social Relationships during the Ninth and Tenth Centuries." Ph.D. dissertation (History). University of Chicago, 1978; Alexander Kazhdan and Giles Constable. *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982).

[8] Évelyne Patlagean, "Les débuts d'une aristocratie byzantine et le témoinage de l'historiographie: système des noms et liens de parenté aux IX-X siècle," in *The Byzantine Aristocracy*, ed. Michael Angold (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp.23-44.

[9] Paul Stephenson, "A development in nomenclature on the seals of the Byzantine provincial aristocracy in the late 10th century." *REB* 52 (1994), pp. 187-211.

[10] Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[11] Paul Magdalino, "Honour among the Romaioi: the framework of social values in the world of Digenes Akrites and Kekaumenos." *BMGS* 13 (1989), pp.183-218.

[12] Jean-Claude Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)* (Paris: Centre de recherche d'histoire et civilisation byzantines, 1990).

to the social changes usually associated with the rise of a provincial aristocracy in the tenth and eleventh centuries. There is strong evidence, however, that this schema not only turns both the *oikos* and the *genos* into something they were not, but also creates a false dichotomy between these two most prominent forms of the family in medieval Byzantine society.

Though the *genos* has received a fair amount of attention within the modern corpus of Byzantine studies, its use in such studies is not without issue. *Genos* frequently appears as a shorthand for "extended family" meant to contrast with the nuclear family represented by the household, though this is done without asking to what extent this contrast holds true or attempting to define the term. In studies of kinship networks, a subject that has received a fair amount of attention in recent years, the *genos* often appears as the individual nodes of these networks, though the nodes themselves are not analyzed or their solidarity questioned. Somewhat strangely, the *genos* has been largely ignored by historians working on the Byzantine family, instead being dealt with primarily in studies of Byzantine identity or the aristocracy, in which the treatment of the *genos* can at times appear peripheral or as a secondary concern. A possible exception to this rule is the work of those like Angeliki Laiou who studied marriage practices among the Byzantine elite. Yet there, like in studies of kinship networks, the *genos* appears as the individual units linked by marriage alliances while the nature of the units themselves is not questioned.[13] Most often, the *genos* is simply translated using one of several alternatives, a practice Gerhard Lubich has shown to be especially obfuscating in studies of historical kinship.[14]

---

[13] See, for example, Christian Settipani, "Les réseaux familiaux dans l'aristocratie byzantine: quelque exemples du VIe au XIe siècle," in *Les réseaux familiaux, Antiquité tardive et Moyen Âge*, ed. Béatrice Caseau (Paris: ACHCByz, 2012), pp.287-306. See also, Vincent Puech, "The Aristocracy and the Empire of Nicaea," in *Identities and Allegiances in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204*, ed. Judith Herrin and Guillaume Saint-Guillain (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011) pp.69-79.
[14] Gerhard Lubich, *Verwandtsein: Lesarten einer politisch-sozialen Beziehung im Frühmittelalter (6.-11. Jahrhundert)* (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2008).

Translations of the term *genos* as "lineage" or "clan" bring with them certain assumptions about form and function; clan is especially problematic, though it continues to appear regularly. Margaret Mullett expressed concerns about the trend over two decades ago.[15] For the anthropologist, "clan" denotes a specific form of descent group in which each individual member's exact relationship to a single founder, often in the far distant past and of a (semi-) legendary character, is not known. Even more problematic is the word's association, in English at least, with Scottish clans or other ethnically or culturally specific examples that bear little resemblance to (and thus have little relevance for) Byzantium. "Lineage" may come closer to an accurate translation of the term, though it still conjures images of the western European nobility with their legally defined limits and strict rules of primogeniture inheritance and agnatic (male line) descent, even if these attributes have proven to be largely an illusion of earlier generations of scholars.

Modern Attempts to Define the *Genos*

The *genos* does not easily lend itself to modern analysis. The sources themselves are often vague or even inconsistent in their employment of the term, which is often the case in the vocabulary of kinship across cultures.[16] In addition to the kind of kin group (especially visible

---

[15]Margaret Mullett, "The 'Disgrace' of the Ex-Basilissa Maria," *Byzantinoslavica* 45 (1984), p.211, n. 57. "It seems a pity that this term [clan government] has taken hold. To the social anthropologist, 'clan' denotes something quite different from the set 'monarchy,' 'oligarchy,' 'democracy,' and so on. It is used of descent rather than kinship (or its political uses) and to distinguish 'lineages' from 'unilineal descent groupings whose members believe they are descended from a common ancestor but do not know the genealogical connections,' R.M. Keesing, Kin Groups and Social Structure, New York 1975, 31. (Note that Anna Dalassênê was very much aware of the genealogical connections). Anglophones who think of 'clan' in terms of the Scottish model, where members of the clan reach from top to bottom of society, a vertical rather than horizontal stratification, may be reminded in the term's popularity among French Byzantinists of Jules Verne's evocation of the Scots quaffing foaming tankards of whisky."

[16] One need only think of the numerous and varied meanings of the English word "family."

amongst the social elite) discussed here, *genos* could connote an ethnic group or "race" (roughly

a synonym of *ethnos*), sex or gender, age or generation, or even a class or category of things in

the Aristotelian tradition. *Genos* was used not only to describe families, but also the entire

human race, Christians as a separate category of people, and even, at times, social classes or

categories.[17] If the *genos* as kin group in the tenth and eleventh century was something different

from earlier Byzantine (or Roman) family groups, the word was about as old as the Greek

language itself, making origins or change in meaning more difficult to detect. Rhetorical

handbooks of those like Menander, dating from Late Antiquity, included the *genos* (here

meaning parentage or more distant ancestry) as an important part of encomiastic speeches, which

serves to further obscure changes in meaning over time as Byzantine sources of all kinds are

saturated with rhetorical norms and topoi. At the same time, Byzantine authors placed a high

value on *variatio* in their works, meaning a surprising variety of terms are at times used as (near)

synonyms of the *genos*, including *genea* (γενεά), *seira* (σειρά), and even *phylon* (φῦλον) or

phamilia (φαμιλία). Similar issues have long plagued scholars investigating the pre-classical and

classical Athenian *genos*, with which the Byzantine concept shared little more than its name,[18]

and scholars of medieval Europe wrestling with the Latin *gens*.[19] The *genos* eventually became

the focus of aristocratic families who sought to establish themselves as a kind of nobility by

birth, but, unlike in the West, this nobility never received any sort of legal definition, and the

---

[17] For example, Michael Psellos uses the phrase "the political *genos*" (τὸ πολιτικὸν γένος) to refer to members of the eleventh-century civil bureaucracy, as contrasted with the military administration. Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, II.146, 138. See: Paul Magdalino, "Justice and Finance in the Byzantine State," in *Law and Society in Byzantium, Ninth-Twelfth Centuries*, ed. Angeliki Laiou and Dieter Simon (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994), p.95.
[18] See, e.g., C.J. Smith, *The Roman Clan: The Gens from Ancient Ideology to Modern Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), esp. Ch. 3; S.D. Lambert, "The Attic *Genos*," Classical Quarterly 49 (1999), pp.484-89.
[19] Cf. Robert Bartlett's observation that " in the space of one work by one author [William of Malmesbury's twelfth-century *Gesta regum Anglorum*] *gens* can be rendered 'race,' 'nation,' 'people,' 'tribe,' 'stock,' or 'family.'" "Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies 31* (2001), p.44.

genos itself was never a legally defined entity in Byzantium, at least not explicitly. The term was so ubiquitous among Byzantine writers that, in most cases, the thought of recording a definition would probably have seemed foolish.

The Ancient Greek-English lexicon of Liddell and Scott, known universally among students of Classics as the *LSJ*, offers the full range of meanings in its entry for *genos*. These include such translations as "clan, house," or "family," as well as "race, stock, kin, offspring, age, generation, sex, gender, class, category, sort, kind," and even "element" or "material."[20] The entry for *genea* (γενεά) is nearly identical, a fact that is equally reflected in the Byzantine use of the term as a near synonym of *genos*, at least in sources from the tenth century and later. Lampe's Patristic Greek Lexicon devotes significantly less space to its entry on *genos* than does the *LSJ*. The reader is simply given "family, class, or race" as options, though, reflecting the lexicon's purpose, it is noted that the *genos* as race is especially true of the "race of Christians."[21] Perhaps the best lexicon for Byzantine studies of the medieval period, the *Lexikon zur Byzantinischen Gräzität* edited by Erich Trapp, gives the shortest entry yet for the *genos*, simply translating it as *Geschlecht* (roughly equal to the English *lineage* or French *lignage*).[22] Interestingly, the German word *Geschlecht* carries with it some of the same ambiguities (or flexibility) as the Greek *genos*, being used for sex/gender or even "the human race" (*menschliche Geschlecht*) in the same way. *Geschlecht* does indeed begin to approach a translation more in line with the medieval evidence, though it is made especially problematic because of the term's history in twentieth-century debates over the changing nature of aristocratic kinship in the medieval West.[23] In sum, modern

---

[20] *LSJ,* p.344.
[21] G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.313.
[22] Erich Trapp,ed., *Lexikon zur Byzantinischen Gräzität besonders des 9.-12. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997ff.), p.313.
[23] See, for example, Karl Schmid, "Zur Problematik von Familie, Sippe und Geschlecht, Haus und Dynastie beim mittelalterlichen Adel," *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 105 (1957), pp.1-62.

lexica, while obviously helpful, do not, on their own, offer solutions to the problem of defining the *genos* as a particular form of kin group in tenth- through twelfth-century Byzantium.

The prominent place of the *genos* in many modern arguments has meant that the concept has not been wholly without modern attempts to define it, even if such attempts remain relatively few in number and generally ancillary. Paul Magdalino, Évelyne Patlagean, and Jean-Claude Cheynet have come closer than most to arriving at something of a definition of the term. For Magdalino, the *genos* has served as both the locus of the preservation of personal honor (at least in the epic tale of *Digenes Akrites*) and as an important factor in the cohesion and functioning of the government of the Komnenian government in the twelfth century. In his discussion of the former, Magdalino offers the following assessment of the *genos*: "The *genos* of relatives (συγγενεῖς) sharing a common great-grandparent was still, within the *patris*, the group in which most people instinctively invested their loyalty and trust, and with which one of the basic qualifications for honourable status - εὐγένεια (lit. "good birth," i.e. nobility) was associated."[24] In the epic tale of *Digenes Akrites*, he argues, the *genos* is "evoked less in terms of ascending genealogy than in terms of a body of close relatives (*syngeneis*), among whom, besides parents and siblings, uncles and grandparents are specified."[25] Again, in the same piece, it is said, "Since no lineage is taken back more than two generations, we can only guess that *syngeneia* extends to second cousins. But whatever the effective limits of the *genos*, cohesion within them is considerable."[26] In his treatment of the government under Manuel I Komnenos, Magdalino describes the imperial *genos* as simply "the extended imperial family."[27]

---

[24] Magdalino, "Honour among the Romaioi," p.184.
[25] Magdalino, "Honour among the Romaioi," p.195.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, p.187. "The Comnenian system identified those interests [private interests of provincial military commanders] more closely by bringing the empire's military command structure

Though not technically incorrect, statements like these contribute to ideas of the *genos* as a large, amorphous, clan-like kin group. And while it is tempting to use the fairly limited scope of existing genealogies from the Byzantine period (rarely offering ancestors beyond grandparents or great-grandparents) as evidence for the outer limits of a single *genos*, this may be misleading. Once again, the *genos* seems to have operated distinctly from such genealogical evidence offered by rhetoricians or historians in Byzantium, even if, like *syggeneia*, memory of one's ancestors was an important aspect of *genos* identity.

Évelyne Patlagean, whose work on the Byzantine family is extremely valuable, also offers some useful anecdotes for moving toward a more complete definition of the Byzantine *genos*, though her work never quite tackled the problem head on. While Patlagean's landmark article on the rise of the middle Byzantine aristocracy offers little more than a translation of *genos* as lineage ("lignage"),[28] one of her more general introductions to the Byzantine family provides slightly more context. In a short review of the language of kinship in Byzantium, Patlagean describes how "Belonging to a long-established lineage became a claim to distinction and merit [by at least the tenth century].   The words *eugenēs* (well-born) and *gonika* (heritage) were permanent, but the old word *genos* returns triumphantly to all kinds of narrative, in the medieval sense of 'kin-group' or 'lineage,' sometimes accompanied by a genealogy going back three generations."[29] The implication, if not exactly argued forcefully, is that the *genos* is, in part at least, limited to those sharing a common ancestor within the previous three generations.

---

within the imperial *genos*, the extended imperial family, and by giving all who belonged to the imperial *genos* a vested interest in the imperial *oikos* and its domain..."

[28] Évelyne Patlagean, "'Les débuts d'une aristocratie Byzantine, p.30: "Mais les allusions au lignage (*genos, genea, seira*) se multiplient."

[29] Évelyne Patlagean, ""Families and Kinships in Byzantium," p.472.

Jean-Claude Cheynet has delivered some passing remarks that begin to deliver something of a definition of the *genos* in some of his own magisterial work on the Byzantine aristocracy and the advent of heritable surnames. In his landmark study of anthroponymy in Byzantium, Cheynet remarks that the *genos*, in at least some cases from as early as the eighth or ninth centuries, "surpassed the cadre of a single family to embrace several lines/lineages, all of them related."[30] Elsewhere, Cheynet has argued that the concept of *genos* was closely linked not only with a sense of noble ancestry, but also with the glorification of these ancestors as a means of edifying and raising the social currency of the group's living members. Here, he describes the *genos* as a social group with "clear limits," though a precise definition of these limits is not given.[31] The two definitions, offered in different publications by the same author, appear to be contradictory, and they thus illustrate exactly the kinds of difficulties faced by scholars as a result of the lack of clarity surrounding the *genos* as a social and cultural phenomenon.

In addition to studies of the aristocracy, the *genos* has appeared most prominently and has received the most attention from scholars exploring Byzantine identity (often alongside Greek and Roman identities) and the concept of "ethnicity." In these studies, the fact that *genos* was also used to designate "family" is typically little more than a footnote. For instance, in Anthony Kaldellis' landmark work on Byzantine identity and their relationship with Greek antiquity, the concept of *genos* (especially, but not limited to, its use as a near synonym of *ethnos*) plays a central role, and is thus frequently discussed. Still, the closest Kaldellis comes to offering a

---

[30] Cheynet, "L'anthroponymie aristocratique à Byzance," in *L'anthroponymie. Document de l'histoire sociale des mondes méditerranéens médiévaux*, ed. M. Bourin, J.-M. Martin, and F. Menant (Rome: École française de Rome, 1996), p.274. "Le 'génos' ici dépasserait le cadre d'une seule famille pour embrasser plusieurs lignées, toutes apparentées."

[31] Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, p.256. "L'utilisation progressive des patronymes dénote une certain conscience d'appartenir à un groupe bien délimité; la gloire des ancêtres est valorisée, suscitant, à partir du IXe siècle, des généalogies plus ou moins fantaisistes… C'est que la notion de *génos* est liée à celle de gloire."

definition of the *genos* as kin group in medieval Byzantium is found in a passage illustrating the complicated nature of the term in the Greek and Byzantine lexicon. "*Genos* suggested biological relation and often designated one's family, while *phylon* suggested 'race.' Yet both were used by historians interchangeably with the *ethnos* and, beyond ethnography, all three words could also designate any category of things regardless of how they were constituted as a group."[32] One important contribution of Kaldellis' study is the assertion that the single term *genos* could express a variety of ideas, all of them interconnected, yet still distinct. So, as Kaldellis argues, just because an individual might be called a Roman "by *genos*" in the sources "does not mean that the Byzantines considered themselves an ethnic group, only that the individuals in question were at least second-generation Romans."[33] Nevertheless, even if the Byzantines "did not view themselves collectively [as a *genos*] in the strong sense of being biologically related to each other,"[34] the fact that only second-generation Romans might be considered Roman "by *genos*" strengthens the concept's link to birth and inheritance of status by birth, since one did not become Roman "by *genos*" simply by entering into the empire's boundaries, declaring allegiance to the emperor, and/or converting to orthodox Christianity.

Gill Page, author of a recent book-length study of Byzantine identity, argues that the *genos* was "firmly associated with a biological relationship" and could thus denote a family or even a nation, "taking the broadest sense of kinship." While the *genos* as a form of family group receives very little attention, it is significant that Page stresses the biological component inherent in the term. He argues that "...the connotations of shared descent were so strong in *genos* that any use of this term in application to Byzantine Romans should be seen as potentially indicative of a

---

[32] Anthony Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.87.
[33] Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, p.88.
[34] Ibid.

sense of ethnic identity."[35] While Page's argument about a Byzantine concept of a Roman "ethnic identity" may remain open to debate, there is ample reason to contend that the *genos*, at least as a kin group, did indeed carry with it a strong sense of shared descent.

Most often, scholars have tended either to reproduce the term without additional comment or, probably most common of all, to offer a simple translation. By far the most frequent translation (other than "family") is that of "lineage" (*lignage*, *Geschlecht*, etc.). Thus, one can read that "the practice [of placing surnames on lead seals] was itself an expression of the ideology of *eugeneia* which was consciously cultivated to promote the image of a particular clan either in competition with rival *gene*, or to promote a sense of common interest between communicating allies."[36] In at least one recent article both *Sippe* and *Geschlecht* are used interchangeably to translate *genos*, a problematic phenomenon as anyone familiar with the discourse surrounding Karl Schmid's and George Duby's models of social change around *l'an mil* can attest.[37]

Defining the *Genos*: The Byzantine Sources

Written sources of all kinds produced in Byzantium, especially in the tenth century and later, are littered with uses of the term *genos*. Histories, chronicles, poetry, and saints' lives from the period in question are indeed full of references to individuals' *genē*, though it is extremely

---

[35] Gill Page, *Being Byzantine: Greek Identity before the Ottomans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.41.

[36] Paul Stephenson, "A Development in Nomenclature on the Seals of the Byzantine Provincial Aristocracy in the Late Tenth Century," *REB* 52 (1994), p.209.

[37] Alexandra-Kyriaki Wassiliou-Seibt, "Die Familie Xiphilinos im 11. Jahrhundert: der Beitrag der Siegel," in *Les réseaux familiaux, Antiquité tardive et Moyen Âge*, ed. Béatrice Caseau (Paris: ACHCByz, 2012), pp.307-23. For the historiography on the medieval West, see esp. Georges Duby, *La société aux XIe et XIIe siècles dan la région mâconnaise* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1953); Georges Duby and Jacque LeGoff, eds., *Famille et parenté dans l'Occident médiévale*. Collection de l'École française de Rome 30 (Rome: École française de Rome, 1977); Karl Schmid, "Zur Problematik von Familie, Sippe und Geschlecht, Haus und Dynastie beim mittelalterlichen Adel: Vorgragen zum Thema, 'Adel und Herrschaft im Mittelalter.'" *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 105 (1957), pp. 1-62.

difficult to piece together any kind of comprehensive definition of the social group based solely

on these sources. A close link between the *genos* and a person's ancestors is readily evident, as is

the *genos'* association with one's origins (usually familial, ethnic, or geographic).[38] One of the

most common means by which an individual's *genos* is described in the narrative sources, at least

from the eleventh century on, is through the use of heritable surnames. Thus, a person might be

described as "of the *genos* of the Doukai" or "Xiphilinos by *genos*."[39] Unlike the Roman *gens*,

however, the Byzantine *genos* was not necessarily coterminous with those individuals sharing a

surname.[40]

Narrative sources are, predictably, not especially helpful in determining the structural

extent of a single *genos*. In many instances, the term *genos* as it is employed in these sources

carries a certain sense of a somewhat limited group, in particular when mention is made of "the

Doukai" or similar collective references identified by a family name. When such language does

appear in context, it often refers only to a group of siblings, sometimes including their father or

parents. Such references seem much more common for male members of the *genos*, to the

exclusion of women, as is the case in one passage from the history written by Michael Attaleiates

in the late eleventh century. Attaleiates describes how Emperor Michael V "Kalaphates," upon

his ascension to the throne, treated his relatives harshly. While exiling John the Orphanotrophos

---

[38] The use of the term in histories or other narrative sources is most often as part of the introduction of a new character into the narrative. In such cases, *genos* is typically paired with a brief mention of the individual's more recent ancestors, a family name, and/or place of origin.

[39] Nicolas Oikonomidès, *A Collection of Dated Byzantine Lead Seals*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1986), pp.101-2. No. 105 (Fogg 546, DO 47.2.1352) is a seal belonging to Niketas Xiphilinos, judge and *koiaistor*, dating from 1098. The inscription, on both sides, reads "Do you need to learn? Know that I am *koiaistor* (quaestor) and judge Niketas, Xiphilinos by *genos*" (Χρήζεις μαθεῖν; Γνώριζε κοιαίστωρά με κριτὴν Νικήταν, τὸν Ξιφιλῖνον γένος).

[40] C.J. Smith, *The Roman Clan: The Gens from Ancient Ideology to Modern Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For more on the relationship between the genos and heritable surnames, see Chapter Four of this dissertation.

(Michael's uncle), "the rest, whether they were grown men with a blooming beard or just adolescents, he had castrated. In this way he destroyed his family (*genos*)..."[41] Firstly, such passages show the *genos* being used to describe a group of living relatives, i.e. a family, rather than simply a description of one's ancestry. It may be tempting interpret passages like this as evidence for a male-dominated *genos*, something akin to the classical Roman *familia*, which was made up of individuals linked to a common, male relative through strictly agnatic descent. There is, however, ample evidence to show that the *genos* was not conceived of in this way (it seems to have been a cognatic descent group).[42] It is clear from a number of different sources that the Byzantine *genos* was heritable through both the female and the male line (that is, Byzantines recognized cognatic lines of descent). This is reflected in Byzantine inheritance law (and practice) as well as in the passage of family names from one generation to another.[43] As is well known, at least one of Anna Komnene's sons carried the family name Komnenos, and, in an *epithalamios* oration (part of wedding ceremonies), is described as a member of the Komnenian *genos*.[44] If the *genos* was passed on solely through agnatic lines, Anna's son would not have been considered a member of his maternal grandfather's *genos*. In a similar vein, one can find numerous examples of people bearing the mother's or even their maternal grandmother's

---

[41] Michael Attaleiates, History, 4.3; Kaldellis and Krallis, trans., pp.16-20. "...τοὺς δὲ λοιποὺς ἀκμῆτας καὶ τὸν ἴουλον ἐπανθοῦντας, οὓς δὲ καὶ προσήβους, ἐκτομίας ἀπεργασάμενος· καὶ τὸ γένος αὐτοῦ τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον καταστρέψας..."

[42] For a more thorough discussion of this and other issues associated with gender, descent, and the *genos*, see Chapter Three in this dissertation.

[43] See, e.g.: Évelyne Patlagean, "Families and Kinships in Byzantium," in *A History of the Family, vol. 1: Distant Worlds, Ancient Worlds*, eds. Burguière, Klapisch-Zuber, Segalen, Zonabend (The Belknap Press of Harvard U Press: Cambridge, MA, 1996), pp.473-4. "Many kin-groups mentioned for the first time in the ninth or tenth century lasted into the thirteenth or fourteenth, or even later. The marital manoeuvrings of the aristocracy, perceptible from the later tenth century, tended to set equal value on the maternal line. In consequence, wives and daughters bore the hereditary name in its feminine form from the eleventh century onwards, as is shown by the register of Judge Eustathios [Rhomaios]. From the twelfth century, aristocrats of both sexes bore the names of both the paternal and the maternal line. Later, the number of names increased still more."

[44] Paul Gautier, ed. and trans., *Nicephori Bryennii Historiarum Libri Quattuor* (Brussels, 1975), pp.340-55; Demetrios Polemis, *The Doukai: A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography* (London: Athlone Press, 1968), p. 113.

surname. While heritable surnames do not serve as perfect indicators of *genos*-affiliation, they were quite clearly linked to the concept of the *genos*. Once again, such occurrences argue against a male-line model of *genos* intergenerational reproduction. Even Galenic medicine recognized a female contribution to the formation of the fetus, which Galen and his successors understood as a "seed" somewhat akin to the male's semen, a point on which Galen differed from Aristotelian theories.[45]

Scholars have frequently noted that, when some ancestry of an actor is given in Byzantine sources (especially narrative sources), it rarely goes beyond that individual's grandparents (usually, but not always males).[46] This has sometimes been used to argue that the Byzantines lacked the same sense of genealogy that western Europeans were exhibiting at this point.[47] This is a misuse of the evidence. It is unclear why the Byzantine authors would have felt compelled to include more information or would have thought it relevant. Evidence coming from several sources, especially marriage law (and actual cases of disputed marriages in particular), suggests that the average Byzantine, especially but not limited to the aristocracy, was well aware of his/her kinsmen (both ancestors and contemporaries) far beyond their grandparents.

Sources that allow female voices to be heard more or less directly, while rare in Byzantium, do display a marked tendency for women, even after marriage, to identify themselves by their natal *genos* rather than by their husband's.[48] For instance, in the preface to

---

[45] Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.117-30. The significance of Galenic medicine for the genos is explored more fully in later chapters.

[46] Évelyne Patlagean, *Un Moyen Âge grec: Byzance, IXe-XVe siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2007), pp.138-45.

[47] Spyros Stavrakas, "The Byzantine Provincial Elite: A Study in Social Relationships during the Ninth and Tenth Centuries." Ph.D. Diss., History, University of Chicago (1978), p.68. Such arguments also ignore similar tendencies in surviving western European genealogies from roughly the same period.

[48] E.g. Eirene Doukaina's *typikon* of Kecharitomene monastery and Anna Komnene's preface to her will. Stratis Papaioannou, "Anna Komnene's Will," in *Byzantine Religious Culture: Studies in Honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*, ed.

the *typikon* of the Convent of the Theotokos Kecharitomene in Constantinople, the founder, Eirene, wife of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos, is called by the family name of Doukaina (the feminized form of Doukas), never Komnene. Eirene uses the term *genos* several times in the opening pages of the *typikon*, once referring to the entire human race and again to describe her upbringing. "My life," she says, "had its beginning in a pious family (*genos*) and one naturally suited to virtue."[49] Examples of women bearing their husband's surname (not to be confused with having others ascribe it to them) are extremely rare prior to the end of the eleventh century, and even then they are the exception, not the rule.[50] Combined with the evidence of explicit references to the *genos* by female authors or patrons, the impression is of a *genos* as a distinctly natal kin group that remained stable, even for women after marriage. This image is reinforced by a significant body of other sources.[51]

In Byzantine rhetoric, *genos* frequently appears as the recounting of the subject's (usually more recent) ancestors, often including both the paternal and the maternal sides; other sources, however, make it abundantly clear that the *genos* as kin group was not limited solely to deceased relatives, but also included a certain number of contemporaries, what might be called one's "living *genos*." For Menander Rhetor, the late antique author credited with composing what would remain the standard 'textbook' for rhetorical training throughout Byzantium's history, an individual's *genos* was a vital portion of any encomium (speech of praise), in particular for an

---

Sullivan, Fisher, and Papaioannou (Brill, 2012), pp.99-121. John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, Vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), p.664.

[49] The translation is Robert Jordan's, found in Thomas and Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, Vol. 2, p.665. ἐξ εὐσεβοῦς τε γένους καὶ πρὸς ἀρετὴν εὐφυοῦς εὐμενείᾳ Θεοῦ καὶ ταῖς σαῖς ἐπιστασίαις καὶ ἀντιλήψεσι τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐκληρώσατο.

[50] Jean-Claude Cheynet, "L'anthroponymie aristocratique à Byzance," in *L'anthroponymie document d'histoire sociale dans des mondes méditerranéens médiévaux. Actes du colloque international organisé par l'École française de Rome avec le concours du GDR 955 du C.N.R.S (Rome, 6-8 octobre 1994)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1996), pp.286-7.

[51] For example, histories, saints' lives, lead seals, and even monastic *typika* frequently use the verb φύειν ("to produce or beget") with the *genos,* supporting the argument for the group's natal origins.

encomium addressed to a king or emperor (a βασιλικὸς λόγος). Menander instructs his students that, after the *prooemium* (introduction), the orator should address the emperor's native city or country (*patris*, πατρίς), followed by the subject's "family" (*genos*, γένος).[52] In general, throughout Menander's work, the *genos* is placed alongside "fatherland" (*patris*) and "nation" (*ethnos*) as signifiers of an individual's virtues as they may have been inherited. That is, *genos*, *ethnos*, and *patris* all conferred upon an individual certain traits and a certain reputation considered to be in-born. Yet, even in Menander, it is clear that *genos* does not refer solely to one's ancestors, but also includes a certain number of living relatives. In a speech to be delivered upon an imperial official's arrival in a new city, for example, the rhetorician says, "Consider also the actions of his family" (ζητήσεις δὲ καὶ τοῦ γένους πράξεις).[53] There is no indication that this would not include the actions of the subject's living relatives.

Later examples of Byzantine rhetoric bear out this interpretation. Take, for example, Eustathios Tornikes' funeral oration for his father, Demetrios Tornikes, composed sometime between 1200 and 1205.[54] In addition to displaying the usual (for the early thirteenth century) praise for the *genos* of the Tornikai as noble (εὐγενὲς), famous (περιφανοῦς, περίφημον), and ancient (τὸ ἀρχαιότερον),[55] and the memory that the family maintained of their "eastern" (i.e. Armenian) origins (τῶν ἀφ'ἡλίου ἀνατολῶν),[56] Eustathios' oration also offers some evidence for an early thirteenth-century Byzantine's understanding of the *genos* as a family group. Throughout the oration, Euthymios describes how Demetrios had been a shining light for his family and how

---

[52] *Menander Rhetor*, ed. with trans. and commentary by D.A. Russell and N.G. Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp.78-81.
[53] *Menander Rhetor*, pp.96-7 (§379).
[54] *Discours III* in Jean Darrouzès, "Les discours d'Euthyme Tornikès (1200-1205)," *Revue des études byzantines* 26 (1968), pp.90-117.
[55] Darrouzès, "Les discours d'Euthyme Tornikès," p.96.
[56] Ibid. Cf. Job 1:3: ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος εὐγενὴς τῶν ἀφ᾽ ἡλίου ἀνατολῶν in the Septuagint.

his noble actions had honored the rest of the family, which, it is quite clear, included the author himself. In these cases, *genos* is nearly always the term used, and its intimate link with the family name of Tornikes is especially highlighted.[57] Interestingly, Eustathios gives a 'genealogy' for and praises his father's native city, Thebes, that looks remarkably similar to his treatment of Demetrios' own, betraying the Byzantine tendency to combine local origins with 'natural' (i.e. *genos* and *patris*).[58] A number of sources beyond the rhetorical genre support this finding. When Michael Keroularios, patriarch of Constantinople, was exiled by Isaac Komnenos, the eleventh-century historian Attaleiates informs his readers that a similar fate befell his close relatives. These relatives are described as "those of his [Keroularios'] *genos*."[59] Such passages clearly indicate that the *genos* was not imagined simply as one's genealogical forbears, but also included a number of living relatives.

Several lexica and etymological works survive from the Byzantine period. The *genos* is almost never included as a separate entry, undoubtedly because of the term's frequent use.[60] One early twelfth-century etymological dictionary (the so-called *Etymologicum Symeonis*) does include an entry for *genos*, though the focus is obviously on etymological roots rather than contemporary usage or a more serious discussion of the term's full range of meanings. It simply tells the reader that *genos* "comes from [the verb] γείνω, meaning 'to give birth to' (τίκτω)."[61] This entry is not completely without significance, as it clearly links the *genos* with birth, and,

---

[57] Ibid. Eustathios refers to the "Tornikian genos" (τὸ γένος δὲ τὸ Τορνίκιον).
[58] Darrouzès, "Les discours d'Euthyme Tornikès," p.97. Eustathios launches into his praise for the city by calling it "the beautifully adorned city, Thebes, scion of a noble root" (ἡ περικαλλὴς αὕτη πόλις, αἱ Θῆβαι, κλάδον εὐγενοῦς ῥίζης).
[59] Attaleiates, History, 63; Kaldellis and Krallis, eds. and trans., pp.114-15. "...ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ αὐτὰ τοῦ γένους τὰ φίλτατα τῆς ὁμοίας ἀπογεύονται τύχης."
[60] One would not expect commonplace terms in these lexica, which were generally created to aid in the reading of ancient texts or those with a more specialized vocabulary, such as legal works.
[61] Davide Baldi, ed. *Etymologicum Symeonis*. Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca 79. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), p.15 (Gamma 54): Γένος‑ ἐκ τοῦ γείνω, τοῦ σημαίνοντος τὸ τίκτω, ὡς σθένω σθένος, νείφω νέφος.

thus, with consanguinity. Beyond this short example, however, Byzantine lexica in general prove

largely unhelpful in the pursuit of a clear definition of the *genos* from a Byzantine perspective.

Happily, however, not all surviving sources are silent on the matter.

Around the year 1260, the thirteenth-century polymath Nikephoros Blemmydes, who,

among other things, taught philosophy in Nicaea after the conquest of Constantinople by the

Latins in 1204, composed a relatively short treatise commonly known as the *Epitome Logica*.[62]

The work is effectively a summary and commentary on Porphyry of Tyre's *Isagoge* (lit.

"Introduction") and most of Aristotle's philosophy of logic (particularly his *Categories*), and may

thus be a rather unusual place to find material for a study of the Byzantine family. The concept

of the *genos* as a categorizing principle, however, is central to Porphyry's and Aristotle's works,

and it is with a brief discussion of the term's meaning that Blemmydes begins his work. "There

are various meanings of [the term] *genos*," he says, "For *genos* signifies the beginning/origin of

the birth of every [person], either from their genitor (ἀπὸ τοῦ τεκόντος) or their fatherland (τῆς

πατρίδος)...The origin by birth is thus twofold, natural and local (φυσική τε καὶ τοπική); natural

is that from the genitor, local from the fatherland."[63] This definition is the first of three given by

---

[62] Linos Benakis, "Commentaries and Commentators on the Logical Works of Aristotle in Byzantium," in *Gedankenzeichen: Festschrift für Klaus Oehler*, ed. R. Claussen and R. Daube-Schakat (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1988), p.8. Benakis, one of the leading scholars of Aristotelian logic and philosophy in Byzantium, has this to say about Blemmydes' work: "The [*Epitome Logica*] covers roughly the same ground as the *Isagoge, Categories, De interpretatione, Prior Analytics* and *Sophistici Elenchi* in eleven chapters. Blemmydes' compendium is no brilliant work, but it is neither verbose nor trivial. The author uses traditional materials from *scholia* and earlier compendia...But Blemmydes was no mere copyist. He often speaks in the first person and he does so in a way that proves he understood his sources. It is noteworthy that the most circulated compendium of Logic during the whole Byzantine era was the [*Epitome Logica*] which was later used even in the West, especially after the Latin translation of 1607."

[63] Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Epitome Logica* 10.1 (*PG* 142, p.753A). The full text of the passage reads as follows: Τὰ σημαινόμενα τοῦ γένους ὑπάρχει διάφορα. Γένος γὰρ λέγεται καὶ ἡ ἑκάστου τῆς γενέσεως ἀρχή, εἴτε ἀπὸ τοῦ τεκόντος, εἴτε ἀπὸ τῆς πατρίδος · ἀπὸ μὲν τοῦ τέκοντος, ὡς ὅταν εἴπωμεν, τὸν Ἰούδαν ἐκ τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ ἔχειν τὸ γένος ἢ ἐκ τοῦ Ἀβραάμ. Ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς πατρίδος, ὡς ὅταν λέγωμεν τὸν Παῦλον Ταρσέα εἶναι τὸ γένος. Ἐκεῖ μὲν γὰρ τὸ γένος εἴτουν ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς γενέσεως ὁ Ἀβραὰμ καὶ ὁ Ἰσραήλ, ἐνταῦθα δὲ πάλιν γένος καὶ ἀρχὴ γενέσεως ἡ Ταρσός. Διττὴ τοίνυν ἡ τῆς γενέσεως ἀρχή, φυσική τε καὶ τοπική · φυσικὴ μὲν ἡ ἐκ τοῦ τεκόντος, τοπικὴ δὲ ἡ ἐκ τῆς πατρίδος.

the author in the opening paragraphs of his treatise, following the format of Porphyry's Isagoge

very closely. Again following Porphyry's model, Blemmydes continues to the second definition.

"*Genos* also refers to the group of those [stemming from] a single origin; in this way they share

links both toward the first origin and to one another, such as when we might speak of the *genos*

of the Jews. For the Jews have a relationship both with the first origin of their birth, namely

Judah, from whom they are descended, and with each other [through] kinship."[64] The third and

final definition given is of the *genos* as a category in Aristotelian systems ("that under which a

species is ordered"), which is, of course, Blemmydes' primary concern in the rest of the treatise.[65]

　　Important to note in Blemmydes' summary is the conflation of the *genos* as a family

group with the *genos* as a synonym of *ethnos*, that is, a nation or people (perhaps ethnic group).

The thirteenth-century polymath uses the Jews to illustrate his definition of *genos* in place of the

Heraclids used by Porphyry. This correlation is perhaps more important than has typically been

recognized by modern scholars, and one which is explored more fully in the following

chapters.[66] More important for the time being, however, is what this definition might tell the

modern reader about the nature of the *genos* as kin group. Blemmydes' purpose is not to record a

discussion of the nature of family, so it is not surprising that this use of the term *genos* is given

rather short shrift. Still, even these few lines of text offer a useful place to begin defining the

genos as kin group more fully.[67] His definitions and examples follow those of his late antique

---

[64] Blemmydes, *Epitome Logica* 10.2 (*PG* 142, p.753A): Λέγεται γένος καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἀπὸ μιᾶς ἀρχῆς, καθὸ σχέσεως ἔχουσι πρός τε τὴν πρώτην ἀρχὴν καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους αὐτούς ὡς ὅταν λέγωμεν τὸ γένος τῶν Ἰουδαίων. Καὶ γὰρ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι σχέσιν ἔχουσι καὶ πρὸς τὴν πρώτην ἀρχὴν τῆς γενέσεως, ἤγουν τὸν Ἰούδαν, ἐξ οὗ κατάγονται, καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους τὴν τῆς συγγενείας.

[65] Blemmydes, *Epitome Logica* 10.4 (PG 142, p.753B). Ἄλλως δὲ λέγεται γένος, ᾧ ὑποτάσσεται τὸ εἶδος, καθ᾽ὁμοιότητα τῶν εἰρημένων γενῶν. Ἀρχή τε γάρ ἐστι τὸ τοιοῦτον γένος τῶν ὑφ'ἑαυτὸ (or ἀφ'ἑαυτὸ - scan unclear), καὶ περιέχει καὶ πάν τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ὑπ'αὐτό.

[66] See chapter five of this dissertation.

[67] This is not the first time that Blemmydes' potential utility in the study of the Byzantine family has been recognized. See, e.g. Paris Gounaridis, ""Constitution d'une généalogie à Byzance," in Parenté et société dans le monde grec de l'Antiquité à l'âge moderne. Colloque international, Volos (Grèce), 19-20-21 Juin 2003. (published

predecessor, Porphyry of Tyre, very closely, though most sentences are not repeated verbatim. As Benakis has argued, Blemmydes demonstrates a clear understanding of the material he summarized.[68]

Immediately apparent is the emphasis on origins, something that is reflected in the language used by other authors in various kinds of sources throughout the tenth through twelfth centuries.[69] An individual is often described as "of" or "from" their *genos* (ἐκ τοῦ γένους). For Blemmydes, as apparently for most other Byzantines of his era and earlier, a person's origins were primarily expressed in two forms: natural, that is biological or genealogical, and local. Such use is confirmed by a wide range of other sources, in which an individual's *genos* is described either in terms of kin relations (which could include what we would deem ethnic origins) or in terms of geographic origins (either a village, city, or a larger region). Heritable surnames could express both simultaneously.[70] Over the course of the tenth and eleventh centuries, *genos* seems to have come increasingly to designate solely one's "natural," specifically familial, origins, as expressed in the common pairing of the terms *genos* and *patris*. Hence, for example, in the Byzantine "epic" of *Digenes Akrites* (probably written in the early twelfth century), when the protagonist meets or is met by a new character within the narrative, the first question asked is "Of what *genos*, from what *patris* are you?"[71] A similar pairing appears prominently in the opening passages of the popular Life of St. Symeon the New Theologian, produced in the early eleventh century. In the introduction, the reader learns that the account of Symeon's life will

---

2006), pp.271-72. Gounaridis, however, quickly dismisses Blemmydes' definition for his own work because of its Late Antique source.

[68] Benakis, "Logical Works of Aristotle in Byzantium," p.8

[69] The *genos* appears most often in descriptions of an individual's ancestry, and it is often used in conjunction with verbs such as "drawn from" or "raised in" or the preposition ἐξ, meaning "from."

[70] This is covered more fully in chapter five.

[71] Grottaferrata 4.320-25.

include "the advantages that accrued to him from his "birth" (ἐκ γένους) and his homeland (πατρίδος)."[72]

Blemmydes' treatise also describes four different kinds of relationships (σχέσεις), the last of which, the bond "by nature," includes the examples both of that between father and son and between the *genos* and *eidos*. His theories, again following Porphyro-Aristotelian thought, not only associate the *genos* with nature, but also the bond between father and son with both nature and, by extension, the *genos*.

The evidence in Blemmydes' work points toward a Byzantine *genos* that should be understood as a specifically natal kin group, a social group defined by its members' shared descent.[73] This reading, seemingly simple as it may be, is not always evident among modern studies. The sentiment is repeated quite clearly by a near-contemporary of Blemmydes, the archbishop of Ochrid Demetrios Chomatenos. Chomatenos' collection of judgments and letters from his time as bishop, known as the *Ponemata Diaphora* ("Various Works"), offers a precious glimpse into both the inner workings of an early thirteenth-century episcopal court and the social lives of the individuals with whom Chomatenos came into contact in his capacity as a judge. Issues of family, particularly marriage and inheritance, play a prominent role in his collection. In one of the bishop's decisions contained in the collection, Chomatenos offers perhaps the clearest indication yet of the link between consanguinity and the *genos* in a response to Stephan Nemanjić, Grand Zhupan of Serbia. Addressing Stephan's apparent questions regarding marriage

---

[72] Niketas Stethatos, *The Life of Saint Symeon the New Theologian*, trans. by Richard P.H. Greenfield (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp.2-3. "...ὅσα τε αὐτῷ ἐκ γένους καὶ πατρίδος ὑπῆρχε πλεονεκτήματα." The translation is Greenfield's.

[73] Kaldellis has pointed out that, for Blemmydes, "nations may be *genê* regardless of whether they are constituted by a common biological descent or by political union." This may indeed be true, but the statement does not detract from the strong association of the *genos* (as family) with natal origins. Rather, the statement is meant to allow for the inclusion of the *genos* of the Romans and the *genos* of Christians in Blemmydes' worldview. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, p.89.

impediments, Demetrios explains how the laws and holy canons have established certain

prohibitions to marriage based upon consanguinity (ἐξ αἵματος) and affinity (seventh degree for

consanguinity, sixth for affinity). Chomatenos then explains that, those "from the same *genos* are

called [relatives] by blood, those by marriage [are called relatives] by affinity."[74]

Chomatenos may be especially explicit in linking kinship "by blood" and the concept of

the *genos*, but his position more generally was not revolutionary. It was, on the contrary, in

keeping with a much older tradition within the Byzantine church. From early in its history, the

church, through canon law, defined kinship (συγγένεια) as slolely "natural kinship," i.e.

consanguineous kinship, which depended only on the act of reproduction and was thus

completely independent not only from affinity, but also from imperial, legal notions of

"legitimate" or "illegitimate" offspring.[75] This tradition had a parallel in Byzantine secular law,

even if the limited use of the concept of *syggeneia* had largely fallen away by the mid-tenth

century or earlier.[76] Yet, even without this point of commonality, and despite the lack of an

explicit definition of the *genos* in Byzantine legal sources, one still finds ample material in

Byzantine law to confirm and even refine the definitions present in Blemmydes' philosophy and

Chomatenos' canon law. One of the most fruitful places to find such information is in the

sizeable corpus of surviving material originating with the most well-known secular jurist from

eleventh-century Byzantium, Eustathios Romaios.

---

[74] Günter Prinzing, ed. *Demetrii Chomateni Ponemata Diaphora*. CFHB 38 (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), p.55, lines 15-25. The title given to this *Ponema*, which, like many in the collection, is written in the form of a letter, is "Concerning Incestuous and Prohibited Marriages" (Περὶ γάμων ἀθεμίτων καὶ κεκωλυμένων). The last portion of the Greek reads " ἐξ αἵματος δὲ λέγονται οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ γένους, ἐξ ἀγχιστείας δὲ οἱ ἀπὸ ἐπιγαμβρείας."
[75] Meletios Apostolopoulos, Το δίκαιον του γάμου της ανατολικής ορθοδόξου εκκλησίας (Athens: Typois Auges Athenon, 1913) (Translation from the German, with considerable updates, of Jos Zhishman's *Das Eherecht der orientalischen Kirche* [Vienna: 1864]), p.398. The canonical tradition especially stressed the importance of "shared blood" (κοινότης τοῦ αἵματος) among kinsmen (συγγενεῖς).
[76] This is clear, for example, in the *Peira* of Eustathios Romaios (LXII.4).

Eustathios Romaios holds a privileged place in the minds of many modern researchers because of the wealth of information his surviving works contain, especially for their value in reconstructing secular, legal practice in medieval Byzantium.[77] The *Peira*, a unique source from the mid-eleventh century, is a collection of what amount to case summaries compiled by a student or pupil of Eustathios Romaios. Eustathios himself had held the position of *droungarios* of the Vigla, i.e. chief judge of the empire.[78] The chief source for the *Peira* was almost certainly a collection of Eustathios' legal opinions (known as *hypomnemata*, ὑπομνήματα), which were much lengthier than the summaries presented in the *Peira*. A judge would typically write a *hypomnema* concerning a specific case, which other judges would then review and sign. It would then form the basis of a tribunal's decision (a σημείωμα).[79] At least three such *hypomnema* written by Eustathios survive in full.[80] What makes the *Peira* so unique is the fact that it allows the reader to examine specific cases that had come before the judge rather than the solely prescriptive legal precepts recorded in the *Basilika* or elsewhere. It is not until the thirteenth century that one finds similar sources that survive.

Eustathios frequently enters into theoretical asides apparently intended both to give his rulings a more general applicability and to provide some justification for the laws he has chosen to cite. In cases involving the calculation of degrees of kinship, especially those revolving around

---

[77] Though Eustathios' knowledge and legal reasoning has been questioned by some modern observers, there can be no debate that his skills in the field of law were recognized by his contemporaries, as he reached the pinnacle of the Byzantine legal establishment by the end of his career. The late Nicholas Oikonomides respected Eustathios' opinions as they exist in the *Peira*, and he had the following to say about the Byzantine jurist: "His deep knowledge of the legislation, his subtlety in avoiding difficulties, his good classical education and his talent as a writer, his strong abilities in reasoning and debating, had made him a remarkable judge and helped him all the way up to the top of the legal hierarchy. He was brilliant, a man of stature, who impressed his contemporaries. His legal studies served as a guide for jurists. And his mere word seemed to exercise a considerable influence over those that surrounded him." "The 'Peira' of Eustathios Romaios," p.191.

[78] Nicholas Oikonomidès, "The 'Peira' of Eustathios Romaios: an Abortive Attempt to Innovate in Byzantine Law," *Fontes Minores* 7 (1989), p.170.

[79] Oikonomidès, "The 'Peira' of Eustathios Romaios," p.177.

[80] See Chapter Two for a detailed discussion of at least one of these surviving *hypomnemata*.

45

a questionable marriage or contested inheritance, Eustathios (or his compiler) has left us with several passages that offer valuable insight into the eleventh-century Byzantine jurist's conception of kinship and the family, including the *genos*.

"[Know] that those joined in marriage are the originators (γενάρχαι) of affinity (ἀγχιστείας)...since it is recognized by the laws that natural kinship is one [thing], that created by law is something else." The two forms of kinship are thus referred to as "of nature" and "of the law." The *Peira* goes on, "and it is easy to see the law/justice of those joined [in marriage], that they are not only the origin of affinity, but also of the *genos*. For a man and woman, united in marriage, constitute affinity toward one another, and a sister-in-law is added to the brother of the husband and a brother-in-law [is created] for the sister of the wife, and further, once children are born, the brothers of both the husband and wife are called uncles of the offspring. Hence a *genos* receives [its] legal origin by obtaining a singular ability for reproduction in more recent times, from the bearing of male and female children."[81] Eustathios then briefly notes the importance of understanding the process of human reproduction for a fuller understanding of kinship, but he refuses to go into detail for the sake of modesty.[82]

The passage cited above is especially noteworthy for several reasons. Firstly, the link between "natural" kinship and the *genos* is unmistakable. This once again reinforces the

---

[81] *Peira*, Title LXII.2, in Zepos and Zepos, *Jus Graecoromanum* (Athens: George Fexis and Son, 1931), Vol. IV, p.234. "Ὅτι τῆς ἀγχισείας γενάρχαι τυγχάνουσιν οἱ συναφθέντες πρὸς γάμον...ἐπεὶ δὲ τοῖς νόμοις ἐγνωσμένον ἐστίν, ὅτι μία μὲν ἐστὶ συγγένεια ἡ φυσική, ἑτέρα δὲ ἡ λεγιτίμα τὴν θέσιν εἰσάγουσα, τὴν ἐκ τῶν δύο τούτων, φύσεώς τε καὶ νόμου...καὶ πάρεστιν ὁρᾶν τὸ δίκαιον τῶν συναπτομένων, ὅτι οὐ μόνον ἀγχιστείας ἀλλὰ καὶ γένους ἀρχὴ τυγχάνουσιν. συναπτόμενοι γὰρ ἀνὴρ καὶ γυνὴ ἅμα τῷ γάμῳ τὴν ἀγχιστείαν συνιστῶσιν ἀλλήλοις, καὶ προστίθεται τῷ ἀδελφῷ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἡ νύμφη καὶ τῇ ἀδελφῇ τῆς γυναικὸς ὁ γαμβρός, ἔπειτα γενομένων παίδων οἱ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς καὶ τῆς γυναικὸς ἀδελφοί θεῖοι τῶν τικτομένων λέγονται, κἀντεῦθεν γένος νόμιμον ἀρχὴν λαμβάνει τὸ ἐξ ἀρρενογονίας καὶ θηλυγονίας μίαν νεωτέροις χρόνοις ἀπενεγκάμενον δύναμιν εἰς διαδοχήν. ὧν τοίνυν τὰ σπέρματα τῆς νομίμης ἀρχὴ γίνονται συγγενείας, οὐκ ἂν ἔγωγε τούτους μηδὲν εἶναι πρὸς ἀλλήλους εἰπεῖν προαχθείην."

[82] Ibid. "ἐρυθριῶ γὰρ τὸν νόμον διδάσκοντά με μὴ ἄλλως τῶν ἐκ πλαγίου συγγενῶν τοὺς βαθμοὺς μετρεῖν, πρὶν ἐπιστῶ τῷ αἰτίῳ τῆς γεννήσεως, κἀκ τούτου πρὸς ἑαυτὸν τοὺς ἀποδιεστῶτας ἑνώσω κλάδους ὥσπερ διὰ μιᾶς ῥίζης. πῶς δ'ἂν τὸν ἄνδρα μὲν καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα [οἰκειώσω] τοῖς ἐκείνων συγγενέσιν, ἀποδιαστήσω δὲ τούτους ἀλλήλων;"

argument that the *genos* was understood as limited to blood relations, as does Eustathios'

tendency (mirroring that of contemporary clergy in the production of canon law) to use the term

"*genos*" in place of "blood" throughout many of his surviving decisions.[83] He repeats this

assertion elsewhere in the *Peira* in even more forceful (and simple) terms. "[Know] that kinship

(συγγένεια) refers not only to [kinship] by blood, which is called 'natural' (φυσικὴ), but also to

that created by law, such as adoption, and a husband is his wife's kinsman (συγγενὴς) not

because he shares kinship [with her] by blood, but as kin created by the law."[84] Eustathios clearly

understands that the *genos*, governed as it is "by nature" (and in contrast to affinity), is

something beyond merely the scope of the law. That is, the *genos* operates independently from

the law, even if the law has an interest in recognizing and governing various aspects of the

relationships created through the "natural" reproduction of the *genos*. While the married couple,

as progenitors, are described in the *Peira* as the "originators" of the *genos*, it is clear that the

bond between man and wife is itself beyond the scope of the *genos*. Each spouse apparently

maintains his or her natal *genos* even after they have been joined in the eyes of the law. It is

significant that the jurist uses the phrase "legal origin" (νόμιμον ἀρχὴν) when discussing the

genos, since, as stated above, the *genos* does not explicitly receive a legal definition anywhere in

the *Basilika* or elsewhere in imperial law. The apparent inconsistency may be reconciled through

the understanding of the *genos* as the singular expression of natural kinship, which, as a social

bond, did receive numerous rights and privileges enshrined in Byzantine law (most notably in

---

[83] For example, in one argument in a case of contested marriage, when Eustathios describes the kinship of the individuals involved in the marriage(s) in question, he mentions those who are not related by blood as "those not at all related to these [people] by *genos*" ("μὴ κατὰ γένος τούτοις τὸ παράπαν προσηκόντων"). Rhalles and Potles V, p.342.

[84] *Peira*, Title LXVI.4; Zepos and Zepos IV, p.245. "Ὅτι οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων μόνον ἡ συγγένεια, ἥτις καὶ φυσικὴ λέγεται, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ νόμῳ δογματισθεῖσα, ὡς ἐπὶ τῆς θέσεως, συγγένεια κέκληται, καὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ τῆς γυναικὸς συγγενὴς μὲν ἐστίν, οὐ μέντοι ὡς φυσικὴν ἔχων συγγένειαν τὴν ἐξ αἵματος, ἀλλ'ὡς τὴν νόμῳ συνισταμένην συγγένειαν φέρουσαν."

marriage, inheritance, and parental rights). Finally, the short passage in which Eustathios alludes to medical knowledge of human reproduction as vital to the calculation of degrees of kinship is much more important than has perhaps been previously recognized. As later chapters of this dissertation will show, Byzantine understandings of human reproduction and physiology played a surprisingly significant role in determining the social and cultural significance of the *genos* in a number of contexts.[85]

This portion of the *Peira* makes explicit the correlation between kinship "by blood" and "natural" kinship, which, when read next to the contemporary tendency to replace the stock phrase of kinship "by blood" (καθ'αἵμα) with kinship "by *genos*" (κατὰ γένος), firmly associates the *genos* with the notion of shared blood. The section is also significant because of the evidence it offers for the sometimes contradictory statements found in the legal reasoning behind decisions concerning marriage law. In a later section of the same collection, Eustathios repeats a portion of the *Basilika* that clearly states that affinity lay "outside of kinship" (συγγενείας ἐκτός).[86]

Though the legal sources tend to be unequivocal in their differentiation between adoptive and "natural" kinship, there is at least one type of surviving adoption formula, between adoptive parent and child, in which the adoptive child is made "an instituted heir (*enstatos kleronomos*) of all our property" and is thus named a "successor to our line (*genos*) and legitimate son."[87] Ruth Macrides makes the point that, without such an explicit contract, the adopted child "was not on the same footing as the blood children of the adoptive family." Such a contract would have ameliorated this inequity, at least in theory. It is unclear if these formulae, of which only five

---

[85] This is the subject of chapter four.
[86] *Peira* LXVI.7; Zepos and Zepos IV, p.246; cf. *Basilika* XXVIII.5.1.
[87] Ruth Macrides, "Substitute Parents and their Children in Byzantium," in Adoption et fosterage, ed. M. Corbier (Paris: De Boccard, 2000), p.312.

survive from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, reflect the language or custom of earlier periods.[88] Too few survive to support any claim to normativity, especially for the period covered here. The fact that inclusion in the adoptive parents' *genos* must be made explicit in the formula supports the other evidence that suggests adoption was considered fundamentally separate from "natural" kinship and the *genos*.

The picture that emerges from Blemmydes, Chomatenos, and the *Peira* is confirmed by a similar definition given by the twelfth-century author Michael Italikos, who addressed a fascinating letter to one Alexios Komnenos (not the emperor; perhaps Anna Komnene's eldest son). Italikos was responding to a question posed by Alexios regarding the vocabulary of kinship in classical Greek literature. As part of his explanation for the ancients' use of the term *homognios* (which Italikos describes as meaning "of the same *genos*"), the author defines *genos* simply as "birth" or "origin," and goes on to say that those "of the same *genos*" could properly be understood as "anyone at all who is related to us by blood."[89]

Taken as a whole, the Byzantine sources argue overwhelmingly for a definition of the *genos* that is restricted to the natal kin group, conforming to the word's etymological roots. Yet there remain some issues. Definitions like those offered by Blemmydes and Italikos, taken at face value, hold the potential to make each family group very large indeed, since the Byzantines understood the entire human race to be a single *genos* descended from Adam. Indeed, Blemmydes' use of the Jews illustrate both his definition of the *genos* as family group and as

---

[88] Macrides, "Substitute Parents and their Children," p.310.

[89] Michael Italikos, Ep. 35, in *Michel Italikos: Lettres et discours*, ed. and trans. P. Gautier (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1972), lines 4-14. Αὐτίκα γὰρ τὸ ὁμόγνιον...ἐκ τοῦ ὁμοῦ καὶ τοῦ γένους παρῆκται, ὡς ἂν φαῖεν καὶ παῖδες γραμματικῶν· τὸ δὲ γένος σημαίνει μὲν καὶ τὰ νεογιλὰ τῶν βρεφῶν καὶ ἀρτίτοκα, ἢ καὶ ἁπλῶς τό τινος γέννημα... Σημαίνει δὲ καὶ τὴν γένεσιν...Ἀλλὰ κατὰ μὲν τὸ πρῶτον σημαινόμενον ὁμόγνιον λέγοντες, τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἂν σημαίνοιμεν· κατὰ δὲ τὸ δεύτερον καὶ τὸν ὁπωσδήποτε κατὰ γενεὰν ἡμῖν συναπτόμενον.

ethnic group, notably the way he describes how all Jews were related to one another not only through their common ancestor, but also through mutual ties of kinship derived therefrom, shows that the *genos* as a concept could and did operate on several, very different scales. Still, Byzantine society did have ways of assigning limits to the natal family.

The Limits of the *Genos*

As the definitions of Blemmydes and Italikos show, the *genos* as a form of social group could come in a wide range of sizes, but this does not mean that Byzantine thinkers had no means of limiting the size of an individual family unit in the guise of a *genos*. While surnames were indeed understood as outward markers of an individual's *genos*, the limits of the *genos* (whether among living relatives or deceased ancestors), were not coterminous with those employing the same family name.

The determination of the structural limits of the *genos* consists of two separate components: the calculation of the origin to which all members would look and the outer limits of living individuals who might be considered (or considered themselves) members of the same *genos*. For the former, the Byzantine sources show a considerable degree of flexibility. On one extreme, one finds frequent mention of the human race, i.e. τὸ γένος τῶν ἀνθρώπων, binding all human beings with their ultimate origin with Adam and Eve. One the other end of the spectrum, each new marriage could be considered the beginning of a whole new *genos*.[90] At the same time, it is equally important to ascertain, at least roughly, the outward limits of living individuals who might regard themselves or be regarded by others as members of the same *genos*. This is,

---

[90] Eustathios Rhomaios says exactly this in one of his *hypomnemata*. Rhalles and Potles, Vol. V, pp.341-53.

perhaps, the more important, or at least the more interesting, of the two questions, since shared *genos*-membership could and did result in a considerable number of privileges for people, and, at the same time, had a very real effect on such issues as the choice of a marriage partner, political affiliation, or inheritance rights. Numerous studies have shown the inefficacy of attempts to assign structural frameworks to human kinship too strictly, but, as we shall see, the Byzantine sources themselves do bear witness to certain *Byzantine* ideas about such limits to the singular family. One of the ways in which this was done most explicitly was in the law.

Michael Attaleiates, the same author of the well-known history covering events of the mid-eleventh century, offers a useful synopsis of the Byzantine legal concept of kinship in his *Ponema Nomikon*, a summary of Byzantine law intended, among other things, as a resource for students of law. "Kinship (συγγένεια) is a general term, [and] is divided into three [parts]: ascendants, descendents, and collateral (ἐκ πλαγίου). Ascendants are those who have given birth to us, such as [our] father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, and so forth. Descendants are those to whom we have given birth, such as a son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter, great-grandson, great-granddaughter, and so on. Collateral [kin] neither gave birth to us, nor were born from us, but share in the same parentage/ancestry and root as us, for example brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, and those who are born from these [people]."[91]

This simple, tripartite division was at the heart of Byzantine thought concerning (consanguineous) kinship. It was so important, in fact, that it is repeated twice in the *Basilika*,

---

[91] Attaleiates, *Ponema Nomikon*, 19.13 (On prohibited marriages): Ἡ συγγένεια ὄνομά ἐστι γενικόν. Διαιρεῖται δὲ εἰς τρία. Εἰς ἀνιόντας καὶ κατιόντας καὶ τοὺς ἐκ πλαγίου. Καὶ ἀνιόντες μὲν εἰσὶν οἱ ἡμᾶς γεγεννηκότες· οἷον, πατήρ, μήτηρ, πάππος, μάμμη, καὶ οἱ ἔτι τούτων ἀνώτεροι. Κατιόντες δὲ οἱ ἐξ ἡμῶν γεννώμενοι· οἷον, υἱός, θυγάτηρ, ἔγγονος, ἐγγόνη, προέγγονος, προεγγόνη, καὶ οἱ ἔτι τούτων κατώτεροι. Ἐκ πλαγίου δέ, οἱ μήτε ἡμᾶς γεγεννηκότες, μήτε ἐξ ἡμῶν γεννώμενοι, τῆς αὐτῆς δὲ γονῆς καὶ ῥίζας ἡμῖν κεκοινωνηκότες· οἷον, ἀδελφός, ἀδελφή, θεῖος, θεία, ἀνεψιός, ἀνεψιὰ καὶ οἱ ἐκ τούτων καταγόμενοι.

once in the portion of the text dealing with questions of inheritance and again in that pertaining to marriage.[92] The passage also made its way (twice) into the tenth-century *Synopsis Basilicorum*, a shorter, more user-friendly summary of the massive text of the *Basilika* compiled shortly after the *Basilika* itself.[93] The portion of text from the *Ponema Nomikon* repeats the text of the *Basilika* more or less verbatim, with one major exception. In the *Basilika*, as in Justinian's *Digest*, the section ends with one additional division within collateral kinship. "Collateral kinship is divided into two [parts], those who are related to us along the male line (agnatic) and those by the female [line]" (cognatic, according to Roman law).[94] This distinction, which was important in the classical Roman period (the Roman *familia* technically consisted only of agnatic relatives of a single, male *paterfamilias*), was no longer relevant in medieval Byzantium.[95]

Interestingly, the section of the *Basilika* dealing with intestate death describes the tripartite division of natural kinship as "the entire succession of the *genos* of [one dying] intestate."[96] Thus, the "natural kinship" of one part of the *Basilika* is equated with the "*genos*" here, a vital correlation that further supports the conclusion that the *genos* was not only a natal kin group, but one that was considered "natural," and thus beyond certain methods of alteration (e.g. through adoption or marriage). This is also seen in the tendency, already present in the *Basilika* and even more frequent in the works of canonists and other jurists from the eleventh century onward, to substitute the common phrase "kinship by blood" (συγγένεια ἐξ αἵματος) with kinship "by *genos*" (κατὰ γένος), and to contrast kinship "by *genos*" with that created by

---

[92] *Basilika* 28.5 and 45.3.1.
[93] *Synopsis* B.I.1 and B.I.4, pp.123-4.
[94] *Basilika* 28.5: "ἡ δὲ ἐκ πλαγίου συγγένεια διαιρεῖται εἰς δύο, εἰς τοὺς κατὰ ἀρρενογονίαν καὶ κατὰ θηλυγονίαν ἡμῖν συναπτομένους."
[95] C.J. Smith, *The Roman Clan*, pp.15ff.
[96] *Basilika* 45.3.8=Nov. 118: Ἐπειδὴ πᾶσα ἡ τοῦ γένους ἐξ ἀδιαθέτου διαδοχὴ τρισὶ γνωρίζεται τάξεσι, τουτέστι τῇ τε τῶν ἀνιόντων καὶ τῇ τῶν κατιόντων καὶ τῇ τῶν ἐκ πλαγίου...

marriage (κατὰ γάμον).[97] This appears to confirm yet again the *genos* as a kin group united

exclusively through ties of shared descent. The question of structural limits, however, remains.

On this, Byzantine law is informative.

As stated earlier, Byzantine civil law did not explicitly define the *genos* as kin group, nor

did it ever specify any rights or privileges enjoyed by its members. Nevertheless, kin relations

did enjoy a number of rights that were enshrined in the laws governing a fairly wide range of

issues, especially inheritance rights and marriage. In many of these instances, the law specified

the extent to which the rights of the individual family members extended and, thus, in a way, the

structural limits of the legally recognized family. Equating these limits with the structural limits

of the individual *genos* may appear tenuous at first, but it becomes much plausible once the link

between the *genos* and the legal concept of "natural kinship" (φυσικὴ συγγένεια) has been

established.

The definition of parricide (*parricidium*) in Justinian's *Digest*, repeated in the *Basilika*,

includes a long list of relatives whose murder constituted parricide. In general, the fourth degree

of consanguinity, equivalent to first cousins, was the outer limit.[98] First cousins were also,

generally speaking, the outer limit of those relatives who, according to Justinianic law (in use

throughout the tenth through thirteenth centuries), could not be forced to act as witnesses against

a kinsman.[99] Similarly, first cousins also formed a kind of limit in Byzantine law governing

shared ownership, in particular of land. In her own investigations, Laiou never encountered

---

[97] See, for example, *Basilika* 5.2.5, 5.2.9; For the work of canonists and other clergy, see Rhalles and Potles, Vol. V, passim.

[98] Geoffrey S. Nathan, *The Family in Late Antiquity*: *The Rise of Christianity and the Endurance of Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p.161.

[99] Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance*, pp.261, 263. Cheynet utilizes both the *Basilika* and the *Peira* as evidence.

relatives more distant than first cousins in collective ownership of a single property, and evidence suggests that, in the event of the dissolution of collective ownership, the law favored putting the patrimonial property in the hands of one of the former owners rather than parceling it out amongst more distant relatives.[100] Thus, in several ways, the law's protection of the rights of a consanguineous kinsman ended at first cousins, which was expressed in legal terms (both in canon and civil law) as the fourth degree of kinship.[101] These limits, however, were only effective in the narrow fields specified by the individual statutes described here, and there is nothing to link them with the *genos* per se. The same cannot be said of two other areas of Byzantine law that were deeply concerned with defining the rights and regulations within the family: inheritance and, most importantly, marriage.

Medieval Byzantium inherited from Rome the legal tradition of calculating kinship according to degrees. The number of degrees separating (or linking) two individuals was found by locating the nearest common ancestor between them. One would then count up the number of generations from the first person to this common ancestor, then back down to the second. Thus, siblings were related to the second degree, first cousins to the fourth, second cousins to the sixth degree, and so on. According to Byzantine thinking, these degrees were established by counting the number of "births" separating the two potential partners. This schema was initially used only for calculating consanguineous kinship, though, by the second quarter of the eleventh century, ecclesiastical and legal authorities began to calculate affinity using degrees as well, at least in questions of marriage impediments. It was in this way that the Byzantines established an order

---

[100] Laiou, *Mariage, amour, et parenté*, p.170.
[101] Of course, there were instances in which the law recognized kin relationships beyond the fourth degree of consanguinity. The *Peira*, for example, following the law as it appears in the *Basilika*, offers evidence for the difficulties faced by an individual attempting to testify against his father- or brother-in-law, any direct descendant, a nephew or niece, or any child born from his antecedents. See: Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance*, p.261.

and categorization for kinship that could then be used by jurists and members of the clergy.[102] These degrees of kinship were used primarily in two spheres of law: inheritance in the case of intestate death and marriage prohibitions.

A large number of manuscripts containing treatises describing the calculation of degrees (sometimes including one or more tables designed to aid the reader) survive, which has led some scholars to argue that the process was a difficult one for many Byzantines to grasp.[103] On the contrary, it is equally plausible that such works survive in these numbers not because of their difficulty but because of their importance to a large proportion of the population. This would have been especially true beginning in the eleventh century, when control of marriage as a means of social control was rapidly becoming a much more central concern of the Byzantine church and government.[104] It was also at this time that serious debate erupted amongst the clergy regarding the extension of marriage prohibitions from the sixth degree of consanguinity to the seventh.

Interestingly, by the early eleventh century, Byzantine jurists and clergy seem to have attempted to reach something of a unified theory of the degree to which ties of extended kinship "mattered" in both marriage and inheritance law. This limit was eventually set at the seventh degree of kinship, which amounted to children of second cousins.[105] While the marriage of individuals related to the seventh degree of consanguinity was not legally forbidden until 1166, throughout most of the eleventh and early twelfth century a probable majority within the clergy already viewed it as off limits and ruled as such when acting as judges in contested marriages. In

---

[102] Byzantine sources give a clear sense of distinguishing closer or more distant kin, not entirely dissimilar from modern use, which implies a "natural" origin of more intimate social relationships. Also of interest in this schema is the favor shown to descendants over ascendants, and living ascendants over collateral family members, at least in cases of intestate death.

[103] Burgmann, "Turning Sisinnios against the Sisinnians," p.165.

[104] For more on this development, see the following chapter.

[105] It also included the grandchildren of your parent's first cousin.

fact, the eleventh and early twelfth century saw a series of debates over marriage impediments, in which the group of judges and jurists (including a large number of clergy) supporting a broad interpretation of the Tome of Sisinnios (sometimes called "Sisinnians")[106] argued that the seventh degree of consanguinity should be included within the limits of incestuous marriage, and, thus, form the outer limits of the singular, natal family. Their interpretation of the law was broader than their opponents (e.g. Michael Skribas), who wanted to interpret the law more strictly and literally. This broader interpretation included harmonizing, among other things, the law regarding intestate inheritance with marriage law, and its proponents drew from Aristotelian philosophy and even Galenic medicine as much as legal precedent.

The participants in these debates over marriage impediments understood them as no less than debates about the nature and extent of the *genos* as the expression of what they called "natural kinship." As such, they deserve a more complete analysis, which appears in a later chapter. For the time being, the most salient point is that the individuals involved in the debates discussed here understood them as debates over the limits of the *genos* as a singular, natal kin group, and that these limits had been established by nature (φύσις) itself.

Natural law (φυσικὸν νόμιμον) is described in Theophilus the Antecessor's Greek translation of Justinian's *Institutes* as "the law that extends to all animals, whether of the land, of the water or of the air. For Nature did not limit her operation to mankind; she also ordered the ways of animals of the air, and she moulded the animals of the land, nor did she omit to take forethought even for the animals that are brought forth in the sea." Notably, marriage is offered as the prime example of natural law as it appears codified in Byzantine law. "Natural law is

---

[106]e.g. Ludwig Burgmann, "Turning Sisinnios against the Sisinnians: Eustathios Romaios on a Disputed Marriage," in Byzantium in the Year 1000, ed. Paul Magdalino (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 161-81.

exemplified in the union of male and female, which we call marriage, and in the rearing and care of their offspring: we see, in fact, not only mankind but also the rest of the animals reckoned among those that observe this law. For Nature, seeing the animals dying off individually, devised immortality (τὴν ἀθανασίαν τούτοις ἐμηχανήσατο) for them by means of marriage and the consequent procreation of young, their love for their offspring, the rearing of these, and the succession of those in their own room and stead."[107]

The theory of the "law of nature" was a foundational component not only of imperial law, but it also had a strong influence on the development of canon law, especially in the determination of licit and illicit marriages. In support of their position that the seventh degree of kinship constituted an incestuous marriage, many members of the eleventh-century clergy (especially bishops, who frequently acted as arbiters of cases of contested marriages) cite Basil of Caesarea's Canon 87.[108] According to Basil, any marriage that would result in the "confusion of names" should be considered off limits. The basis of Basil's theory, so influential among Byzantine thinkers of the eleventh century and beyond, rests upon the supposition that nature itself had determined the linguistic designations for specific relations in the Greek language. Thus, says Basil, "Those who are blinded by dishonorable lust do not pay heed to nature, which long ago determined the names of the family (τὰς τοῦ γένους προσηγορίας)."[109] For Basil and those following his logic, any marriage that resulted in the "confusion of names" (τὴν σύγχυσιν)

---

[107] Theophilus Antecessor, *Paraphrase of the Institutes*, 1.2.pr; J.H.A. Lokin, Roos Meijering, B.H. Stolte, and N. van der Wal, eds. *Theophili Antecessoris Paraphrasis Institutionum* (Groningen: Chimaira, 2010), pp.2-3. Speaking of marriage, the text reads: "παραδείγματα δὲ τοῦ φυσικοῦ νομίμου ἄρρενός τε καὶ θηλείας συνάφεια, ὅπερ ἡμεῖς γάμον προσαγορεύομεν, καὶ ἡ περὶ τοὺς τεχθέντας ἀνατροφὴ καὶ σπουδή."
[108] The canon originates in Basil's letter to Diadoros, typically given the number 160 in editions of his letter collection.
[109] Basil of Caesarea, *Letter 160*, par. 5.1-3, in *Saint Basile. Lettres*, ed. Y. Courtonne, Vol. 1 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1957). Οἱ δὲ οὐδὲ πρὸς τὴν φύσιν ἀποβλέπουσιν, οἱ τὴν ψυχὴν λημῶντες τῷ πάθει τῆς ἀτιμίας, πάλαι διακρίνασαν τὰς τοῦ γένους προσηγορίας.

contravened nature and was thus not only illicit, but incestuous.[110] This was the primary, though

not the only, argument put forth in the eleventh century in support of prohibiting marriage

between those related to the seventh degree of kinship.

The *Basilika*, perhaps unsurprisingly, describes incestuous marriages (described

separately from prohibited marriages) as "against nature," in a passage repeated in several

summaries and commentaries on the legal compendium.[111] The idea, common to many cultures,

is that incest contravenes nature itself, and there is thus some aspect of prohibited marriages

(which were coterminous with licit sexual relations in Byzantium) that was not up for

negotiation, at least in theory. Much of the literature produced from the late tenth through twelfth

centuries regarding prohibited marriages was aimed at finding exactly where "nature" itself had

set the limit. This idea carried immense weight in the debates of eleventh- and twelfth-century

Byzantium.

The philosophical definitions of the *genos* offered by Porphyry, Aristotle, and later

Byzantine commentators place the group within the series of hierarchical categories equally

understood as having originated in nature itself, and there is ample evidence that those Byzantine

authors who use the term in their own histories, hagiographies, or poetry thought of the social

group in this very same Porphyro-Aristotelian terms. It is not surprising that the *genos*, then,

lacked a legal definition as such, since it was understood as fundamentally different from

expressly *legal* kinship (the legitimacy of children, slave or free status, adoption, inheritance

rights, etc.). With nature at the heart of the *genos*, this may have even served to strengthen the

---

[110] Basil of Caesarea, *Letter 160*, par. 5.6: Ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοὺς ἀλλήλων ἢ ἀνεψιοὺς προσεροῦσιν; Ἀμφότερα γὰρ αὐτοῖς προσαρμόσει διὰ τὴν σύγχυσιν.
[111] It appears clearly and concisely in the *Synopsis Basilicorum*, a more user-friendly compendium based on the *Basilika*, which was compiled in the tenth century. Zepos and Zepos, *Jus Graecoromanum*, Vol. V, pp.141-2.

bonds among those sharing a *genos*, at least relative to other forms of social bonds or even other forms of kinship. This very idea, in fact, was argued by several jurists and bishops during the eleventh- and twelfth-century debates surrounding the extension of marriage impediments, as the following chapter will demonstrate.

The evidence explored thus far has hopefully provided a more or less cohesive image of the *genos* as it appears in a wide range of sources from the tenth through the thirteenth centuries. It is quite clear that the concept held a similar, if not identical, set of assumptions, values, and uses whether it was employed in a saint's *vita* or in a legal argument. It is, however, important to ask one additional question of this evidence. Is it a useful exercise to piece together a singular image of the *genos* drawn from such disparate sources in such different genres and contexts? Does this practice present an unrealistically coherent whole that distorts the particular circumstances of each source's composition and/or its author's intent? The following (short) section will suggest that the apparent consistencies described in the pages above are more than just the creative editing of a modern scholar and are, in fact, a product of the particular Byzantine *milieux* that produced the men and women behind the written sources.

The Use of Philosophical and Legal Texts to Define the *Genos*

The works of Aristotle and Porphyry of Tyre were well known throughout the Byzantine millennium, where both Porphyry's *Isagoge* and Aristotle's *Categories,* generally read as the first of six works known as the *Organon*, had formed the basis of the study of Aristotelian logic since

antiquity. [112] Though Nikephoros Blemmydes is cited here, he was not the first Byzantine thinker to have approached Porphyry's or Aristotle's version of the *genos*. There were a large number of commentators on both Aristotle and Porphyry throughout the Byzantine period, meaning definitions found in the ancient authors were by no means outdated or unfamiliar to authors in the tenth through twelfth centuries or later. Arethas of Caesarea, Michael Psellos, Theodore Prodromos, and John Tztetzes all wrote their own commentaries on various works by both Aristotle and Porphyry, in addition to their other, better known works. [113]

Even Eustathios Romaios, in the *Peira*, offers clear evidence of the influence Aristotelian categories (and, probably, Porphyry's *Isagoge*) had on his thought, specifically as it pertains to the family. He introduces a paragraph describing the nature of kinship in the same way that the Basilika does. "[Know] that syggeneia is a general term." What follows, however, is not a summary or direct quotation from the *Basilika* (of the division of kinship into consanguinity and affinity or the tripartite division of consanguines). Rather, Eustathios offers a brief summary of Porphyry's and Aristotle's hierarchical division of classificatory terms (which include *genos*). It is not unheard of for Byzantine judges or jurists to use non-legal authorities in support of their decisions, but this particular case is especially informative. [114] For Eustathios, the multifaceted and, indeed, complicated set of terms and concepts designed to deal with kinship and the various forms of "the family" in Byzantium, were best explained through the use of philosophy. Thus,

---

[112] Porphyry's *Isagoge* (Εἰσαγωγή, "Introduction") was not strictly speaking an introduction to Aristotle's Categories, but it was frequently treated as such, especially since, as an introduction to logic more generally, it was typically studied just before approaching the *Categories* as the first portion of the *Organon*. For Porphyry, the *genos* appears as the first of five "items" in his classificatory system. For a useful summary of Porphyry's thought in the *Isagoge*, see the translation and commentary by Jonathan Barnes: Porphyry, *Introduction*, trans. with comment. by Jonathan Barnes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003).

[113] In general, see Linos G. Benakis, "Commentaries and Commentators on the Logical Works of Aristotle in Byzantium," in *Gedankenzeichen. Festschrift für Klaus Oehler*, ed. Regina Claussen and Roland Daube-Schackat (Tübingen: Stauffenburg-Verl., 1988), pp.3-12.

[114] See: Spyros N. Troianos, *Η θέση του νομικού/δισαστή στη βυζαντινή κοινωνία* (Athens: Idryma Goulandre-Khorn, 1993).

echoing Porphyry of Tyre, Eustathios could argue that not all forms of kinship could be categorized under the "general term" *syggeneia*.[115] The passage makes it abundantly clear that, at least from one jurist's point of view, the *genos* as it appears in family law was understood to be the same (or at least of the same nature) as the *genos* in Aristotelian philosophy. Not only does it show that Eustathios, a career jurist, had been trained in philosophy (which is not surprising), it also, and more importantly, demonstrates that, for this jurist at least, there was no clear distinction between the Aristotelian *genos* and its homonymous counterpart in family law.

The same jurist also provides clear evidence for the blurred lines between secular and canon law in Byzantium. In a single decision (ὑπόμνημα) of Eustathios Romaios in 1025 regarding the potential marriage of two male cousins to two female cousins, the jurist (himself not a member of the clergy) cites not only the *Basilika*, but also the Tome of Patriarch Sisinnios and Canon 87 of St. Basil of Caesarea.[116] From within the *Basilika*, he draws not only from the laws specifically designed to govern marriage, but also from those portions concerning inheritance in the case of intestate death. Eustathios' contemporary, Demetrios, bishop of Cyzicus, himself cites the *Basilika* alongside St. Basil and other canonical and biblical precedents.[117]

It has been argued that knowledge of legal impediments to marriage and the calculation of degrees of kinship was limited to a small circle in Byzantium, but there is considerable evidence to the contrary. Emperor Alexios I Komnenos requested the treatise on marriage

---

[115] *Peira*, Title LXII.3 (p.235)- "Ὅτι ἡ συγγένεια ὄνομά ἐστι γενικόν. τὸ δὲ γένος οὐχ ἓν εἶδος περιλαμβάνει, ἀλλ'αἱ διαφοραὶ περιουσίαι ἀποτελοῦσι τὰ διάφορα εἴδη, καὶ οἷς ἔνεστι κοινωνία τούτοις καὶ διαφορά. οὐκ ἄρα πᾶσαι ὁμοειδεῖς συγγένειαι ἐξηρτημέναι τοῦ γενικοῦ τῆς συγγενείας ὀνόματος, ἀλλὰ διάφοροι, ὡς ὁ νόμος καὶ ἡ διαιρετικὴ γνῶσις, ἢ οὐδὲν διαφεύγει, πανσόφως ὑποτίθεται. οὐ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἵππος καὶ κύων ἓν εἶδος εἰσίν, εἰ καὶ τῆς τοῦ ζώου φωνῆς ἀπῃώρηται."
[116] Ralles and Potles, Vol. V, pp.341-53.
[117] Ralles and Potles, Vol. V, pp.354-68.

impediments from Niketas, bishop of Ankyra, and, less than a generation earlier, Michael Psellos

also included a brief reference to the *Basilika's* guide to calculating degrees of kinship in a work

of poetry addressed to Emperor Michael VII Doukas (r.1071-78).[118] As mentioned above, a

different Alexios Komnenos in the mid-twelfth century requested that Michael Italikos clarify

several terms used by Greek sources for kinship or family groups. Clearly this was not

specialized knowledge restricted to a small circle of specialists. Rather, the nature of kinship and

the laws governing marriage were a primary concern of several emperors and even lay people

outside the realm of canon or secular law.

Much of the court oratory and other poetry used as sources for the tenth through the

twelfth century, especially for the apparent increased interest in noble birth and ancient lineages,

was written by individuals equally studied in philosophy and other disciplines. Some more

famous examples include John Geometres, who was well-educated and whose works (in both

prose and verse) cover such wide-ranging interests as monasticism, imperial encomia, and

biblical exegesis. The famous twelfth-century orator and poet, Theodore Prodromos, also served

as a professor of rhetoric in Constantinople and composed his own commentary on Aristotle's

Categories.[119] Additional commentaries on the *Isagoge* and Aristotelian logic were composed by

the likes of Arethas of Caesarea in the tenth century and John Italos in the eleventh. Michael

Italikos taught rhetoric and philosophy in Byzantium before being appointed *didaskalos* of

physicians.[120]

Leo the Deacon, author of a history that serves as one of the best sources for the second

half of the tenth century, certainly received a thorough education, even if much of his biography

---

[118] L.G. Westerink, *Michaelis Pselli Poemata* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1992), Poema 8.
[119] Benakis, "Commentaries and Commentators on the Logical Works of Aristotle," pp.6-7.
[120] *ODB* p. 1368.

remains obscure. His work is riddled with Homeric and classicizing language, and he tells his readers that, while in Constantinople, he had received a "secondary education" (ἐγκύκλιος παίδευσις).[121] Michael Attaleiates, in what little personal information he included in his own writings, makes clear that he had studied "the general curriculum, moving on to philosophy and rhetoric, and finally concentrating on the study of law."[122] His *Ponema Nomikon* is one of the most useful and complete summaries of the *Basilika* to be produced in the middle Byzantine period. John Xiphilinos, eventual patriarch of Constantinople, earlier in his career held the position of *nomophylax*, effectively the head of the faculty of law in, a position created by Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos at the time of his foundation of the school of law in Constantinople in 1047.[123]

Michael Psellos, author of a much cited chronicle covering the middle years of the eleventh century, was the first Consul of the Philosophers, that is, head of the school of philosophy established in Constantinople by Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos, and his credentials as a teacher and author of philosophical works (including, of course, the study of Aristotelian logic) are without reproach. Psellos, like many Byzantine thinkers, was also familiar with the teachings of Galen and other medical doctors, whose works the Byzantines read as general philosophy rather than strictly medical treatises.[124] Psellos also authored an epitome of the *Basilika*, in verse, thus demonstrating his own familiarity with the law.

---

[121] Leo the Deacon, *History*, 72.17-18 (Book IV, ch. 11); Alice-Mary Talbot and Denis F. Sullivan, trans., *The* History *of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2005), p.9.

[122] Dimitris Krallis, *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline in Eleventh-Century Byzantium* (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2012), p.6.

[123] Krallis, *Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline*, pp.6-7.

[124] Owsei Temkin, "Byzantine Medicine: Tradition and Empiricism," *DOP* 16 (1962), pp.106-8.

Some of the most important commentaries on classical philosophy (as well as other classical Greek and Roman works) were composed by clergymen, especially bishops, who were the same individuals charged with formulating the church's position on marriage impediments and, importantly, the theories behind it. Arethas of Caesarea in the tenth century and Eustathios archbishop of Thessaloniki in the twelfth are two of the better known examples, though they are certainly not alone. John Zonaras' own career included holding the office of *droungarios* of the watch (δρουγγάριος τῆς βίγλας), a senior judicial post, as well as private secretary to the emperor (*protasekretes*) before he adopted the monastic habit and dedicated his life to his writing.[125] The logic of Aristotle and Porphyry formed an important part of the curriculum established by Michael Psellos at the School of Philosophy in Constantinople at a time when increasing numbers of people seem to have been able and willing to receive some form of higher education in Byzantium, including philosophical training.[126]

All of this demonstrates that the fields of Aristotelian philosophy, medicine, theology, and law, while perhaps inaccessible to the majority of the Byzantine population at any given moment, were nevertheless widely read and understood, often by the very same individuals who composed the histories and poetry frequently used by modern historians to construct their narratives of social and cultural change in the period in question. Thus, debates carried out by senior clergy members concerning the limits of the singular family (*genos*) or the multifarious definitions of *genos* in commentaries on Porphyry's *Isagoge* should not be relegated to small

---

[125] *ODB*, p.2229.

[126] Basil Tatakis, *Byzantine Philosophy*, trans. Nicholas Moutafakis (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., 2003), p.129. According to Tatakis, the curriculum looked like the following: "At the outset, the entering student would study grammar, rhetoric, and logic--the trivium. Upon completion he would proceed on to higher studies with Psellos, where he would study arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy--the sciences enumerated by Plato in Book 6 of the Republic, called the quadrivium. From this he would pass not on to dialectic, as Plato proposed, but to philosophy, which is seen as complementary to all the sciences beginning with the logic of Aristotle."

circles of specialists on the fringes of Byzantine society in the tenth through twelfth centuries. On the contrary, it was in these fields that the nature of kinship and the family was (re-)negotiated and debated, and these debates had very real consequences for people of all social strata, particularly when it came to questions of marriage and inheritance.

On the one hand, the Byzantines did maintain a conceptual differentiation between *genos* as family group and other uses of the term. Kaldellis expressed this idea clearly when he differentiated between a "strong" and a weaker sense of the *genos* as seen in sources relevant to Byzantine identity.[127] On the other hand, it is equally important to understand that debates over the nature of the *genos* among clergy or jurists involved in marriage disputes, medical knowledge of human reproduction, philosophical treatises and commentaries on Aristotle and Porphyry of Tyre, narrative histories, hagiographies, and various forms of poetry were very well integrated among Byzantine thinkers, and thus contributed collectively to the cultural and social reality of the *genos* as a distinct form of kin group.

Conclusion

The composite image formed by combining the various and, at times, partial definitions of the *genos* discussed here (including those of the "natural kinship" in the legal sources) is not only internally consistent, it is also consistent with the concept's use outside of the realm of philosophy and law. Unlike the term *syggenēs/syggeneia*, which was restricted to consanguineous kin in canon and (most) civil law, but could and did include affinal and even adopted or spiritual kin in other contexts, there does not appear to be any contradiction to this

---

[127] Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium,* pp.87-93, passim.

definition of the *genos* in, for example, narrative histories or hagiography from the same period.[128] Above all, it is clear that Byzantine authors had a clear sense of the *genos* as a form of family group, with a specific set of cultural associations and certain limits, at least in some contexts.

Following these sources, the *genos* was a carefully defined group of living individuals and their ancestors extending well beyond the individual household and operating independently from it. It was a consanguineous kin group, displaying many of the qualities of a lineage as described by Jack Goody, though, unlike the western European 'houses' used by Goody, the Byzantine aristocratic *genos* does not seem to have derived its unique identity through its connection to "a landed estate, claims to office, titles or other relatively exclusive rights."[129] Instead, the focus of the *genos'* cohesion rested more squarely in ties of blood and its family name. Though the individual identification with a given *genos* certainly entailed a certain degree of recognition of one's ancestors and was, partially at least, dependent upon this recognition, extensive genealogies are rare in surviving Byzantine sources, making the *genos* appear to be a more "ego-oriented" descent system than an "ancestor-focused" one.[130]

Put another way, the *genos* was the Byzantine expression of the natural (biological) family. According to Byzantine thinking, it was governed by "nature" (*physis*), which left it beyond the reach of most potential innovations or restrictions; as such, it was largely immune to

---

[128] This is, of course, only true for the use of *genos* indicating a family group. When the term *genos* is used by Byzantine sources to indicate a group or class of individuals or things sharing certain common traits, such as Michael Psellos' use of "*politikon genos*" (contrasted with the "senatorial *genos*"), it is another matter entirely. See: Psellos, *Chronographia*, II.146, 138; Paul Magdalino, "Justice and Finance in the Byzantine State," in Law and Society in Byzantium, Ninth through Twelfth Centuries, ed. Angeliki Laiou and Dieter Simon (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994), p.95.

[129] Jack Goody. *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp.227-8.

[130] Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*, pp. 231-2.

alteration through adoption, marriage, or spiritual kinship (though the union of husband and wife was up for debate for a short time in the twelfth century). There were, however, some attempts to redefine its limits, at least as far as the *genos* was identical to the natural family (φυσικὴ συγγένεια) as it appeared in Byzantine law and religious thinking concerning marriage and inheritance in cases of intestate death. This meant that the *genos* was the primary form of the family involved in questions of marriage law, making it of unquestionable importance in the lives of nearly every individual in medieval Byzantium, at least in theory.

Unlike the ancient Roman *gens*, a single *genos* was not coterminous with those individuals sharing a surname. Heritable surnames were most certainly the primary indicators (or at least the most visible one) of an individual's *genos*, but they cannot be said to have determined an individual *genos'* size. The Byzantine *genos* was not an agnatic kin group, and the older Roman concept of *paterfamilias* had fallen out of use long before the tenth century. Any limits to the *genos* seem to have operated regardless of gender, even if there were some within Byzantine society who understood the female line of descent to be somehow less legitimate than the male or even having a polluting effect on the intergenerational reproduction of the *genos*.[131]

The basic definition of the *genos* appears to have remained generally stable throughout the period in question (and indeed for a much longer period than that, reaching back into antiquity). The *genos* as defined by Blemmydes in the thirteenth century would have been recognizable to a Byzantine in the ninth. The difference seems to lie in the importance placed on

---

[131] See chapter four for a more complete discussion of this trend. Smith, *The Roman Clan*, p.15. "The *nomen* was inherited through the male line, and so the gens can be seen as a group comprising all agnates, and so, potentially at any rate, a collection of families. Agnates are defined as legitimate descendants of a common male ancestor, through the male line only, but for some purposes at least this stopped at what was known as the sixth grade (i.e. second cousin); there was no such limit on the gens. In the gens of the Fabii then, every free member born into the group took the *nomen* Fabius and was a *gentilis*."

one's *genos* as a determining factor in individual identity and social and political status. The eleventh century was something of a turning point, both in the noble identity of the Byzantine aristocracy and in the intensity of debate surrounding marriage impediments; Laiou has argued for a link between the two, which appears to find support in the sources.[132] Byzantine thinkers of the eleventh century and later worked to give the *genos* more clearly defined limits as it became a more important social group and a more powerful means of differentiating one group or even one individual from another. The appearance of heritable surnames contributed to such functions as very visible indicators of one's membership in a given *genos* and, at the same time, helped each individual *genos* develop a unique identity of its own over several generations. The legal sources also suggest that the *genos* should not be viewed as a uniquely aristocratic phenomenon at all, as even a peasant farmer would have been subject to the same restrictions concerning marriage and would have had an answer to the question "of what *genos* are you."

Attempts to find a precise relationship between the *genos* and the *oikos* or related concepts have largely been in vain. The distinction between them is by no means clear in many Byzantine texts, and the two can at times appear to be used alternately as rough synonyms. The difference may perhaps be more fruitfully explored as one of emphasis. The *oikos* is typically imagined as a group of individuals linked first and foremost by their shared living space. The *genos*, on the other hand, emphasizes the groups shared links of descent. It is true that, in many cases, *oikos* is used by Byzantine authors to denote a group of people without any direct reference to their living situation, but the bonds within the group seem to have been formed primarily by identifying their interests with a household as a physical space. Thus, perhaps the clearest difference between the *oikos* and the *genos* is the fact that the former was a social group

---

[132] Laiou, *Mariage, amour et parenté*, pp.21-5.

based primarily around shared living space (even if these bonds were reinforced through ties of marriage or other forms of kinship) and might include any number of slaves or other hangers-on, while the *genos* was a social group whose ties were strictly imagined as those of blood, which transcended physical space.

As with many terms and concepts related to kinship, it is probably a mistake to assign strict limits to *genos* membership or to define it too narrowly outside of Byzantine law. Problems arise when one tries to identify the absolute limits of the *genos* at the seventh degree of kinship, most notably an individual's distant ancestors and third cousins, both of which were almost certainly considered part of a person's *genos*, at least at certain times, and both of which exceeded the seventh degree of kinship (third cousins were related to the eighth degree). It is equally impossible to map those sharing the same surname onto the *genos* found in Byzantine law, especially since it was not unusual to find a son bearing a different family name than his own father. Still, it can be useful to regard these structural limits as important to Byzantine thinking regarding shared blood and its limits (and thus of those traits imagined as hereditary), while more distant relatives could still lend very real political or other kinds of support or, in the case of long-dead ancestors, could still lend legitimacy and authority in claims of political or social prestige.

Structural changes (i.e. expansion) to the family did occur in Byzantium, but these should be understood as happening with the expansion of marriage impediments between the seventh and eleventh centuries and the inclusion of spiritual kinship in these calculations. The effects of these expansions outside of marriage law were probably negligible. As far as the *genos* is concerned, one cannot speak of any radical expansion of the family that coincides with changes in the nature of aristocracy in the ninth through twelfth centuries. There was a marked increase in

the frequency with which the concept of the *genos* appears in surviving sources, which, combined with other linguistic evidence, may very well indicate a shift in the cultural currency and importance of the natal kin group, if not significant social change, but there is little evidence of revolutionary transformations in kinship structures themselves. If more nieces and nephews, cousins and brothers-in-law appear in the sources from the twelfth century than do in those from the ninth, this indicates a growing tendency to record this information and perhaps a more meaningful bond of kinship in a greater number of situations than previously. This, however, is not a structural expansion of the Byzantine family. There is very little evidence that individuals were recognizing others as kinsmen whom they would not have considered as such in earlier periods.

Chapter Two: The Genos and the Language of Kinship

Τίμιος ὁ θάνατος ἀληθῶς τῶν ὑπὲρ τοῦ γένους καὶ τοῦ φύλου χριστιανῶν
τετελευτηκότων ἐν δεσμοῖς καὶ πολέμοις,
ὧν σήμερον τὴν μνήμην ἐπιτελοῦμεν πιστῶς.

"Truly honorable is the death of those who have fallen in captivity and in wars
on behalf of the *genos* and the nation of Christians,
whose memory we faithfully celebrate today."
-Tenth-century office (*akolouthia*) for those who have died in battle[1]

By the middle of the twelfth century, the *genos* played a much greater role in Byzantine politics and aristocratic society than it had two centuries earlier. The process by which the concept moved to the center of aristocratic identity is particularly visible in the language of the sources. Changes associated with the definition and role of the term *genos* between the early tenth and the late twelfth centuries were accompanied by other, more sweeping changes in the vocabulary of kinship occurring in Byzantine society at the same time. The nature of these developments sheds valuable light on the changing social and cultural significance of the *genos* and of kinship more broadly.

This chapter focuses on the language associated with the *genos* and situates it within the broader framework of the Byzantine Greek vocabulary of kinship and changes thereto. The *genos* moved to the center of the Byzantine vocabulary of kinship in the period between the early tenth and the late twelfth century. As part of this process, the specific language of the *genos* achieved near-codification (both in the use of the term itself and in the language associated with

---

[1] Th. Détorakis and J. Mossay, eds., "Un office byzantin inédit pour ceux qui sont morts à la guerre, dans le Cod. Sin. Gr. 734-735," *Le Muséon* 101 (1988), p.204, lines 315-16.

it), even if there always remained a certain flexibility in the vocabulary for the singular kin group (i.e. "the family"). The chapter will also demonstrate that the use of the term *genos* to designate both ethnic groups and kin groups was not a meaningless correlation. Instead, there was a certain degree of conceptual overlap among the different uses (on different scales) of the concept of the *genos*, which carried real significance, especially concerning the *genos* as an identity-set and as the locus of primary loyalties. The *genos*, on whatever scale, appears as the strongest and most meaningful marker of group solidarity and collective identity in medieval Byzantine sources. More broadly, this chapter takes the position that changes in the vocabulary of kinship are indicative of broader social and cultural changes.

The analysis of the vocabulary of kinship has long been used as a tool in anthropology, in particular for determining variations in kinship systems and the relative importance of various kinship distinctions.[2] In these studies, the language of kinship is usually divided into two categories: forms of address and terms of reference.[3] The subject of this chapter is the latter.[4] The space of a single chapter is not nearly sufficient for a comprehensive discussion of the entire range of the vocabulary of kinship in medieval Byzantine Greek, and this chapter accordingly makes no claims to total coverage in this sense. More general overviews may be found in several books and published articles, most notably by Évelyne Patlagean.[5]

---

[2] Jérôme Wilgaux, "Les évolutions du vocabulaire grec de la parenté," in *Parenté et société dans le monde grec de l'Antiquité à l'âge moderne. Colloque international, Volos (Grèce), 19-20-21 Juin 2003*, ed. Alain Bresson, Marie-Paule Masson, Stavros Perentidis, and Jérôme Wilgaux (Bordeaux : Diffusion de Boccard, 2006), pp.209-34. Referring to questions about the correspondence between vocabulary and social, cultural, or political realities or that between linguistic and socio-cultural change, Wilgaux states: "Ces questions ont joué un role essential dans l'histoire de l'anthropologie de la parenté…" (p.209).

[3] Wilgaux, "Les évolutions du vocabulaire grec de la parenté," p.210.

[4] For an excellent study of Byzantine forms of address, a topic that deserves even more attention, see: Michael Grünbart, *Formen der Anrede in byzantinischen Briefe vom 6. bis zum 12. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: VÖAW, 2005).

[5] Évelyne Patlagean, "Les débuts d'une aristocratie byzantine et le témoignage de l'historiographie: système des noms et liens de parenté aux IXe-Xe siècles," in *The Byzantine Aristocracy : IX to XIII Centuries*, ed. M. Angold (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1984), pp.23-43; eiusdem, "Families and Kinships in Byzantium, " in *A History*

The tenth and eleventh centuries were marked by important changes in the vocabulary of kinship employed by the sources.[6] It has been remarked that the tenth and eleventh centuries witnessed the language of kinship becoming much more precise than it had previously been, while authors also display much more interest in recording kin relations in their works, whether using older or newer vocabulary to do so. The language of adoption and even baptism became more firmly linked in language and significance, while affinal relationships gained new vocabulary to reflect their growing significance in marriage alliances and social relations.[7] Importantly, the *genos* and its related vocabulary appears with much greater frequency as the period covered here progresses, in many cases taking precedence over other forms of 'the family.' At the same time, a specific vocabulary for describing the *genos* came to be widely recognized and utilized, with certain sets of assumptions and valuations encoded within it.

In the previous chapter, the potentially misleading translations of the Byzantine word *genos* into a broad assortment of modern terms has already been suggested. Gerhard Lubich's study of kinship terminology in western medieval sources, mostly from Carolingian and Ottonian Europe, has shown not only the negative, obfuscating effects of assigning modern terms and their concomitant associations with certain sets of behavioral assumptions and associations to medieval concepts of kinship in their various forms, his work has also demonstrated that it is possible to use a close analysis of this particularly medieval vocabulary of kinship on its own terms in order to produce a nuanced picture of political, social, and cultural change.[8] Lubich

of the Family, vol. 1: Distant Worlds, Ancient Worlds, eds. Burguière, Klapisch-Zuber, Segalen, and Zonabend (The Belknap Press of Harvard U Press: Cambridge, MA, 1996); eiusdem, *Un Moyen Âge grec: Byzance IXe-XVe siècle* (Paris: Édition Albin Michel, 2007), esp. pp.83-163; Wilgaux, "Les évolutions du vocabulaire grec de la parenté."

[6] Ruth Macrides, "Families and Kinship," in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, ed. E. Jeffreys, J.F. Haldon, and R. Cormack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.652-60.

[7] Macrides, "Families and Kinship," pp.653-4.

[8] Gerhard Lubich, *Verwandtsein: Lesarten einer politisch-sozialen Beziehung im Frühmittelalter (6.-11. Jahrhundert)* (Cologne, Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2008).

himself frames his study in the following way: "Besteht eine grundsätzlich andere Begrifflichkeit des Mittelalters, die mit dem Terminus 'Verwandtschaft' (und all ihren Konnotationen) unvollständig oder gar fehlerhaft interpretierend übersetzt wird? Und: Wird dadurch nicht die Struktur eines der bedeutendsten Bindungsmechanismen von Personengruppen im Früh- und Hochmittelalter grundlegend verkannt?"[9] His answer to both is an unequivocal 'yes.'

Difficulties and Issues with the Linguistic Approach

A linguistic approach to Byzantine sources is admittedly fraught with difficulties. While both the written and the spoken language (or languages) changed over time, and while this change almost certainly reflected other social and/or cultural shifts, there were numerous other influences and phenomena that serve to mask the precise relationship between linguistic and socio-cultural change in a Byzantine context. Byzantine authors, for example, were heavily influenced by ancient Greek texts emanating especially from classical Athens and imperial Rome. This influence was largely responsible for the diglossia that existed throughout Byzantium's existence, in which the written word often differed considerably from the spoken Greek used in daily interactions.[10] Biblical and patristic literature looms large as well throughout the Byzantine epoch.

---

[9] Lubich, *Verwandtsein*, p.11. "Does there exist a fundamentally different terminology of the Middle Ages, whose interpretation is incomplete or even flawed when translated with the term 'kinship' (and all its connotations)? And, is not the structure of one of the most meaningful bonding mechanisms of social groups in the early and high Middle Ages thereby fundamentally misunderstood?"

[10] In Byzantium, it is probably more accurate to speak of a polyglossia rather than a diglossia. At any point in time, especially from the mid-eleventh century and into the twelfth, written sources could display a number of characteristics more or less influenced by Attic Greek and/or biblical Koine. It is perhaps better to imagine the written language on a sliding scale between the spoken demotic Greek on one end and Attic (or even Homeric) Greek on the other.

Patristic, biblical, and ancient literature indeed exerted a strong influence on the choice of vocabulary in surviving written sources, sometimes explaining otherwise odd vocabulary. For example, Niketas Choniates, in one of his late twelfth-century orations to Isaac II Angelos, refers to the Vlachs as a "faithless and unfaithful [to God] people (*genea*)."[11] The use of *genea* to refer to a nation or people is somewhat unusual, even if the same term is frequently used as a synonym for *genos* as family or kin group. Yet, as Van Dieten, the editor of Choniates' text, himself points out, the phrase is a purposeful reference to Luke 9:41 (ὦ γενεὰ ἄπιστος καὶ διεστραμμένη) and Matthew 12:39 (γενεὰ πονηρὰ καὶ μοιχαλίς). Choniates' somewhat unusual word choice does not, in this instance, indicate a cultural shift in the use of the term *genea*.

One need not look far in medieval Byzantine sources for evidence of the pervasive influence more ancient Greek and Roman literature had on its content, including vocabulary. The active use of the term *adelphidous* (ἀδελφιδοῦς) to indicate a nephew was, in fact, largely abandoned in the spoken language of the middle and late Byzantine periods (ca. tenth century and later) in favor of *anepsios* (ἀνεψιός).[12] *Adelphidous* and similar forms, however, continued to be found in Byzantine writing throughout the tenth through twelfth centuries, especially during the Komnenian period (ca. 1081-1185).[13] This most likely reflects the greater influence of Attic Greek and classical literature on the learned, written language at this time. Phrases denoting ideas of the foundation or founders of a *genos* also display clear dependence on more ancient precedents.[14]

---

[11] Oration 1 in *Nicetae Choniatae Orationes et Epistulae*, ed. Van Dieten (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1972) p.9. "...ἡ ἄπιστος αὕτη καὶ μοιχαλὶς γενεά..."

[12] Wilgaux, "Les évolutions du vocabulaire grec de la parenté," p.231.

[13] The word appears at least six times in Niketas Choniates' *History*, for example. See *Nicetae Choniatae Historia*, ed. van Dieten (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1975).

[14] For more on this, see below.

The influence of classical Greek or Roman literature could also affect Byzantine culture and values, at least inasmuch as they were expressed in writing. Leonora Neville, for example, has noted a 'return' to classical Roman values expressed in the historical writings of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries (in her case, Nikephoros Bryennios' *Material for History*). She contends that some of the 'family values' seen in Bryennios' history may, in fact, be little more than literary models borrowed from the Roman sources he had at his disposal. Could the tendency to describe Byzantine *genē* in the twelfth century using ancient language have had a similar effect on the value system associated with the kin group? Certainly it is impossible to argue for the unbroken continuity of these social structures, but the Byzantine authors who utilized the term, on whose works modern scholars rely to ascertain the social and cultural significance attached to it, may well have been influenced by what they read about the Greco-Roman past.

It is also a fact of Byzantine literature, especially in the mid-twelfth century and later, that many authors prided themselves on the concoction of new terms, which might in turn be borrowed by other, later authors, ostensibly out of admiration. In such cases, uniqueness and creativity could actually be admirable qualities in an otherwise very conservative literary and rhetorical tradition.[15] In some cases at least, the vocabulary choices made by Byzantine authors to denote the family group or ties of kinship seem largely to have been dictated by rhetorical concerns, especially *variatio* and *etho-* or *prosopopoiia*.

The conventions of Greek rhetoric and rhetorical training deeply affected the language of medieval Byzantine sources. One scholar has described this influence as follows. "Byzantine

---

[15] Erich Trapp, "The role of vocabulary in Byzantine rhetoric as a stylistic device," in *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys (Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), pp.137-49; see esp. pp.138-9.

rhetorical education promoted a series of forms belonging unusually far in the past, while contemporary Greek speech was avoided with unusual strictness; in its insistence on the use of the right linguistic register for each subject and occasion, and its archaic approach to the definition of 'right,' it was more successful than most comparative structures in defying the passage of time, thus organizing Byzantine Greek literature as if the Greek language had not changed for many centuries."[16]

Byzantine sources likewise display a certain creativity in their employment and, indeed, combination of kinship designations. So, in an inscription from the twelfth century, the grand hetaireiarch George Palaiologos claimed to be the descendant of the Doukai and Komnenoi by styling himself the descendant of *autokratoreggonoi*, literally "imperial grandsons" (ἐκ Κομνηνοδουκῶν αὐτοκρατορεγγόνων).[17] A thorough scouring of the many sources produced in the two and a half centuries covered by this study would produce a dizzying array of such creative combinations, and a comprehensive review of this kind of evidence is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Finally, the twelfth century also witnessed the beginnings of some literature in the vernacular (or closer to the vernacular) in Byzantium, especially in poetry.[18] The earliest surviving versions of the tale of *Digenes Akrites* (dating to the early twelfth century) preserve a curious mixture of forms, syntax, and vocabulary that includes both remarkably modern elements

---

[16]Michael Jeffreys, "Rhetorical Texts," in *Rhetoric in Byzantium. Papers from the Thirty-fifth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Exeter College, University of Oxford, March 2001*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys (Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), p.89.

[17] Paris Gounaridis, "Constitution d'une généalogie à Byzance," in *Parenté et société dans le monde grec de l'Antiquité à l'âge moderne. Colloque international, Volos (Grèce), 19-20-21 Juin 2003* (2006), p.275; Nicolas Oikonomidès "Pictorial propaganda in XIIth c. Constantinople." *Glas 390 de l'Académie serbe des sciences et des arts. Classe des sciences historiques* 11 (Belgrade, 2001), pp.93-102.

[18] Alexander Kazhdan and Ann Wharton Epstein, Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp.83-6; Erich Trapp, "Learned and Vernacular Literature in Byzantium: Dichotomy or Symbiosis?" *DOP* 47 (1993): pp.115-29.

alongside decidedly Homeric terms.[19] This development, which arguably affected the range of linguistic options available to Byzantine writers, further muddies our image of linguistic change over time.

All of these factors serve to complicate the study of the Byzantine language of kinship, especially one that attempts to draw correlations between linguistic and social or cultural change more broadly. Still, such obstacles are not insurmountable, and despite the apparent difficulties, there is much to learn from a close examination of the language used by surviving sources.

Overview of the Byzantine Vocabulary of Kinship and Linguistic Change

Linguistic change, like social change associated with kinship structures, tends to be slow. Significant change did occur in the Greek vocabulary for kinship over the course of the Byzantine millennium, but it was neither sudden nor revolutionary. Be that as it may, the period under investigation here, in particular the tenth and eleventh centuries, witnessed rather more rapid and significant change than almost any other in Byzantine history.

Jérôme Wilgaux has argued that the most formative period of change in the vocabulary of kinship in the Greek language in fact occurred between the first and third centuries of our era, well before the period under consideration here.[20] At the same time, however, Wilgaux demarcates the tenth through twelfth centuries in Byzantium and identifies it as a crucial period in itself, marking a certain break with the Late Antique and early medieval periods of linguistic development. Certainly by the eleventh century, though probably earlier, Byzantine society had

---

[19] Elizabeth Jeffreys, ed. and trans., *Digenis Akritis: The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.xli-lvi, passim.
[20] Wilgaux, "Les évolutions du vocabulaire grec de la parenté," p.211-12.

at its disposal a complex vocabulary for kinship that could account for relations (consanguineous at least) out to the eighth degree of kinship (following Romano-Byzantine reckoning).[21] Many such terms for more distant relatives, especially collateral relatives beyond second cousins, rarely appear in sources outside of a legal context, but they existed nonetheless.

For Wilgaux, who has studied the vocabulary of kinship in the Greek language from Homer through the modern era, the dominant feature of this vocabulary is stability. Change occurred largely among the indicators of more distant relatives, especially collateral.[22] Specifically, Wilgaux identifies two important shifts over the nearly three millennia covered by his study: the loss of bifurcation (taking account of the sex of the intervening relative between Ego and Alter) and the evolution of the term *anepsios* (ἀνεψιός), which lost its sense as "cousin" (alongside other changes in the designation of nephew/niece and cousin). He also notes the relatively fluid and changeable nature of terms for affinity and more generic indicators of kinship (e.g. the numerous methods of designating one a "kinsman").[23] In the period under investigation here, two additional themes can be identified: the addition of new designators for affinal relationships that tend to emphasize the alliance among *genē* created by marriage and the proliferation (and, in some cases, invention) of various terms that seem to indicate a certain emphasis on the sibling bond and on shared blood through the use of such terms as *homaimon* or *synaimos* to signify consanguineous kin, usually siblings.[24] This is, of course, in addition to

---

[21] See chapter two for a discussion of degrees of kinship. For a list of these technical, largely legal terms, see Wilgaux, "Les évolutions du vocabulaire grec de la parenté," pp.232-3. The eighth degree of consanguinity is the equivalent of third cousins, which is *trisexadelphos* (τρισεξάδελφος) in medieval Byzantine reckoning.

[22] Wilgaux, "Les évolutions du vocabulaire grec de la parenté," p.217.

[23] Ibid. Wilgaux does not offer much detail on the last case (generic terms and terms for affinity), "dont l'étude est plus délicate, car le sens des termes employés ne peut toujours être retrouvé avec précision."

[24] Examples of this phenomenon include the increased employment of *autadelphos*, as distinguished from *adelphos*, which was being used as a form of address among friends and monks, to indicate biological siblings, the appearance of *gynaik-* and *andradelphos* to indicate a brother-in-law, and the preference for *exadelphos* (rather than *anepsios*) to express "cousin."

perhaps the most notable trend in the language of kinship from the mid-tenth century onward, represented by the use of the term *genos* itself. In general, there is marked increase in the attention paid to relationships of kinship in sources of all kinds and an ever greater precision in the indication of these relationships.[25]

In the Byzantine period, bifurcation was technically maintained only in the vocabulary of affinity (e.g. *gynaik-/andradelphos*, γυναικ-/ἀνδράδελφος, both indicating a brother-in-law, depending on whether it is the brother of one's husband or of one's wife). By the modern age, it has more or less completely disappeared from the Greek language.[26] A similar phenomenon is probably behind the disappearance of the term *adelphidous*, in favor of *anepsios*, over the Roman and Byzantine periods. As Wilgaux states, "il n'a pas paru nécessaire de distinguer les deux types de neveux."[27] Wilgaux, however, includes Homeric phrases like "my father's father" or "my mother's father" as evidence of bifurcation. Following this argument, he seems to underestimate the degree to which this type of (periphrastic) differentiation re-entered the Greek vocabulary in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

The presence or absence of bifurcation in kinship terminology has been widely viewed as a significant indicator of kinship structures and the social and cultural role of family in a given

---

[25] Évelyne Patlagean, "Families and Kinships in Byzantium," in Burguière, Klapisch-Zuber, Segalen, Zonabend, eds., *A History of the Family, vol. 1: Distant Worlds, Ancient Worlds* (The Belknap Press of Harvard U Press: Cambridge, MA, 1996), pp.467-88, esp. p.472. "From the ninth or tenth century onwards, the vocabulary of kinship became more precise than was required by canonical prohibitions. Historiographers went further along this way than did the tax records of rural households, because they had to explain the political role of kindreds near the throne. They reveal the part played by the *gambros*, the 'wife-taker', husband of the sister or daughter of an 'Ego-man,' as distinguished from the other brothers-in-law, the wife's brother (*gynaikadelphos*) and husband's brother (*andradelphos*). They introduce new words such as *sympentheroi* (wife's and husband's fathers), and more rarely *syngambroi* (husbands of two sisters)."

[26] Wilgaux, "Les évolutions du vocabulaire grec de la parenté," p.219. Wilgaux views the progression of this process, once started, as nearly inevitable.

[27] Wilgaux, "Les évolutions du vocabulaire grec de la parenté," p.220. "It did not seem necessary to distinguish the two types of nephews."

society. The lack of bifurcation in Byzantine Greek is thus notable, if not exactly exceptional among Indo-European languages of the medieval period. It suggests, for example, that the role of one's maternal uncle, which is important in many cultures (the avuncular relationship), was not especially significant in Byzantium. As Barbara Hill indicates, "The all-important role of mother's brother does not seem to function in Byzantium. There may have been a role for him, but it does not appear in the sources. All uncles...were identified by the term *theios*...A brother-in-law was a *gambros* whether he was a wife's brother or a sister's husband. The same term was used for son-in-law, which suggests that generation was not stressed either."[28] Following Hill's argument, "This suggests the lack of clearly defined groups which intermarry."[29]

Although medieval Greek lacked bifurcation in its technical sense, sources from the eleventh century onward display an ever increasing interest in indicating individuals' family relations, including specifying the ways in which one individual was related to another (or to a family as a whole). Descent through the female line was not necessarily viewed as identical or as having the same legitimacy as that through the male line, at least among some Byzantines.[30] Thus, just as the lack of bifurcation in the terms used for nephews might indicate a lack of social or cultural consequences stemming from the sex of the intermediate generation between Ego and his/her nephew, so too might this greater interest in specifying the precise line through which an individual was related to another, either through ancestry, collateral kinship, or affinity, be viewed as an indication that such information had gained some form of renewed significance, whether socially, culturally, or both.

---

[28] Barbara Hill, *Imperial Women in Byzantium 1025-1204: Power, Patronage and Ideology* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 1999), pp.137-8.
[29] Ibid.
[30] This is covered more fully in chapter four.

Already by the tenth century, *exadelphos* (ἐξάδελφος) had largely replaced the classical *anepsios* as denoting a cousin, even if various, ancient alternatives continue to appear into the twelfth century and later.[31] Such alterations in the vocabulary of kinship, however slight, nevertheless highlight the central place of the sibling bond when expressing other forms of kinship. This contention is supported by the increase in terminology highlighting shared ties of blood among siblings in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[32] Monastic language of brotherhood and the motif of brotherhood within semi-ritualized friendship, much older phenomena than most of the other linguistic changes described here, are further proof of the central role played by the sibling bond in Byzantine society.

Many of the additions to the medieval Greek vocabulary of kinship deal with affinity, i.e. kinship through marriage. This may be related to the increasingly political nature of marriage, particularly among the aristocracy, as marriages within the social elite took on an ever greater importance as solidifiers of inter-familial alliances.[33] It may also be related to a more general interest in greater specificity in kinship designations as one moves further into the eleventh and, especially, the twelfth century. If affinal relationships were viewed as more instrumental in the web of social and political bonds in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, there was a concomitant interest in specifying the precise nature of an individual's relationship to another (relatives "on the mother's" or "father's side," my wife's brother, my sister's husband, etc.). This pattern held true for both consanguineous and affinal kin.

---

[31] E.g. Kekaumenos, p.95, in *Raccomandazioni e consigli di un galantuomo*, ed. M.D. Spadaro (Alessandria, Italy: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998), pp.44-242.

[32] For more on this, see below (p.80) and chapter four of this dissertation.

[33] Angeliki Laiou, *Mariage, amour et parenté à Byzance aux XIe-XIIIe siècles* (Paris: de Boccard, 1992); Ruth Macrides, "Dynastic marriages and political kinship," in *Byzantine Diplomacy*, ed. Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1992), pp.263-80.

Pentheros (πένθερος), meaning father-in-law, was not an innovation of the tenth or eleventh century, but the related term *sympentheros* (συμπένθερος, "co-father-in-law") seems to have been something new. *Gambros* (γάμβρος, "brother-" or "son-in-law"), like *pentheros*, is an extremely ancient Greek word, certainly not an invention of the tenth century or later; *syggambros* (σύγγαμβρος), however, denoting "co-brothers-in-law," seems to be.[34] The term *syggambros* was often associated with the idea of *trigeneia*, that is, it would be used to designate two men from two different families who had married two sisters (hence uniting three independent families). It acquired a certain title-like significance under the Komnenoi, as did many other kinship designations, thanks to the administrative reforms of Alexios I and his successors.[35] Even if it was not a complete innovation, the terms certainly appear with more frequency in this period than in earlier ones.

Trigeneia (τριγένεια), though rare outside of legal texts, is another innovation (or potentially a reintroduction) in the language of affinity in the late tenth and eleventh centuries. In Byzantine law, *trigeneia* referred to the relationship shared by three separate families (τρία γένη), through the marriages of two siblings. The term, again in the law, could be used for any situation in which two families have created affinity with a third, including cases in which an individual marries for a second time.[36] The situation created by such unions of three families and the marriage impediments resulting from them were an issue for debate taken up, once again, by

---

[34] Though far from perfect evidence, a search using the online database of the *Thesaurus Lingaue Graecae* (performed 5/27/15) produced no instances earlier than the mid-tenth-century *Souda* (https://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/index.prev.php).

[35] Lucien Stiernon, "Notes de titulature et de prosopographie byzantine. Sébaste et Gambros," *REB* 23 (1965), pp.222-43.

[36] Constantin G. Pitsakis, "Parenté en dehors de la parenté : formes de parenté d'origine extra-législative en droit byzantin et post-byzantin," in Alain Bresson, Marie-Paule Masson, Stavros Perentidis, and Jérôme Wilgaux, eds. *Parenté et société dans le monde grec de l'Antiquité à l'âge moderne. Colloque international, Volos (Grèce), 19-20-21 Juin 2003* (Bordeaux : Diffusion de Boccard, 2006), p.316 : « …le lien entre les membres de 'trois familles' (τρία γένη), par opposition à l'affinité elle-même, qui est un lien entre 'deux familles,' une *digeneia* (δύο γένη). »

the circle of jurists around Eustathios Romaios in the mid-eleventh century.[37] *Trigeneia*, like many of designations for affinal kin, became particularly important under the Komnenoi (especially under Manuel I), when it was incorporated into the system of precedence and title at the imperial court.[38]

Though generally few in number, many of the true neologisms that appear in the tenth through twelfth centuries (*sympentheros*, *syggambros*, and perhaps *trigeneia*) suggest a greater emphasis on collaboration between two or more parties representing two or more separate families. The very fact of needing (or choosing) to utilize a separate word to indicate the shared interests between two or more groups, which were quite obviously understood as *genē*, suggests not only a great level of cooperation, or expected cooperation, among *genē* tied through marriage, it also argues for a high degree of cooperation and shared interests within each respective *genos*. In fact, the same period (tenth through twelfth centuries) also witnessed an increased frequency with which marriage itself was termed, literally, an "alliance."[39]

The Greek language, in any period for which written record survives, never distinguished between as many different relatives as some languages and cultures. Still, in eleventh and twelfth-century Byzantium, a greater interest in kinship and a larger number of distinctions are clearly visible in the sources. A shifting emphasis over the long term tends to favor generational distinctions over others, with a special focus on the sibling relationship (e.g. the replacement of *anepsios* with *exadelphos* to designate cousins). While few, if any of these terms can rightly be deemed neologisms invented in this period of Byzantium (indeed, their origins lie in antiquity), it

---

[37] Ibid.

[38] Stiernon, "Notes de titulature et de prosopographie byzantine."

[39] Patlagean, "Les débuts d'une aristocratie byzantine," p.33. The most common Greek term for this idea is γαμικὴ συνάλλαγμα.

cannot be denied that they received renewed attention over the course of the tenth through twelfth centuries.

In the tenth through twelfth centuries, fewer changes or additions can be detected in kinship designations of the type studied by Wilgaux than in the first few centuries of the Common Era, with the possible exception of certain affinity designations. Some terms, ancient in origin (as indeed was *genos* itself) did re-enter the Byzantine vocabulary with renewed vigor or with slightly altered meanings in the period as well, notably *homaimon* or *synaimos*. Instead, the changes include the broader and more frequent utilization of existing vocabulary to specify relationships with a greater degree of precision and with greater frequency. Additionally, as the sections below will show, a kind of vocabulary for discussing and describing the (extended) family as a unit, i.e. the *genos*, achieved some degree of codification precisely in this period (tenth through twelfth centuries). Subtle linguistic changes like these further argue for the growing significance of the *genos* and the assumption of shared interests and cohesion within it.

Genos: Frequency of Appearance Over Time

An important aspect of the changes in the vocabulary of kinship in the medieval period, and the one most relevant to this study, involved the employment of the term *genos* itself. In the words of Évelyne Patlagean, in the tenth and eleventh centuries, "[b]elonging to a long-established lineage became a claim to distinction and merit. The words *eugenēs* (well-born) and *gonika* (heritage) were permanent, but the old word *genos* returns triumphantly to all kinds of narrative, in the medieval sense of 'kin-group' or 'lineage,' sometimes accompanied by a

genealogy going back three generations."[40] Elsewhere, Patlagean has noted that, already in the tenth-century chronicle known as *Theophanes Continuatus*, older traditions of nicknaming and personal epithets continued alongside a noticeable increase in mentions of family (*genos*) affiliations and a greater interest in lineage (following Patlagean's argument, represented by the words *genos*, *genea*, and/or *seira*).[41] The claim that the word *genos* "returned" is perhaps a slight exaggeration (it never really disappeared from the Greek vocabulary), but there is no doubt that it quickly achieved a status within the Byzantine vocabulary that it had not previously enjoyed. Thanks to the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* online database, such statements can be put to the test quantitatively.

The tables below display the comparative frequency with which the term *genos* appears in a selection of texts from the period covered by this study. Table 1 lists each text with the number of occurrences of the term *genos* per 10,000 words, while Table 2 offers a visualization of the same material in a bar graph. In an effort to yield as few variables as possible, the texts included here have been limited to chronicles and histories produced between the ninth and early thirteenth centuries. The list of texts, thirteen in all, is not exhaustive. Rather, it is meant to offer a small sample suggestive of larger trends. This is, of course, an imperfect model, as chroniclers in the ninth century had very different aims and employed very different styles than did historians of the twelfth or thirteenth century. Still, the fact that such texts tend to be lengthy (thus producing a high volume of words through which to sift) and to have certain features that are broadly consistent, the comparison seems worthy of investigation.

---

[40] Patlagean, "Families and Kinships in Byzantium," p.472.
[41] Patlagean, "Les débuts d'une aristocratie byzantine," p.30.

Text	Appearance of *genos*/10,000 words
Theophanes, *Chronographia* (early ninth cent.)	2.7
George the Monk, *Chronographia* (early ninth cent.)	4
Theophanes Continuatus (mid-tenth cent.)	3.1
Symeon Logothetes, *Chronographia* (mid-tenth cent.)	3.5
Leo the Deacon, *History* (ca. 1000)	3.8
Michael Psellos, *Chronographia* (1070s or early 1080s)	14.3
John Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories* (late eleventh cent.)	6.1
Skylitzes Continuatus (late eleventh cent.)	5.9
Michael Attaleiates, *History* (late eleventh cent.)	8.6
Nikephoros Bryennios, *Material for History* (twelfth cent.)	7.6
Anna Komnene, *Alexiad* (mid-twelfth cent.)	4.5
John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Komnenos* (late twelfth cent.)	6.3
Niketas Choniates, *Annals* (early thirteenth cent.)	11.2

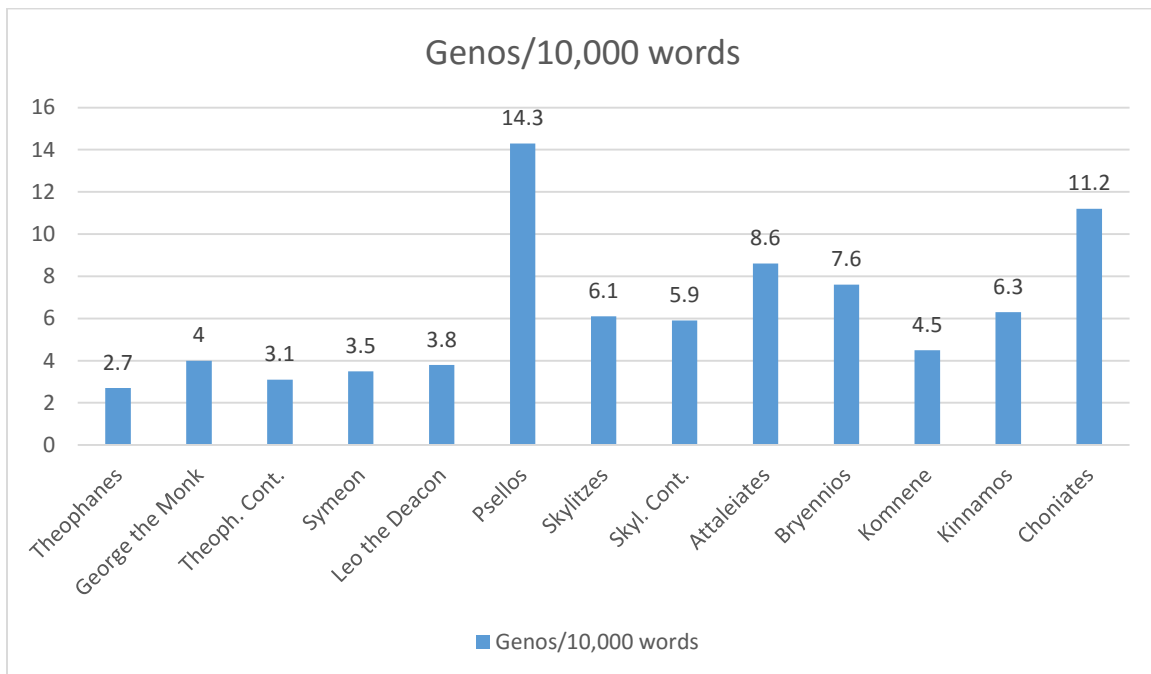Table 1: Frequency of Appearance of *Genos* in Historical Narratives

Table 2: Frequency of Appearance of *Genos* in Historical Narratives

Such findings are, of course, rather imprecise and cannot offer anything more than a general impression of linguistic change. Given the large number of synonyms used by the sources to indicate the *genos*-family (e.g. *genea*, *phylon*, *phamilia*, even *oikos*) and the multiple uses to which the term '*genos'* itself was put, it would be a mistake to read too much into the numbers given. Still, the impression given by this evidence supports the contention that the *genos*, both as a concept and as an influential social unit, gradually moved to the forefront of Byzantine consciousness over the course of the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, with a significant increase visible between the beginning of the eleventh century and its end. In fact, when one begins to analyze the individual uses of the term within each of the texts cited here, the differences between eighth- or ninth-century chronicles and histories written in the late eleventh or twelfth centuries become even more marked.

When not used to refer to family groups, *genos* appears most often in passages relating to various ethnic groups, especially Jews and various Jewish tribes. This is true, for example, in the chronicles of Theophanes and George the Monk, where there are perhaps more appearances of the term in this sense than in any other.[42] In these texts, *genos* is rarely employed to indicate a family or kin group. In Niketas Choniates' *Annals*, on the other hand, nearly every appearance of the term is as an indicator of kinship or ancestry.

The unusually high number of appearances of the term in Michael Psellos' *Chronographia* is partially due to the author's personal style, favoring the use of the word not only to indicate aristocratic lineages, but also to denote things like political factions. He famously uses the phrase *politikon genos* to refer to the civil bureaucracy and/or guilds of

---

[42] Both chroniclers cover the history of the world beginning with creation. Thus, large sections of both chronicles utilize biblical (Old Testament) sources and borrow from the vocabulary of the Greek Septuagint, which explains several of their uses of the term *genos*.

Constantinople, which he then contrasted with those individuals and families who made up the "senatorial" class.[43] Elsewhere, in one of his letters, Psellos again contrasts the *politikon genos* with the Scythians as nomads: "For Scythian nomads differ from the political *genos*, and island-dwellers are not closely related to those on the mainland; as their homes are in different regions, so they display different customs of the inhabitants."[44] Psellos here, like Porphyry of Tyre and Nikephoros Blemmydes in their philosophies, blurs the line between *genos* as kin group and *genos* as a kind of ethnic or national group or even as a social order with no genealogical links whatsoever.

The timeline suggested by these data for the increasing use of the term *genos* in narrative sources corresponds with the appearance of family names in the same or similar sources, which should not be surprising.[45] The growing frequency in the appearance of surnames from the late tenth and eleventh centuries and the increasing amount of detail given regarding an individual's relation to particular *genos* (including the use of the term *genos* itself) on lead seals reflects contemporary practices found in other written sources, indicative of the development of the aristocratic *genos* into the form of "the family" of most social and cultural relevance. Histories and chronicles written in the mid-tenth and early eleventh centuries (e.g. Theophanes Continuatus and Leo the Deacon) only give surnames for a fraction of the persons introduced into the narrative. Theophanes in his chronicle names 97 persons "without a second name, and

---

[43]Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, II.146, 138; Paul Magdalino, "Justice and Finance in the Byzantine State," in Law and Society in Byzantium, Ninth-Twelfth Centuries, ed. A. Laiou and D. Simon (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994), p.95.

[44] K.N. Sathas, Μεσαιωνικὴ βιβλιοθήκη ἢ Συλλογὴ ἀνεκδότων μνημείων τῆς ἑλληνικῆς ἱστορίας (Venice: Τύποις του φοινικός, 1876), Vol. V, p.515 (no. 208). Σκύθαι μὲν γὰρ Νομάδες τοῦ πολιτικοῦ γένους ἀπηλλοτρίωνται, καὶ τοῖς ἠπειρώταις οἱ νησιῶται οὐ πάνυ προσήκουσιν, αἵ τε διάφοροι τῶν κλιμάτων οἰκήσεις, ἀλλοτρίας τῶν οἰκητόρων τὰς γνώμας ἀποδιδόασιν. Psellos is also known to have used the term to categorize the five different kinds of philosophy.

[45] See the previous chapter for more details.

only 22 individuals...with an additional name (surname)." By comparison, in Niketas Choniates' history, written almost four centuries later, "only 23 names are not followed by the surname...105 people are specified in Choniates by double names, and their surnames are not individual sobriquets but solidly established names of lineages..."[46] The kind of aristocratic kin group represented by the *genos* or its synonyms makes infrequent appearances in these earlier works, and, even then, the vocabulary for this kind of kin group is inconsistent, suggesting that the authors are perhaps unsure of how to describe them or the relative novelty of this specific kind of family organization.

Narratives of the mid- to late eleventh and early twelfth century (e.g. Michael Attaleiates, Anna Komnene, Nikephoros Bryennios) appear much more concerned with each of their characters' family background, often giving the reader not only a surname but also a brief commentary on various qualities associated with that family or notable ancestors. By the close of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth century (e.g. John Kinnamos and Niketas Choniates), scarcely a single actor appears without a surname, and descriptions of an individual's family and relation with notable ancestors and contemporaries can be quite lengthy indeed. Not only has the vocabulary of the *genos* become solidified, but an entire repertoire of stock phrases and tropes used to describe these aristocratic *genē* has clearly taken shape, drawing especially from older language for ethnicity and royal/imperial dynasties.

Inscriptions on lead seals, especially those from the twelfth century, display some of the same tendencies in their language. Most notably, this includes not only the increasing frequency of the appearance of the term *genos* and/or reference to a family name, but also the predilection

---

[46] Alexander Kazhdan, "The Formation of Byzantine Family Names in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries." *Byzantinoslavica* 58 (1997): p. 94.

to differentiate between kinship on the mother's or father's side, as well as the frequent use of elaborate modifiers and evocative imagery to describe such families or relatives.[47]

The consistent change in the use of the term *genos* in the legal and theological literature concerning marriage impediments produced in Byzantium between the tenth and the early thirteenth century also displays a similar trend. There is a marked, progressive increase in the frequency with which the *genos* appears over this period, in part because the concept came ever more frequently to replace certain other formulations (e.g. "relative by blood" vs. "relative by *genos*"). Here, too, one finds evidence that the *genos* as kin group was increasing in its social and cultural importance in many spheres of Byzantine society. The evidence quite clearly supports the contention that, over the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the *genos* moved to the center of the Byzantine concept of kinship and its significance.

Synonyms of the *Genos* and Other Forms of "Family"

Even if the *genos* generally overtook other forms of the family in the sources, a surprising variety of terms continued to be used as (near-)synonyms throughout the medieval period. *Genea* (γενεὰ) appears most commonly as a synonym of the *genos*, though *oikos* (household) and *syggeneia* (kinship), slightly different in meaning and connotations, are employed even more often. The variety of terms used by Byzantine authors to denote the *genos* includes a significant number of apparent borrowings from classical Greek (especially Athenian) concepts, in which

---

[47] For some representative samples of such language as it appears on surviving lead seals, see: V. Laurent, *Les bulles métriques dans la sigillographie byzantine* (Athens: Estia,1932); Michael Grünbart, *Inszenierung und Repräsentation der byzantinischen Aristokratie vom 10. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert* (Münster: Wilhelm Fink, 2015), pp.46-51 (Appendix 2.7).

the *genos* itself is, of course, included. Other such words appearing in the sources include *phylon*, *phratrē*, and even *dēmos*.[48]

The most common designator for 'the family' in Byzantine sources is undoubtedly the *oikos*, or "household."[49] While the difference is not clear in every case, most often the Byzantine sources make a distinction between the *genos* and its synonyms on the one hand and the *oikos*/household on the other. The *oikos* typically consisted of the nuclear family and any number of servants, slaves, and other hangers-on (often referred to simply as one's "men," ἄνθρωποι), and it served as the basic social and economic unit in Byzantium.[50]

Perhaps the clearest difference between *oikos* and *genos* is that the former would include members of the household not bound to the head of the household through biological kinship (i.e. slaves, servants, 'men,' and other hangers-on). This, however, assumes a level of differentiation and specificity not always evident in the sources. In some contexts, especially in later sources, it is safe to assume that the sources use terms like *genos*, *oikos*, *phamilia*, or other variants quite interchangeably and without any real difference in meaning.

Syggeneia (συγγένεια), usually rendered in English as "kinship" itself, is equally common. As the English translation suggests, however, the term is rarely used to designate a

---

[48] For an example of the unusual use of the term *dēmos* to denote a family, see: Stephanos Efthymiadis and J.M. Featherstone, "Establishing a Holy Lineage: Theodore the Stoudite's Funerary Catechism for His Mother (BHG 2422)," in *Theatron: Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter/Rhetorical Culture in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Michael Grünbart (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), p.45 (6).

[49] This fact is largely responsible for the large amount of attention the *oikos* has attracted among modern scholars, as suggested in chapter one.

[50] Paul Magdalino, "The Byzantine Aristocratic Oikos," in *The Byzantine Aristocracy*, ed. Michael Angold, pp.92-105. According to the Byzantine legal tradition, at the age of 25 a (male) individual was considered an independent (tax-paying) adult and the head of his own household, though many children will have married and, perhaps, moved out of their parents' care long before then. The legal age for marriage throughout the eleventh century was 14 for males, 12 for females. Betrothal was legal at age 7. Judging by the amount of attention underage betrothals and marriages receives in the extant sources, particularly from the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, it would seem to have been quite common among the aristocracy to attempt to marry off their children (or at least to arrange their marriage) even younger.

family or kin group per se, meaning it cannot generally be considered a synonym of the *genos* or related concepts.

Prior to the middle of the eleventh century, *genea* (γενεά) seems to have been the preferred (though by no means only) word employed whose meaning and range of uses more or less exactly matches the later use of *genos*. Like *genos*, *genea* could designate a kin group or some larger association of persons or things linked through powerful bonds, often biological. Also like *genos*, *genea* could be used to indicate ties of blood (κατὰ γενεάν), as opposed to other forms of kinship.

Though it had a slightly different range of meanings and uses to which it was put, there are many cases in which *genea* unequivocally appears as a more or less exact equivalent of *genos*.[51] In the mid-tenth century, Symeon the Logothetes uses *genea* when he describes how Emperor Michael III's mother apparently warned him that the future emperor Basil I would be the one "who will destroy our family (or dynasty, γενεὰν ἡμῶν)."[52] Unlike *genos*, *genea* appears as an indication of generation, in addition to its use as a term for the family. Also unlike the *genos*, *genea* was rarely used to refer to nations or ethnic groups (with certain exceptions).

Despite the fact that *genos* eventually overtook *genea* (and other terms) as the preferred method for indicating the kind of kin group that is the focus of this dissertation, *genea* by no means disappeared from the medieval Greek lexicon. In the later eleventh century, for example, Kekaumenos employs the word *genea* to designate both a family group distinct from the

---

[51] For example, in the formula *kata genean* (κατὰ γενεάν), indicating a relationship "by blood." See, for example, Michael Italikos, Ep. 35, in *Michel Italikos: Lettres et discours*, ed. and trans. P. Gautier (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1972). Italikos uses this formulation in a description of those sharing a genos.
See also chapter three of this dissertation for a discussion of the letter's contents.
[52] Symeon (Magister) Logothetes, *History*, ed. Immanuel Bekker, *Theophanes continuatus, Ioannes Caminiata, Symeon Magister, Georgius Monachus continuatus.* CSHB 33 (Bonn, 1838), pp.234.22-235.1. "οὗτός ἐστι, τέκνον μου, ὁ μέλλων τὴν γενεὰν ἡμῶν ἀφανίσαι."

household and, like other Byzantine authors of his time, to express "generation."[53] The former

use makes it appear as a synonym of the *genos*, which is consistent with a number of other

authors, especially those who wrote in the first half of the eleventh century.[54]

The *Strategikon* also contains several instances of the borrowed Latin form *phamilia*

(φαμιλία).[55] Kekaumenos is not alone among Byzantine authors in the eleventh and twelfth

centuries in his use of the term *phamilia*, borrowed from Latin, though he is no clearer than his

contemporaries in its precise meaning.[56] One modern lexicon equates the Greek form *phamilia*

with the indigenous term *genea*,[57] while another defines it simply as "household."[58] In the

Strategikon, it is at least clear that *phamilia* refers to a group of living individuals and does not

include a sense of a longer lineage, as both *genos* and *genea* often do. In general, it seems that,

for Kekaumenos, *phamilia* signifies the nuclear family, perhaps somewhat interchangeable with

oikos but without the additional connotations attached to the latter thanks to its place in

Byzantine law and fiscal policy. Some passages suggest that the term simply encompassed one's

wife and children, but how hard and fast this limit holds remains unclear.[59]

In the Lexicon for the *Hexabiblos aucta*, a compilation of legal terminology with sources

and subjects reaching back into the sixth century, the entry for *phamilia* offers four separate

---

[53] Kekaumenos, ed. Spadaro, pp.96, 170.

[54] Leo the Deacon is an excellent example.

[55] Kekaumenos, ed. Spadaro, pp. 168, 175, 188.

[56] It remains unclear whether the word's presence in the medieval Greek language represents a survival from an earlier era in Roman history or a loan resulting from more recent contact with western Europeans. Kekaumenos' familiarity with the term may reflect his time spent in military service, where Latin borrowings survived with much greater frequency than in other spheres of Byzantine society in the eleventh century.

[57] E.A. Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), p.1134.

[58] G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.1470.

[59] Kekaumenos, ed. Spadaro, p.188.1-6: εἰ δὲ καὶ τὰς γυναῖκας καὶ τὰ τέκνα αὐτῶν εἰσάγωσιν εἴς τι κάστρον τῆς Ῥωμανίας, πρότρεψον εἰσαγαγεῖναὐτάς, πλὴν ἔνδον τοῦ κουλᾶ ἔστωσαν· αὐτοὶ ἔξω ἔστωσαν. καὶ εἴπερ θέλουσιν εἰσέρχεσθαι εἰς τὰς φαμιλίας αὐτῶν, δύο ἢ τρεῖς εἰσερχέσθωσαν· ὁπόταν δὲ αὐτοὶ ἐξέλθωσιν, ἄλλοι πάλιν εἰσερχέσθωσάν σοι.

definitions, most of them from a legal standpoint.[60] *Phamilia* displays four [meanings]: "a thing, as the law states: let a closer kinsman have the *phamilia*. Individuals, as when we might say concerning a patron and freedmen. And commonly for the entire *genos* and concerning those subject to a single individual."[61] The similarities with the *genos* and the general flexibility with which these terms were employed are obvious.

Phylon (φῦλον), like *genos*, could also designate ethnic groups/nations and sex/gender in the medieval period, in addition to being used as a rough synonym for the *genos* as kin group.[62] It seems to have been more common for authors to use the term as an indicator of tribal affiliation, sometimes appearing as a sub-division of a *genos* as ethnic group. Anthony Kaldellis has suggested the *phylon* in some way "suggested 'race,'" which may be a slight exaggeration.[63] He also stresses the term's use as a synonym of ethnos and the possibility of its employment to "designate any category of things regardless of how they were constituted as a group."[64]

The distinction between kin group and ethnic group is not always clear in the term *phylon*. Such use can be found in the *Vita Basilii*, book five of the continuation of Theophanes. Written in the mid-tenth century, it uses both *phatria* and *phylē* to speak of the group of princes who supposedly remained separate, somehow, over several generations in Macedonia, blurring

---

[60] Marie Theres Fögen, *Das Lexikon zur Hexabiblos aucta. Forschungen zur Byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte,* Band 17. (Frankfurt am Main: Löwenklau Gesellschaft, 1990), pp.152-214. The lexicon survives in *Codex Parisinus gr. 1355*, which was compiled around the year 1400.

[61] Fögen, *Das Lexikon zur Hexabiblos aucta*, pp.152-214. Ἡ φαμιλία δηλοῖ δ'· πρᾶγμα, ὡς ὅταν ὁ νόμος λέγῃ· ἐγγύτερος συγγενὴς ἐχέτω τὴν φαμιλίαν. πρόσωπα, ὡς ὅταν λέγωμεν περὶ τοῦ πάτρωνος καὶ τῶν ἀπελευθέρων. καὶ κοινῶς ἐπὶ παντὸς γένους καὶ περὶ τῶν ὑπεξουσίων τοῦ ἑνὸς προσώπου.

[62] For example, in George Tornikes' encomium for Anna Komnene (Jean Darrouzès, ed. and trans., *Georges et Dèmètrios Tornikès: Lettres et discours* (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1970), p.229, lines 21-22: Τὸ γὰρ γυναῖκα, τὴν φύσιν τοῦ ἁπαλοῦ τούτου φύλου...

[63] Most scholars of issues related to the concept of race consider it to be the product of the early modern world. While *phylon* (and *genos*), as understood by medieval Byzantines, might denote some aspects associated with the modern concept of race, it is problematic to evoke the term directly in a Byzantine context.

[64] Anthony Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.87.

the lines between ethnic group and family groups or lineage.[65] In fact, *phylon* appears in a number of instances as a kind of subdivision of *genos* (usually *genos* as nation/people). Constantine VII repeats the words of Herodotus in his treatise *De administrando imperio* when he describes how the "Iberian [i.e. Georgian] *genos*" is a single *genos* divided into several, named tribes (φῦλα).[66] Constantine, or at least his source, stresses the singularity of the *genos* in the passage, despite the many tribes and polities associated with it. This would presumably be done in order to highlight certain attributes (perhaps language, religion, physical or cultural traits) that were common to all of the various 'tribes' named afterward.

Phylon makes a particularly noteworthy appearance in the late tenth-century history of Leo the Deacon. When Leo records what he claims to be the actual text of a letter written by the rebel Bardas Phokas to newly-crowned Emperor John I Tzimiskes in 971, *phylon* (φῦλον) appears as a synonym of *genos*.[67] Significantly, this is the only time this ancient Greek word appears in the entire text of Leo's *History*. This unusual addition may suggest one of two alternatives; either Leo was, in fact, quoting directly from a letter or other pamphlet at his disposal which had been written by Bardas Phokas or a supporter of his cause, or, perhaps more likely, Leo is here using a slight change in his vocabulary as a way of strengthening his rhetorical *ethopoiia*, creating, as it were, the illusion of speaking with another man's voice.

---

[65] *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker, pp.213-16; Gounaridis, "Constitution d'une généalogie à Byzance," p.272.
[66] *De administrando imperio*, 23.5-11, in *De administrando imperio. Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus*, ed. Gyula Moravcsik, trans. Romilly Jenkins, new revised edition (Washington, D.C., 1967): Ταύτης δὲ πολλά φασιν ἔθνη διαιρεῖσθαι, καθάπερ † Ἡρόδοτος † ἐν τῇ ιʹ Τῇ καθ᾽ Ἡρακλέα γέγραφεν ἱστορίᾳ οὕτως• «Τὸ δὲ Ἰβηρικὸν γένος τοῦτο, ὅπερ φημὶ οἰκεῖν τὰ παράλια τοῦ διάπλου, διώρισται ὀνόμασιν ἓν γένος ἐὸν κατὰ φῦλα• πρῶτον μὲν οἱ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐσχάτοις οἰκοῦντες τὰ πρὸς δυσμέων Κύνητες ὀνομάζονται (ἀπ᾽ ἐκείνων δὲ ἤδη πρὸς βορέαν ἰόντι Γλῆτες)• μετὰ δὲ Ταρτήσιοι• μετὰ δὲ Ἐλευσίνιοι• μετὰ δὲ Μαστινοί• μετὰ δὲ Κελκιανοί• ἔπειτα δὲ † ἠδιορόδανος†.»
[67] Leo the Deacon, *History*, 116.15. Leo has Bardas refer to his own "brave and heroic *phylon*." τοῦ ὁμογνίου αἵματος ἑπταπλασίως ἐκτίσοντα τὸ ἀνταπόδομα, τῷ πανολεθρίᾳ τὸ γενναῖον καὶ ἡρωϊκὸν φῦλον παραπέμψαι σκαιωρήσαντι.

In fact, Talbot and Sullivan have commented on the seemingly unusual language of kinship found throughout Leo the Deacon's history. "Leo's vocabulary often tends to substitute poetic or less used terms for the more common ones, as Krumbacher observed. For brother (ἀδελφός) he also uses αὐτάδελφος, ὁμαίμων, and σύναιμος; for 'relatives' (of Nikephoros Phokas) he employs οἱ ἐξ αἵματος προσήκοντες (37.21), οἱ ἀγχιστεῖς (43.11), and οἱ ἐξ αἵματος...ἀνήκοντες (96.1)."[68] To go one step further, it seems clear that these apparent "poetic" substitutions are far from random interpolations or simple cases of *variatio*. Leo's employment of terms like *homaimon* and *synaimos* for siblings reflects a growing interest among Byzantine authors in emphasizing the special status of ties of blood, as do his expressions of "those related by blood."[69] In the former case, Leo in fact anticipates a linguistic shift that becomes readily apparent by the mid-twelfth century, if not slightly earlier.[70] The emphasis on ties of blood appears to have been used not only to distinguish consanguineous kin from those related through marriage, but, in highlighting this fact, also demonstrates just how serious these social bonds were.

Indicators of Kinship

Byzantine authors, particularly those of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, display a sometimes remarkable variety of ways to designate the bond of kinship (or kin-like bonds). Aside from the standard canon of basic indicators (mother, father, brother, cousin, etc.), by far the most common indicator employed is predictably *syggenes* and phrases using its noun form,

---

[68] Alice-Mary Talbot and Denis F. Sullivan, trans. and intro., *The* History *of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2005), p.24.

[69] This is discussed more fully in chapter four.

[70] This shift is evidenced by, among others, the letter by Michael Italikos (no. 35 in Gautier's edition) addressing the very issue of the use of *homaimon* to indicate brothers. The letter is also discussed in more detail in chapter four.

syggeneia (e.g. κατὰ συγγένειαν, "by kinship"). As covered in chapter two, in both canon and secular law, *syggeneia* was technically limited to consanguineous kin (the biological family).[71] This is in stark contrast to the ways in which the term was employed in other contexts, in which *syggenes*/*syggeneia* can indicate consanguinity, affinity, adoption, or other forms of (quasi-)kinship.[72] Slaves, according to Roman law, did not have *syggeneia*; this, however, gradually changed.[73]

Syggenēs (συγγενής) is undoubtedly the most common kinship term, found in nearly every kind of source. Indicating a very general, non-specific bond of kinship, it was limited to consanguines only in legal sources. In other contexts, it could include almost any relationship, though generally to the exclusion of spiritual kinship. It may be read as a more common substitute for the technical terms (like *trisanepsios* or *exanepsios* or *tritexadelphos*) that could be found in the calculation tables and other, legal sources. The term often appears paired with friends and/or acquaintances, indicating a close circle of supporters around an individual.

The twelfth-century (probably) lexicon known as Ps.-Zonaras contains an entry for *syggenes* (συγγενές), the neuter form of the more familiar adjective *syggenēs*, which offers some interesting insight into the concept as understood by contemporary Byzantines. *Syggenes* is

---

[71]Schminck, "Kritik am Tomos". The eleventh-century critique of the Tome of Sisinnios by Michael Skribas spends a good deal of time arguing that *syggeneia* (and the *genos*) is fundamentally different than affinity (*agchisteia*). Rhalles and Potles Vol. 5, pp.389-90: *Apokrisis* ("response") of Basil Achridenos, archbishop of Thessaloniki, in which he states quite clearly that *syggeneia* is valid only for consanguinity. "*Agchisteia*," he says," is the joining of people through marriage "outside of *syggeneia*." Ἀγχιστεία δέ ἐστι, κατὰ τὸν νομοθέτην, οἰκειότης προσώπων ἐκ γάμων ἡμῖν συνημμένων, συγγενείας ἐκτός. The passage appears to be a summary of the *Basilika*. This topic is covered more fully in chapters one and two of this dissertation.

[72] In Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*, for example, there are numerous examples of affinal kin addressed as "kinsman" (*syggenēs*).

[73] Theophilos Antecessor, in *Theophili Antecessoris Paraphrasis Institutionum*, ed. J.H.A. Lokin, Roos Meijering, B.H. Stolte, and N. van der Wal, (Groningen: Chimaira, 2010), pp.80-1 (1.10.10); Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery and the Mediterranean World*, pp.141-44.

defined as "that which differs not at all from another [thing], either greater or lesser, but is similar. Alternatively, *syggenēs* is that which similarly comes from the same *genos*."[74]

Synaimos (σύναιμος), like *homaimon* (both indicating those who "share the same blood"), appears regularly as an alternative for 'brother' throughout the period in question, though with greater frequency in the second half of the eleventh and twelfth centuries than previously.[75] Other terms, like *syggonos* (σύγγονος, "sharing parents"), likewise make their appearance in some contexts, usually (though not always) denoting a sibling by emphasizing shared lineage.[76] Phrases describing those who "share a *genos*" also appear, especially in the twelfth century.[77]

Homophylos appears most commonly as a designator of shared ethnic or "national" identity (perhaps best translated as "compatriot" or something similar). So, in a tenth-century office commemorating the Byzantine casualties of war, the fallen soldiers are once referred to as "our *homophyloi*" (τοῖς ἡμῶν ὁμοφύλοις).[78] It is worth noting that the term *phylon*, which appears just a few lines earlier in the office, is used to designate the "nation of Christians" (τοῦ

---

[74] J.A.H. Tittmann, ed., *Iohannis Zonarae lexicon ex tribus codicibus manuscriptis*, 2 vols.(Leipzig: Crusius, 1808; repr. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1967), p.1688. **Συγγενές**. τὸ οὐδαμῶς διαφέρων τοῦ ἑτέρου ἢ κατὰ βελτίωσιν ἢ κατὰ μείωσιν, ἀλλ' ὁμοίως ἔχον. ἢ συγγενές ἐστι τὸ ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ γένους ὁμοτρόπως ὑπάρχον.

[75] The continuator of Skylitzes, for example, refers to Caesar John Doukas as "the brother (*synaimos*) of the previous emperor" (ὁ τοῦ προβεβασιλευκότος σύναιμος). *Skylitzes Continuatus,* in Ἡ Συνέχεια τῆς Χρονογραφίας τοῦ Ἰωάννου Σκυλίτζη, ed. E.Th. Tsolakis (Thessalonike: Etaireia Makedonikon Spoudon, 1968), p.141.

[76] The form appears, for example, in a lead seal from the twelfth century, in which one Gabriel identifies himself as the brother (*syggonos*) of the archbishop of Bulgaria (τοῦ ποιμενάρχου σύγγονον Βουλγαρίας). *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art. Vol. 1: Italy, North of the Balkans, North of the Black Sea*, eds. John Nesbitt and Nicolas Oikonomides (1991), p.99 (no. 31.1; Fogg 215).

[77] Niketas Choniates, ed. Van Dieten, Oration 3, p.17, lines 3-10. Οὐκοῦν καὶ μὴ ἔχων πάνυ λαμπρά τε καὶ περιώνυμα τῶν ἀρχηγῶν τοῦ γένους τὰ παραδείγματα, τούτους αὐτὸς ἐσέμνωσας καὶ κατὰ ἀνάρρουν καὶ ἀναστοίβασιν ὕδατος ἢ κατὰ καμπὴν ἡλίου καὶ ἐπανάλυσιν εὐκληρίας αὐτοῖς ἀντεπαφῆκας ἐξάλματα· ὥστε καὶ κατὰ τὴν τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ κλίμακα ἀνέβαινον ἀπὸ σοῦ οἱ τοῦ αὐτοῦ σοι μέτοχοι γένους εὐγενείας ἀναβαθμὸν καὶ κατ'ἐπάνοδον αὖθις ἀνέλυον ὡς ἐπὶ βατῆρά σε, τὸν ἔσχατον τῇ τάξει καὶ ὕπατον τῇ λαμπρότητι...

[78] Détorakis and Mossay, "Un office byzantin inédit," p.206, line 340.

φύλου χριστιανῶν).[79] In theory, the *phylon* constituted by *homophyloi* could be either a single

family (equivalent to *genos*) or an entire nation or people, though the term appears far more

frequently to indicate the latter. By the same token, the less frequent but nearly synonymous term

homognios (ὁμόγνιος, "of the same *genos*") could be equally ambivalent, though, in contrast to

homophyloi, authors seem to have favored its use to indicate shared familial origins.[80]

Homophylos in particular implied a strong sense of solidarity.

Upon receiving a number of Byzantine captives from the Fatimid ruler al'Mu'izz in 969,

according to Leo the Deacon, "the emperor Nikephoros was delighted, as was fitting, and held a

day of celebration to render prayers of thanksgiving to God for His deliverance of his fellow

countrymen (ὁμοφύλων)."[81] Sources from the Palaiologan period (ca. 1261-1453), especially

during the tumultuous period in the mid-fourteenth century, offer numerous examples of

Byzantine soldiers taken by other Byzantines as captives in civil wars who were deliberately not

subjected to slavery, precisely because of their status as *homophyloi*.[82] The designation clearly

carried with it a strong sense of belonging and obligation of mutual support.

Homoethnos also appears, for example, in John Xiphilinos' account of the miracles of St.

Eugenios of Trebizond, compiled in the second half of the eleventh century.[83] In the same text

---

[79] Détorakis and Mossay, "Un office byzantin inédit," p.204, line 316.
[80] E.g. Michael Italikos, Ep. 35, ed. Gautier.
[81] Leo the Deacon, History, V.1; Talbot and Sullivan, trans., p.127.
[82] Helga Köpstein, *Zur Sklaverei im ausgehenden Byzanz*, pp.56-7. In 1322, when Andronikos III took the city of Apris, he elected not to enslave those Byzantine soldiers who had opposed him, but gave them the choice to return to their homes or to serve under him, "denn es solle verhindert werden ὁμοφύλοις αἵμασι χρανθῆναι." See: *Ioannis Cantacuzeni imperatoris historiarum libri* 4, ed. J. Schopeni. 3 vols. (Bonn, 1828-32): I.141.18, 16, 17ff; 142.17; cf. George Akropolites, *History*, I.148.15; *Cantacuzeni*, I.270.10; 272.7ff; 286.8ff. and several others.
[83] J.O. Rosenqvist, *The hagiographic Dossier of St. Eugenios of Trepizond in Codex Athous Dionysiou 154. Acta Universitatis Uppsaliensis. Studia Byzantina Uppsaliensia* 5 (Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 1996), pp.170-202, lines 208-10: Ἐν οἷς ἦν ἀνὴρ σατανικῆς λεγεῶνος κατάπλεως, ἀλύσεσι κρατούμενος καὶ δεσμοῖς κατεχόμενος καὶ τοῖς ὁμοεθνέσι νυκτὶ καὶ ἡμέρᾳ παρατηρούμενος… The passage refers to the repeated raids made on the area around Trebizond by "Scythian" peoples. Similar uses of the term appear at lines 273 and 291.

can be found references to *homogeneis* and *homophyloi* as markers of 'sameness,' in most cases, shared ethnic origins or political affiliations.[84]

Byzantines of the tenth through twelfth centuries likewise had many means at their disposal for indicating the "other," the "foreign," and for differentiating themselves from them. As in so many other aspects, many of these words and phrases were inherited or more deliberately borrowed from Classical Antiquity.

Michael Attaleiates, in the encomiastic portion of his history, praises Nikephoros III Botaneiates for his magnanimous treatment of the relatives of Emperor Michael VII, his predecessor. "He [Botaneiates] allowed her [Michael VII's mother] daughters to marry too, and consented that the marriage arrangements be entrusted to the leading senators. And so the emperor, who was basically an outsider, unrelated to her by blood (ὁ ἀλλότριος καὶ ξένος τοῦ αἵματος αὐτῆς βασιλεὺς), filled this woman, who had lived in misery and lamentation while her child reigned, with joy and mirth and made her more distinguished than she had ever been."[85] The virtuous nature of Botaneiates' actions is given added weight by stressing his status as "other" (*allotrios*) as an outsider, in relation to Michael VII's kin.

In yet another instance, this one recorded in the history of Niketas Choniates just over a century after Attaleiates, the contrast is once again made clear. Choniates records a supposed discussion between the newly crowned emperor John II Komnenos (r. 1118-1143) and his grand domestic, one of his closest advisors, concerning the recently discovered plot by the emperor's sister, Anna, to overthrow him and replace him on the throne with her husband, Nikephoros

---

[84] *Miracles of St. Eugenios of Trebizond*, ed. Rosenqvist, line 328 (*homogeneis*) and lines 216 and 270 (*homophyloi*).
[85] Attaleiates, *History*, 36.2; Kaldellis and Krallis, eds. and trans., pp.554-5.

Bryennios. The severity of Anna's betrayal and the upheaval of social order it represented is highlighted by Choniates through the pairing of oppositional adjectives. "The relative is found to be the enemy, the other [to be] a friend."[86] In this case, *allotrios* ("other") appears as the opposite of both "friend" and "kinsman," while it is paired with "enemy" (in war).

This is not to say that the term *allotrios*, when placed in explicit opposition with kinsmen, could only carry such weighty, negative connotations. Throughout the legal literature on marriage (both civil and canonical) from the eleventh century, jurists and clergy typically use the phrase '*to allotrion genos'* (τὸ ἀλλότριον γένος) to refer to one of the two families to be joined by a proposed marriage.[87] In such cases, no moral judgments are attached to the adjective, and it is instead used simply to differentiate a woman's family from that of her fiancé (or vice versa). Still, the other uses to which *allotrios* was put should serve to reinforce the argument for the strength of bond of kinship in medieval Byzantium, in particular within the *genos*, and the *genos'* function as a primary indicator of the in-group, as opposed to the "other."

Codification of Vocabulary of *Genos*

Just as it is possible to trace in the sources the eventual 'victory' of the *genos* as the term adopted by aristocratic families as the designator of their lineage and larger kin group, so too do the sources display at the same time an ever growing confidence, or at least a greater degree of uniformity, in the ways in which they describe a prominent (or obscure) *genos* and in how they ascribe an individual's membership in said *genos*. Put another way, concurrent with the

---

[86] Choniates, *History*, 11. τὸ μὲν γὰρ συγγενὲς πολέμιον εὕρηται, τὸ δ' ἀλλότριον φίλιον.

[87] *Peira*, Title LXII.1, in Zepos and Zepos, vol. IV. "ἀγχισταὶ δὲ εἰσὶν οἱ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς καὶ τῆς γυναικὸς συγγενεῖς, διὰ τοῦτο λεχθέντες ἀγχιστεῖς, ἐπειδὴ δύο συγγένειαι ἀλλότριαι καὶ διάφοροι πρὸς ἑαυτὰς διὰ τῶν γάμων συνάπτωσται, καὶ ἑκάτερος τῶν συναφθέντων εἰς τὸ ὁροθέσιον τῆς τοῦ ἄλλου συγγενείας προστίθεται..." (cf. Basilika XLV.3).

progressive increase in the utilization of the *genos* as the form of kin group most central to the

aristocracy, the ways in which authors discussed and described a *genos* developed into a kind of

coded vocabulary.

Much of the language of praise (or criticism) of an individual's *genos* was intimately

related to the concept of fame.[88] A praiseworthy *genos* was one that was well-known, famous, or

noteworthy. Obscurity, on the other hand, was tantamount to a lack of *genos* (*agenēs*). An

individual from a reasonably wealthy and/or socially prominent family might be (somewhat

coyly) described as from a *genos* or from among those who are "not unknown" (τῶν οὐκ

ἀσήμων), while those families wishing especially to celebrate their prestige might be known as

"noble among nobles" (εὐγενὴς τῶν εὐγενῶν).[89]

Although hardly a revolutionary development, the use of plant-imagery and horticultural

language reaches new heights and sometimes impressive creativity as the *genos* moves squarely

into the aristocratic vocabulary. Individuals are frequently described as the "offshoot" or

"sapling" (βλάστημα, ὄρπηξ, κλάδος) of their *genos*, while the *genos* itself, with its strong

associations with genealogical origins and the past, is often paired with terms like "root" (ῥίζη).[90]

Indeed, in the kinds of (partial) genealogies that become especially common and much more

---

[88] This fact has important implications for the role of the *genos* in general. See chapter five for a more complete discussion.

[89] For the former, see (for example), the eleventh-century version of the *Miracles of St. Eugenios of Trebizond*, in *The Hagiographic Dossier of St. Eugenios of Trebizond*, ed. and trans. Jan Olof Rosenqvist (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1996), e.g. line 328: Γυνή τις τῶν οὐκ ἀσήμων. For the latter, several good examples are found in *The Life of St. Symeon the New Theologian*, ed. and trans. Richard P.H. Greenfield (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2013).

[90] In George Tornikes' oration dedicated to Anna Komnene upon her death, her parents are described as "saplings of the root of the Komnenoi and Doukai, respectively." (Ἥρκει μὲν οὖν περὶ τῶν τῆς βασιλίδος ταυτησὶ γεννητόρων τοῦτο καὶ μόνον εἰπεῖν ὅτι Ἀλέξιος καὶ Εἰρήνη ταύτῃ γεννήτορες, ὁ μὲν Κομνηνῶν, ἡ δὲ Δουκῶν ῥίζης ὄρπηκες). Jean Darrouzès, ed., *Georges et Dèmètrios Tornikès: Lettres et discours*, p.235, lines 13-15. According to Darrouzès, (p.220, n.1), the oration was probably written sometime around 1154-55, but he does not think that the oration was ever delivered in front of an audience.

politically and socially influential by the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, terms such as

rizouchia (ῥιζουχία, from the Greek for "root") and *genarchia* (γεναρχία, combining *genos* with

"beginning" or "origin") are also sometimes used to refer to one's lineage, showcasing the

importance of origins and the backward-looking tendency inherent in the concept of lineage and,

consequently, the *genos*.[91]

Though medieval Byzantine tables for calculating degrees of kinship frequently take the

form of a tree or include visual imagery suggestive of plant life, family trees or genealogies are

extremely rare in a Byzantine context. So, while almost no images of family trees survive from

medieval Byzantium, in their texts, there was a rich tradition of visualizing the *genos* and

genealogy in precisely this manner. In a rather early example of such language, the introduction

to Constantine VII's *De Administrando Imperio* concludes with a prayer, beseeching God to

grant that "the trunk" (στέλεχος) of his son's lineage (γενεά) be covered in the "shade of many

leaves."[92]

By the middle of the twelfth century, the horticultural imagery could be quite lavish,

especially in a rhetorical context. Thus, in a speech delivered in honor of the weddings of Anna

Komnene's two sons, the unification of the *genos* of the Doukai with that of the Komnenoi in the

previous generation (embodied by the marriage of Alexios I Komnenos to Eirene Doukaina) is

celebrated using an elaborate metaphor of the mingling of two vines.[93] Niketas Choniates, in one

of his many orations, offers praise of Isaac Angelos' Hungarian wife's lineage, which the

---

[91] Gounaridis, "Constitution d'une généalogie à Byzance."
[92] See also below, p.100.
[93] Paul Gautier, ed. and trans., *Nicephori Bryennii Historiarum Libri Quattuor* (Brussels, 1975), pp.340-55.

Hungarian royal family traced back to the Julio-Claudian dynasty of Rome. Among other things, Maria is called "truly the bouquet of her *genos*" (τὸ τοῦ γένους ὄντως ὀσφράδιον).[94]

Even inscriptions found on lead seals begin, from early in the twelfth century, to display similar flowery language (often in meter) in reference to the owner's *genos*.[95] Such inscriptions often became so large that they precluded the owner of the seal from including any sort of iconography on one or both sides of the seal, a testament to the cultural value placed on such familial praise.

Perhaps the most notable, and most discussed, component of the language associated with the aristocratic *genos* in this period is the rise to prominence of a sense of nobility by birth (expressed as *eugeneia* or, in its adjectival form, *eugenēs*). In particular, a great many scholars have studied or otherwise commented on the appearance in precisely this period (from the mid-eleventh into the twelfth century) of a concept of "nobility by birth" among the social elites of the Byzantine Empire. A full treatment of this idea, which was not exactly an innovation of the tenth or eleventh centuries, is beyond the scope of this chapter. It is certainly true that nobility by birth gained in importance and in the frequency with which it appears in the sources, particularly after the mid-eleventh century, and that the idea was closely linked with the emergence of the *genos* as a particularly powerful identity-marker among the Byzantine aristocracy. It thus also represents an important aspect of the codification of the vocabulary used to discuss, praise, or criticize an individual's *genos*. At the same time, however, there persisted the idea that nobility

---

[94] Niketas Choniates, Oration 5, ed. van Dieten, p.40.
[95] This phenomenon is well known among scholars and has been the subject of considerable discussion. See, for example, Laurent, *Les bulles métriques dans la sigillographie byzantine*.

could come not only from one's *genos*, but also through individual actions.[96] One could have a

noble soul, an attribute completely separate (usually) from a noble bloodline.

Nobility of family (as opposed to nobility of the soul) became something of a trope in

some saints' lives from as early as the second half of the ninth century. In the *vitae* of saints such

as Michael Maleïnos, Euthymios the Younger, and Symeon the New Theologian, the saints'

wealthy and "noble" families (often described as *genē*) are described at length near the beginning

of the narrative, in part, at least, to highlight the difficult and pious nature of their decisions to

renounce their families and wealth in favor of a monastic vocation.[97]

Cheynet has highlighted the fact that certain formulas, such as οἱ ἐπίσημοι καὶ εὐγενεῖς

("the famous and noble") or οἱ λαμπροὶ τὸ γένος (those who "are illustrious in [their] *genos*")

were reserved for those families who could count two or more generations of illustrious

members, at least by the last quarter of the eleventh century.[98]

The opposite of *eugeneia*, "nobility," is typically expressed as either *dysgeneia* or

ageneia (more commonly as adjectives, *dysgenēs* and *agenēs*).[99] While there were subtle

differences between the two (having a disreputable *genos* vs. being without one), the two seem

largely to have been interchangeable. Both were intimately connected with the social politics of

reputation. No one could really have been considered without a *genos*, yet belonging to one that

---

[96] Kekaumenos, ed. Spadaro, pp.11-12, 98-99; Magdalino, "Honour among the Romaioi: The Framework of Social Values in the World of Digenes Akrites and Kekaumenos," *BMGS* 13 (1989)," p.220.
[97] Alice-Mary Talbot, "The Byzantine Family and the Monastery," *DOP* 44 (1990), pp.119-29.
[98] Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance*, p.256. "C'est que la notion de génos est liée à celle de gloire, qui s'acquiert avec la seule durée. Les formules οἱ ἐπίσημοι καὶ εὐγενεῖς, οἱ λαμπροὶ τὸ γένος désignent des familles comptant plusieurs générations d'hommes illustres."
[99] For a good example of the use of *dysgenēs*, see the Spiritually Beneficial Tales by Paul of Monemvasia, a tenth-century compilation, in *The Spiritually Beneficial Tales of Paul, Bishop of Monembasia*, ed. and trans. John Wortley (Kalamazoo, 1996), esp. 98.33-7; See also Judith Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence: Women and Empire in Byzantium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), p.273.

had not made a name for itself, and was thus unknown, was tantamount to being without a genos in some elite circles of the eleventh century and beyond.

The adjective *agenēs* and its variants were so derogatory in nature that Niketas Choniates could use it to describe how the "Scythians" had, in the reign of Isaac II Angelos, "sordidly (ἀγεννῶς) slinked out of their pens like wild animals."[100] In fact, terms connoting a "low-born" status can be found in many sources describing various "barbarian" peoples, even in the same period (and sometimes in the same sources) that such vocabulary is directed at individuals or families within the confines of the Byzantine Empire.

Similarly, some barbarians were understood to be more "noble" than others. This is famously the case in the mid-tenth-century *De administrando imperio*, in which only the Franks were noble enough to warrant the honor of a Byzantine imperial bride.[101] One late eleventh-century text describes the Pechenegs not only as more numerous than the Uzes, but also as "nobler," though both groups are categorized as a "Scythian *genos*" (a reference to their semi-nomadic lifestyles, no doubt). [102]

Common to both descriptions of the *genos* as *ethnos* and *genos* as family group is an association with the verb ἕλκειν, "to draw," often accompanied by the preposition ex (ἐξ/ἐκ). Taken in combination, such language serves to strengthen the concept's link with ancestry and genealogy, whether at the level of nations and peoples or individual lineages. Similar constructions appear utilizing the verb ἀναφέρειν; this usage has very ancient antecedents. In the

---

[100] Oration 4, lines 11-12, in *Nicetae Choniatae Orationes et Epistulae*, ed. Van Dieten, p.27. Note that this phrase uses language reminiscent of Psalm 103:22.
[101] Ruth Macrides, "Dynastic marriages and political kinship," in *Byzantine Diplomacy*, ed. Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1992), pp.266-67.
[102] *Skylitzes Continuatus*, ed. Tsolakis, p.114: τὸ τῶν Οὔζων ἔθνος, γένος δὲ καὶ οὗτοι σκυθικὸν καὶ τῶν Πατζινάκων εὐγενέστερον καὶ πολυπληθέστερον, παγγενεὶ μετὰ τῆς ἰδίας ἀποσκευῆς τὸν Ἴστρον περαιωθὲν

older cases, however, it was typically an individual who appeared as the object.[103] In eleventh- and twelfth-century Byzantine contexts, it is often the family name that appears, typically in the plural (Μανουὴλ ἐκείνου τοῦ πάνυ, ὃς ἐς Κομνηνοὺς ἀναφέρων τὸ γένος).[104] Such language, when put in context, further supports the strength of the collective identity of an aristocratic *genos* centered on the family name. And while famous ancestors were commonly recognized and celebrated by members of a given *genos*, their solidarity cannot be said to have focused upon a singular "founder," even if some sources do use the language of "origins" or "foundations" when referring to specific ancestors (or, sometimes, near-contemporary members) of a particular *genos*.[105]

The language of drawing one's *genos* highlights the fact that any one individual could (and often did) draw their lineage from several different *genē* simultaneously. Choices were made both by the individuals themselves and by those authors who record information about them regarding with which *genos* they would be primarily identified.

Among those lineages that were "well-born," the two highest distinctions were reserved for those who could count an emperor or empress among their kin, especially a direct ancestor, though having a family member or ancestor married into the imperial household was only a slightly lesser distinction. Failing this, a second tradition, with its origins in the tenth century, sought to link an individual (via their *genos*) to a person or persons of high rank and, again, repute, even if they could not boast of imperial status. In this tradition, as, to a lesser degree, in

---

[103] Often a mythological hero, such as Herakles or Perseus.

[104] Bryennios, *Material for History*, 1.1.1, in *Nicephori Bryennii Historiarum libri quattuor*, ed. P. Gautier (Brussels, 1975).

[105] There is evidence that certain families maintained some degree of memory of individuals considered to have founded the family. Skylitzes, for example, records how Leo, the father (Skylitzes mistakenly calls him the grandfather) of the famous general Eustathios Argyros, "was the first to acquire the surname Argyros, either from his purity of life, the comeliness of his body or from some aspect of his nobility." Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories*, 7.30, trans. Wortley, p.183.

the former, the *genos* would often be linked to a relative (or at least contemporary) of Emperor

Constantine I or a foreign royal or imperial family, whether from the distant past or near-

contemporary (e.g. the Arsacids or, especially after the eleventh century, the Bulgarian royal

family).[106]

The evidence outlined here occurs alongside and compliments the language associated

with the *genos* in contemporary Byzantine law and in formulations of biological reproduction

and shared blood, which are covered by subsequent chapters. Read alongside one another, it is

clear that as the *genos* moved to the center of the Byzantine vocabulary of kinship in the eleventh

and twelfth centuries, there grew up around it a related vocabulary of belonging, aristocracy, and

praise (and their opposites) that may be understood as a kind of coded vocabulary more or less

understood by all those at the upper end of the social spectrum, and perhaps many more.

Taken together, the sources suggest not only the gradual development of the very idea of

one's *genos* and the various kinds of language and concepts attached thereto, it also reinforces

the linguistic, and perhaps conceptual, affiliation between these aristocratic family groups and

concepts of ethnicity or ethnic groups. This coincidence is not without significance.

Genos as *Ethnos*, *Genos* as Family

Subsequent chapters will demonstrate that surnames as *genos*-markers could function in

ways similar to such ethnic markers as "Skythian" or "Armenian." [107] Not only could both

groups be identified with the term *genos* (or its synonyms), the language typically accompanying

---

[106] Gounaridis, "Constitution d'une généalogie à Byzance."
[107] See especially chapter five.

either concept is remarkably similar in medieval Byzantine sources as well. If one recalls the definition of the *genos* offered in Nikephoros Blemmydes' thirteenth-century philosophical work, in which the difference between the *genos* as ethnic group and *genos* as kin group is really just one of scale, the conceptual overlap between the two ideas becomes difficult to ignore. The next logical step, then, is to ask just how extensive, and how significant, this conceptual overlap might be.

Certain similarities between ethnicity and kinship have long been recognized by scholars.[108] Both could be understood as cultural constructs viewed by Byzantines (as in other societies) as inherently biological or natural in their reproduction. Both were fundamental to both individual and group identities, which manifested themselves in many spheres of society and had a profound impact on things like individual or group behavior and representation in literature or art. In medieval Byzantine Greek, both could also find expression in the term *genos*.

Medieval Byzantine concepts of ethnicity and, especially, identity are notoriously difficult to pin down, and studies continue to appear regularly addressing these very issues. In particular, Byzantine identity has garnered a large amount of attention in recent years, both for its complicated nature and, to a certain extent, to rehabilitate the notion that their self-identification as Romans cannot and should not simply be written off.[109] It has recently been argued, for instance, that medieval Byzantine identity as it is presented in the *Material for History* by Nikephoros Bryennios was first and foremost "grounded in shared political

---

[108] Walter Pohl, "Gender and Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages," in *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900*, ed. L. Brubaker and J.M.H. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.23-43.
[109] Among the many recent studies, one of the best treatments of the subject and of the various methodologies available to the historian (and the relevant bibliography) can be found in Ioannis Stouraitis, "Roman Identity in Byzantium: A Critical Approach," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 107 (2014), pp.175-220;" see also Anthony Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

community," almost entirely ignoring the religious (Orthodox Christian) aspect so often associated with Byzantium.[110]

To follow the definition set down by Gill Page in his study of medieval Byzantine identity, ethnicity is to be found at the "nexus of three fundamental areas:" the individual, subjective belief of memberships in a group based on ancestry and bolstered by the certainty that others in the group will recognize him/her as such, the "possession, expression or favouring [of] certain social and cultural traits (the 'ethnic criteria') by members of the group," and an awareness of the boundaries between "us" and "them."[111] Put another way, Page classifies as ethnic groups those whose collective identity has "strong associations with race and the past," coupled with the existence of a contrasting "other" and a certain "subjective act of faith by members of a group."[112] According to this argument, both the Byzantine notion of *ethnos* and, in most cases, *genos* fulfill the necessary criteria.

When tackling the twin concepts of *genos* and *ethnos*, Page sees some subtle differences in the ways in which each term is employed by his Byzantine sources. While he emphasizes the fact that the Byzantine concept of the *genos* was "firmly associated with a biological relationship," albeit one that could function on various levels and within groups of widely different sizes, he views *ethnos* as implying a less firm association based primarily around "shared association" and culture, rather than biological relationships.[113] Based upon these findings, Page contends that a *genos* could (and did) serve as "a subdivision of an *ethnos*, but not

---

[110] Leonora Neville, *Heroes and Romans in Twelfth-Century Byzantium: The Material for History of Nikephoros Bryennios* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.86-8.
[111] Page, *Being Byzantine*, pp.11-13.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Page, *Being Byzantine*, p.41. Page further argues that *genos* could denote a family or even a state "taking the broadest sense of kinship."

vice versa."[114] He also notes the negative connotations of *ethnos* preserved in the New Testament, some of which may have survived into the Byzantine period, and its associations with the foreign, traits not shared by the *genos*.[115] For Page, the Byzantine *genos* retained a largely neutral connotation.

This difference is borne out in the sources. While *ethnos* carried with it an association with the "other," *genos* seems most often to have been associated with the reverse, with "us." Thus, for example, in an oration dedicated to Emperor Alexios II Komnenos (r. 1180-1183), Niketas Choniates praises the emperor for all of his efforts for the good of the empire. As part of this praise, the author emphasizes all the emperor has done both inside and outside, i.e. internally and in foreign policy/war.[116] *Genos* and those deeds "within" (ἔσωθεν) the empire are juxtaposed with those enacted "outside" (ἐκτός) and against "foreigners" (ἀλλοφύλων).

Page has argued that "the connotations of shared descent were so strong in *genos* that any use of this term in application to Byzantine Romans should be seen as potentially indicative of a sense of ethnic identity."[117] Indeed, Nikephoros Blemmydes, whose thirteenth-century *Epitome Logica* played such an important role in defining the *genos* in chapter one, states in the same work that "nations may be *genē* regardless of whether they are constituted by a common biological descent or by political union."[118]

---

[114] Ibid.
[115] Page, *Being Byzantine*, pp.41-2. Page cites cases from *Digenes Akrites* to support this contention.
[116] *Nicetae Choniatae Orationes et Epistulae*, ed. Jan-Louis van Dieten (Berlin and NY: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1973), p.112, lines 21-2. "...ἐκ γένους, ἐξ ἀλλοφύλων, ἐκ τῶν ἐκτός, ἐκ τῶν ἔσωθεν…"
[117] Page, *Being Byzantine*, p.42. Page does concede that the formulaic *'genos tōn Romaiōn'* could be an attempt by the political elite to instill a sense of shared ethnicity "over and above more obvious polyethnicity..."
[118] Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Epitome Logica*, 10.1-4; Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, p.89. The translation is Kaldellis'.

Anthony Kaldellis, however, disagrees. He argues against the idea that the designation of "Romans by *genos*" is indicative of a concept of Roman ethnicity per se. He states categorically that "The Byzantines did not view themselves collectively in the strong sense of being biologically related to each other."[119] He sees such descriptions as indicating little more than that such individuals were "at least second-generation Romans."[120] According to this view, the biological connotations of the *genos* are maintained, even if there was a clear difference between the *genos* of the Romans and other *genē*, especially those outside the empire's borders. One did not become Roman "by *genos*" simply by entering into the empire's boundaries, by declaring allegiance to the emperor, or even by converting to orthodox Christianity.

Kaldellis' argument is largely convincing, for there is little in the sources to indicate that the Byzantines viewed the *genos* of the Romans (or of Christians) as an ethnic group in the same way that they did for other, foreign *genē*. Yet George Akropolites, a late thirteenth-century historian, could still have one of his actors exclaim that he and those to whom he was speaking were "pure Romans by *genos*" (καθαροὶ τὸ γένος Ῥωμαίοι).[121] In this instance, Akropolites' speaker was purposefully drawing a distinction between the inhabitants of a Byzantine town and its Latin overlords, which explains the otherwise unusual contention of a "pure Roman *genos*." As in many cases, the choice to utilize the term *genos* is made in order to create the strongest possible sense of group solidarity among those listening or reading. *Genos*, in nearly all its uses, does seem to have carried strong connotations of biology, of 'natural' origins. This does not

---

[119] Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, p.88.
[120] Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, p.88.
[121] George Akropolites, *History*, in A. Heisenberg, *Georgii Acropolitae opera*, ed. A. Heisenberg (Leipzig: Teubner, 1901), vol. 1, §44.33.

make 'Roman' an ethnic identity per se, but it does leave room for conceptual overlap among the various forms that the *genos* could take.

Regardless of whether the *genos* of the Romans constituted a truly ethnic identity, the concept itself was fundamental to Byzantine identity. It was a powerful marker of collective identity and group cohesion in both of the (interrelated) ideas of the *genos* of the Romans and the *genos* of the Christians, the two most common and, arguably, most powerful means used by medieval Byzantines to conceptualize their community on a large scale. The *genos*, in fact, became the favored concept of self-identification for the Greek-speaking, Orthodox Christian community within the Ottoman Empire.[122] For those within the community, they were simply members of "the *genos*." This usage developed out of the Byzantine identification with the *genos* of the Romans and is reflected already in some texts from as early as the tenth century (and probably much earlier).

The *genos*, denoting the entire Roman people and the theme of its salvation (and potential destruction), makes several appearances in the homilies of ninth-century polymath and Patriarch of Constantinople Photios. In his first homily on the attack of the Rus' on Constantinople sometime in the early 860s, for example, the "barbarians" are described as seeking "to destroy the entire *genos*."[123] In another, dedicated to Emperor Michael III and the future Emperor Basil I,

---

[122] S. Anagnostopoulou, "The Terms *millet*, *genos*, *ethnos*, *oikoumenikotita*, *alytrotismos* in Greek Historiography," in *The Passage from the Ottoman Empire to Nation-States: A Long and Difficult Process: The Greek Case*, ed. S. Anagnostopoulou (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2004), pp.37-55.

[123] Homily 3 in B. Laourdas, *Ἑλληνικά* 12 Παράρτημα (Thessalonica, 1966), lines 9-10: ἀλλ' ἀνθρώπων αὐτῶν οἰκτρῶς τὰ σώματα συναλήθουσα καὶ τὸ γένος ἅπαν πικρῶς ὀλοθρεύουσα…

Photios draws upon the common formula of the salvation of the *genos*, in this case describing how the Logos "took flesh from the virgin [Mary] for the common salvation of the *genos*."[124]

The position of the emperor was often imagined as the leader, or even father, of the *genos* of the Romans. In a short encomiastic poem written by in honor of Emperor Basil I, Photios addresses the emperor and reminds him that "the great *genos* of the Romans, the inheritance of Christ, has now been given to you, emperor."[125]

Michael Psellos praises Constantine IX Monomachos, using a pun based on his surname, as "one who would face danger in advance and alone for the state (κράτος), a worthy fighter beyond everyone else, fighting in single combat for the common fame of our people (ὑπὲρ τῆς κοινῆς τοῦ γένους εὐκλείας)."[126] It is worth noting not only the fact that the emperor is imagined as fighting on behalf of the *genos*, but that he is apparently doing so for its "common fame." The language of reputation associated with the *genos* is very much reminiscent of that associated with the *genos* as aristocratic kin group, as covered in a previous chapter.[127] Michael Attaleiates criticizes Michael VII Doukas for not doing everything he could for the "salvation of the entire Roman *genos*" (σωτηρίαν τοῦ γένους παντὸς τῶν Ῥωμαίων), which served to discredit the emperor whom Attaleiates' patron, Nikephoros III Botaneiates, sought to replace.[128]

---

[124] Homily 18 in Laourdas, ed., p.176, lines 16-17: · ὁ λόγος ἐκ παρθένου σάρκα λαβὼν εἰς κοινὴν τοῦ γένους σωτηρίαν An example of the formula in which Christ is described as "The Logos, having taken flesh from a virgin for the common salvation of the *genos*…"

[125] Gyula Moravscik, "Sagen und Legenden über Kaiser Basileios," *DOP* 15 (1961), p.63: "γένος τὸ μέγα τῶν Ῥωμαίων, ἡ Χριστοῦ κληρονομία, ἐδόθη νῦν, βασιλεῦ, σοι κατὰ τὴν θείαν καρδίαν."

[126] Michael Psellos, "Encomium for Constantine Leichoudes," pp.398-9, quoted and translated in Kaldellis, *Byzantine Republic*, p.58.

[127] See chapter four.

[128] Attaleiates, *History*, 26.6.

In *The Muses*, a unique twelfth-century document similar to a mirror of princes, the role of emperor is described as "the leader of the army and the *genos*."[129] The dual focus is intended to convey the seriousness of the responsibility associated with the office. After the reorganization of the imperial administration under Alexios I, and considering the prevailing social mores of the time, the precise meaning of the term *genos* in this instance could be, and perhaps was, interpreted as having a dual meaning. While it obviously recalls the *genos* of the Romans, the most common way of referring to the inhabitants of the empire, the Komnenian government was at the same time held together by familial ties with the *genos* of the Komnenoi.[130] Alexios' heir would, in fact, be not only the "ruler of the *genos* of the Romans," he would also find himself at the head of the *genos* of the Komnenoi, a charge no less vital in twelfth-century Byzantium.

Soldiers were also reminded that they fought not only on behalf of the emperor, but also for their *genos*. In the mid-tenth century poetic oration celebrating the capture of Crete by Nikephoros Phokas (the future emperor), Theodosius the Deacon has the now-famous general utter the following words of encouragement to his men. "Remember, men, and let us die if necessary for the august emperor of the *genos*."[131]

Similarly, in formulations of the *genos* of the Romans or of Christians, the ancient term *archēgos* (ἀρχηγός), makes frequent appearances. A common appellation of Christ in Byzantine texts, the term carried with it associations with both founder and leader or prince.[132] So, in the late twelfth-century orations of Niketas Choniates, Christ is repeatedly described as "the

---

[129] P. Maas, ed. "Die Musen," *BZ* 22 (1913), p.350, line 62. ἄρχων δὲ παντὸς τοῦ στρατοῦ καὶ τοῦ γένους… The blurred distinction is made even stronger by the fact that, in the following lines, the author calls on Alexios' heir(s) to "rule gently over those who follow the right of your father."
[130] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.184-217.
[131] *De Creta Capta*, 464-65. The edition is found in H. Criscuolo, *Theodosii diaconi de Creta capta* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1979): μνήσθητε καὶ θάνωμεν, ἄνδρες, εἰς δέον ὑπὲρ γένους ἄνακτος εὐσεβεστάτου.
[132] *LSJ*, p.252.

116

leader/founder (ἀρχηγός) of our *genos* and of [our] salvation."[133] *Archēgos* does, however, occasionally appear in contexts in which the *genos* is clearly referring to a kin group, rather than the Roman or Christian people.

In a funerary oration (ἐπιτάφιος λόγος) to Theodore Trochos, Choniates utilizes the concept in both functions using parallel structures. Early in the oration, Choniates praises Theodore for having contributed to his family's reputation and nobility, despite having come from rather humble beginnings. "You did not have illustrious and famous examples of the founders of [your] *genos* (τῶν ἀρχηγῶν τοῦ γένους), rather you yourself have ennobled these [men]."[134] Slightly later in the composition, Choniates addresses Christ as the "founder of our *genos*" (ὦ τοῦ γένους ἡμῶν…ἀρχηγέ).[135]

The Byzantines did not make an especially strong distinction between family genealogies and those meant to ascribe origins to an entire people. The Byzantine sense of genealogy could simultaneously take on aspects of a history, especially the history of a particular 'tribe' or 'people.' Constantine VII's *De administrando imperio* instructs his son to learn all he can about Byzantium's neighbors, including their "geneaologies." The same text preserves a genealogy of the prophet Mohammad, which simultaneously acts as "l'histoire de la nation arabe."[136] Beyond this, there seems to have been a large degree of conceptual overlap among the different uses of the term *genos*, which can have serious consequences for a more complete understanding of the concept as it was used to designate kin groups.

---

[133] Niketas Choniates, Oration 3, p.25: "ὦ τοῦ γένους ἡμῶν καὶ τῆς σωτηρίας ἀρχηγέ."
[134] Niketas Choniates, Oration 3, p.17. Οὐκοῦν καὶ μὴ ἔχων πάνυ λαμπρά τε καὶ περιώνυμα τῶν ἀρχηγῶν τοῦ γένους τὰ παραδείγματα, τούτους αὐτὸς ἐσέμνωσας…
[135] Niketas Choniates, Oration 3, p.25.
[136] Gounaridis, « Constitution d'une généalogie à Byzance, » p.272; *De Administrando Imperio*, *proem.*, 44-6; §14.76.

In both the *genos* as family and the *genos* as *ethnos* there were strong expectations of solidarity and mutual support. In the chronicle of *Theophanes Continuatus*, a certain Constantine is said to have been especially friendly toward Basil I "since he himself drew his *genos* from the Armenians."[137] In Attaleiates' history, one Nestor is supposed to have joined forces with an enemy of the empire "due to the equivalence of their races" (τῷ ὁμοτίμῳ τοῦ γένους).[138]

While one cannot assume a perfect, one-to-one correlation between the imagined significance of belonging to the *genos* of the Romans and to the *genos* of the Phokades or Komnenoi, there is enough evidence linking the two concepts to suggest a certain degree of conceptual overlap. Expectations of solidarity within and loyalty to one's *genos*, along with the central place of the *genos* in the social and political identity of medieval Byzantines, is shared across the term's different uses. It is equally clear that the *genos* served as the clearest, and perhaps strongest marker of the "in-group," of "us" in a Byzantine context, even when the concept is functioning at different scales.

Byzantine authors are not prone to extended ruminations on the implications of *genos*-membership as it concerns (aristocratic) kin groups in the tenth through twelfth centuries. There is, however, a longer tradition of such discussions concerning the Roman people, their government, and the ideals associated with inclusion in this privileged group. This, then, allows for more thorough analysis by modern scholars, which has significance not only for a more thorough understanding of Byzantine identity writ large, but also for the *genos* as kin group. In short, an examination of one can reveal certain, fundamental aspects of the other. The potential

---

[137] *Theophanes Cont*. 230.1-3. ὁ προμνημονευθεὶς Κωνσταντῖνος πατρίκιος, σφόδρα φιλίως πρὸς τὸν Βασίλειον διακείμενος ἅτε καὶ αὐτὸς ἐξ Ἀρμενίων ἕλκων τὸ γένος… Basil I, it should be remembered, was widely regarded as having Armenian ancestry.
[138] Attaleiates, *History*, 26.2; Kaldellis and Krallis, eds. and trans., pp.374-75.

utility of this approach and the extent of the conceptual overlap among the various uses of the concept of the *genos* are perhaps clearest in the importance placed on the "continuation" or "preservation" of the *genos*.

Continuation or Preservation of the *Genos*

Whether speaking of the *genos* as a family, a nation, or the entire human race, the continuation, preservation, and/or succession of the *genos* was always a primary concern. This singular concept, expressed in a number of ways, was most prominently displayed encompassing two primary means of preservation: fighting in defense of the *genos* and biological reproduction.

A common theme in Byzantine literature concerning marriage predictably emphasizes the importance of the institution for the "continuation of the *genos*" through having children.[139] This continued well into the period concerned here and beyond, even if John Chrysostom (followed by several others) had argued in the fourth century that the world was already full of people and, thus, child rearing was no longer to be understood as the primary reason for marriage.[140] In the Galenic corpus of medical texts, the phrase appears frequently in contexts related to the reproductive organs and reproduction in general, which is itself envisioned as the "continuation of the *genos*" (ἡ διαμονὴ τοῦ γένους).[141] The virtue extended to the imperial family as well. The prayer at end of the prooemium of the *De administrando imperio* (mentioned above) concludes with the following wish: "May the trunk of his [Romanos II's] *genos* be darkened by the leaves

---

[139] The so-called Tome of Sisinnios, for example, includes a reference to the "continuation of the *genos*." See Rhalles and Potles V, pp.11-19. For more on the Tome, see the following chapter.
[140] J.-P. Migne, *PG* 51, p.213.
[141] For example, it appears in *De usu partium* 14.1, 14.2, and 15.1, inter alia. See Margaret Tallmadge May, trans. and commentary, *Galen: On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*. Περὶ χρείας μορίων/*De usu partium* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968).

119

of many offspring, and the shadow of its fruit cover imperial mountains, so that through you, ruling emperors might glorify you forever."[142]

In fact, Constantine VII's descendants famously did not fulfill this wish. Emperor Basil II and his brother, Constantine VIII, left no male heirs to the throne, nor do they seem to have been greatly concerned by this fact. The Komnenoi, on the other hand, were famous even among their contemporaries for the large number of children each family within their *genos* had.[143] The difference in family strategies in this case are so great, in fact, that they should not go unmarked. While the "continuation of the *genos*" was a common virtue long before the reign of Alexios I, it seems that his generation and those that followed took the call to procreation much more seriously than those who had come before.

If the Komnenoi epitomized the family strategy of large numbers of children, the ideal of the continuation of the *genos* through reproduction, coupled with the reproduction of the economic means of sustaining that *genos*, was much older. It is particularly visible in hagiography, in which saints are often shown having to choose between entering into an ascetic or monastic life dedicated to God or the perpetuation of the family line. The two choices typically appear as almost equally powerful in their draw. Such is the case, for example, in the *Catechism* for his mother, Theoktiste, written in the ninth century by the champion of icons and prolific author Theodore the Stoudite. Early in the text, which, among other things, acts as an

---

[142] *De adminstrando imperio*, prooem., lines 46-8: Κατασκιασθείη τὸ στέλεχος τοῦ γένους αὐτοῦ πολυγονίας φύλλοις, καὶ ἡ σκιὰ τοῦ καρποῦ αὐτοῦ ἐπικαλύψαι ὄρη.
[143] Barbara Hill, *Imperial Women in Byzantium 1025-1204: Power, Patronage and Ideology* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 1999), pp.139-42; Shaun Tougher, "Imperial Families: The Case of the Macedonians (867-1056)," in Approaches to the Byzantine Family, ed. L. Brubaker and S. Tougher (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), pp.303-26. This was true at least until the reign of Manuel I Komnenos.

encomiastic biography of his mother, Theodore recounts her decision to dedicate not only

herself, but her entire household to the ascetic worship of God.

"Arranging everything in good order, she left the house (ἐξέρχεται τῆς οἰκίας),

committing to God the entire household (δῆμον ὅλον): the four children, three

brothers-in-law and herself and her husband...This event took the empress by

surprise on the very day; it astonished the relations of the family; it left

acquaintances perplexed...that a married couple still in middle age and self-

sufficient in their livelihood, holding an imperial dignity in the treasury and

having grown children was not bound by affection for these latter (τῷ τούτων

φίλτρῳ), nor desire for the succession of their race (οὐ τῷ καταλιπεῖν διάδοχον

τοῦ γένους), nor the bonds of kinship (οὐδὲ τῷ αἵματι τῆς ἀγχιστείας), nor the

alienation of their household (τῆς οἰκίας), nor yet the loss of their servants..."[144]

The most informative portion of the text quoted above comes in the list of reasons why a

married couple would want to avoid dedicating their lives to God, leaving the social world of

Byzantium behind. Similarly, in the ninth-century *Life of St. Euthymios the Younger*, the saint is

said to have inspired a desire to enter the monastic life in his entire family, which most of them

did. The exception was his daughter Anastaso, "who was urged to marry and bear children 'for

the perpetuation of the family' (πρὸς διαμονὴν τοῦ γένους)."[145] Whether speaking of the genos

as family or as something more grandiose, its continuation through reproduction was a universal

ideal in Byzantine thought and was expressed in precisely the same formulation. But the *genos*

---

[144] Efthymiadis and Featherstone, "Establishing a Holy Lineage: Theodore the Stoudite's Funerary Catechism for His Mother (BHG 2422)," p.45 (6). The passage is also noteworthy for the somewhat unusual use of the term *dēmos* to refer to the household.

[145] Talbot, "The Byzantine Family and the Monastery," p.120; *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. and trans. Patricia Karlin-Hayter (Brussels: Éditions de *Byzantion*, 1970), pp.172-74.

was not preserved or continued solely through biological reproduction. It also had to be defended

against outside threats.

A Byzantine office intended for the commemoration of the war dead discovered in a

manuscript from Mt. Sinai by Theocharis Detorakis in 1986, a rare find among Byzantine

sources, attests to the centrality of *genos* (and *patris*, or "fatherland") in the conceptualization of

group loyalties and communal identity in Byzantium.[146] The office, which consists of a prayer of

367 lines addressed primarily to Christ, was apparently an attempted innovation to the more

usual prayers on behalf of the dead normally recited on the Saturday before Forgiveness Sunday

(Σάββατον τῆς Ἀπόκρεω or Ψυχοσάββατον).[147] The office offers a glimpse into the worldview

espoused by contemporary Byzantines in the context of war, illuminating the ways in which

collective identity and motivations for war were imagined in the early tenth century.

Throughout the prayer, Christ's people are alternately referred to as *laos* (τοῦ λαοῦ

σου)[148] or *ethnos* (τὸ ἔθνος σου),[149] or simply "your servants" (οἱ δοῦλοι σου).[150] The *genos*

makes several appearances, though it is used slightly more ambiguously. The language of

kinship appears repeatedly at the forefront of the office. In the first few lines, those Byzantines

who had died in combat or captivity are called "our brothers" (ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν).[151] Later on, they

are called "our *homophyloi*" (τοῖς ἡμῶν ὁμοφύλοις) that is, "those of the same *phylon*." While

---

[146] Détorakis and Mossay, eds., "Un office byzantin inédit," pp.183-211. The manuscript, Cod. Sinaiticus Gr. 734, has been dated to the tenth century. Detorakis and Mossay believe the office originates sometime toward the end of the ninth or early in the tenth century. There are two other such offices known to survive from roughly the same period. They have both been edited and published. See L. Petit, ed., "Office inédit en l'honneur de Nicéphore Phocas" *BZ* 13 (1904), pp.398-420 and A. Pertusi,ed., "Una acolouthia militare inedita del X secolo," *Aevum* 22 (1948), pp.145-68.
[147] Détorakis and Mossay, "Un office byzantin inédit," p.183.
[148] Detorakis and Mossay, "Un office byzantin inédit," p.188, line 30; p.190, line 65; p.192, line 110
[149] Detorakis and Mossay, "Un office byzantin inédit," p.192, line 105.
[150] *Laos* is by far the most common throughout the text. Détorakis and Mossay, "Un office byzantin inédit," passim.
[151] Detorakis and Mossay, "Un office byzantine inédit," p.186, lines 10-11.

this term is often used to describe those of the same nation or ethnic group, as it is surely meant here as well, it could also carry connotations of kinship, in much the same way as the *genos*.[152]

As for the soldiers, they have died "for you" (Christ) (ὑπὲρ σοῦ),[153] "for the Lord's patrimony" (ὑπὲρ κληρονομίας τεθνηκότες τῆς αὐτοῦ),[154] "for your people" (ὑπὲρ τοῦ λαοῦ σου),[155] "for the Christ-named [Christians]" (ὑπὲρ χριστωνύμων),[156] or "for the *genos* and the nation (φύλου) of Christians."[157] This last formula is worth repeating in whole for its contribution to this study. "Truly honorable is the death on behalf of the *genos* and of the Christian nation (φύλου), [which] they, whose memory we faithfully celebrate today, have suffered in captivity and war."[158]

A roughly contemporary prayer for fallen soldiers echoes this language. "They have shown themselves the foundations of the fatherland and of the entire *genos* (πατρίδος καὶ τοῦ γένους παντὸς ἑδραιώματα) by disregarding life here below as though [it were] something transitory. In order that you might save your chosen people (τὸ ἔθνος σου τὸ περιούσιον) from the hands of the barbarians, O Christ, you have given it brave fighters who have died gloriously in battles and in captivity."[159]

---

[152] Détorakis and Mossay, "Un office byzantin inédit," p.206, line 340. ...τοῖς ἡμῶν ὁμοφύλοις τοῖς ἐν πολέμοις καὶ δεσμοῖς θανοῦσιν ὑπὲρ σοῦ...

[153] Détorakis and Mossay, "Un office byzantin inédit," p.188, line 34; p.190, lines 79 and 90; p.202, line 255; p.206, line 342.

[154] Détorakis and Mossay, "Un office byzantin inédit," p.194, line 121.

[155] Détorakis and Mossay, "Un office byzantin inédit," p.192, line 110;

[156] Détorakis and Mossay, "Un office byzantin inédit," p.198, line 189.

[157] Détorakis and Mossay, "Un office byzantin inédit," p.204, lines 315-16.

[158] Ibid. Τίμιος ὁ θάνατος ἀληθῶς τῶν ὑπὲρ τοῦ γένους καὶ τοῦ φύλου χριστιανῶν τετελευτηκότων ἐν δεσμοῖς καὶ πολέμοις, ὧν σήμερον τὴν μνήμην ἐπιτελοῦμεν πιστῶς.

[159] Translation by Frank R. Trombley, "War, Society, and Popular Religion in Byzantine Anatolia (6th-13th Centuries)," in Η Βυζαντινή Μικρά Ασία (6ος-12ος αι.) (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 1998), p.98.

The question one might rightly ask is for which *genos* a soldier or general viewed himself as fighting and potentially dying. The author of this particular office may have been speaking of the *genos* of the Romans or, indeed, of all Christians, but for soldiers staring death in the face on the front lines, the motivations for doing so could be on a less esoteric level, even if the ideals they espoused were expressed or imagined in the very same language used in the office detailed above. The *genos* or *phylon* in the office could easily be understood at the familial, rather than 'national' scale, and a similar phenomenon could be the case for each instance of *patris* (that is, local or regional loyalties rather than a devotion to Constantinople or the empire it embodied).

Indeed, several surviving military handbooks from the Byzantine era attest to the practice of grouping soldiers according to geographic origins, ethnicity, and even families (fathers and sons or siblings).[160] In the heat of battle, on the front lines, soldiers may very well have been fighting for their kinsmen or *homophyloi* at their sides rather than some lofty ideal of the *genos* of (all) Christians.

When, in 970-971, Bardas Phokas took up arms against John I Tzimiskes, his motivations (as recorded by Leo the Deacon) were clear. He sought to avenge the wrongful death of his uncle, Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas, and to defend his family's honor.[161] For Bardas, and probably many of his men as well, the *genos* was central to his reasons for fighting, but this *genos* was first and foremost of the Phokades. In the fictional *Digenes Akrites*, too, taken to represent the value system of twelfth-century Byzantine elites, the *genos* as kin group is clearly the most influential social group. Battles are fought and won on its behalf, and the glory and honor thus achieved is not only celebrated primarily within the *genos*, it is also shared amongst

---

[160] For example, "On Skirmishing," a tenth century military treatise dedicated to Nikephoros II Phokas. See George T. Dennis, ed. and trans., *Three Byzantine Military Treatises* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1985), pp.137-66.
[161] For more on this episode, see above (PAGE) and chapter six of this dissertation.

its other members.[162] The *genos* of the Romans or of Christians is present in surviving versions of the tale, but most often fades into the background.

Michael Attaleiates appeals to his readers' sense of obligation to protect the empire and the people in his thinly veiled criticism of his contemporaries. "For the noble Romans of that time [the second century BCE] did not strive for money and the acquisition of wealth but simply for renown, the demonstration of their manliness, and their country's safety and splendor."[163] The renown of which Attaleiates speaks was not limited to the individual, but, following late eleventh-century ideals, was shared by the *genos*; this was certainly true of the *genos* of the Romans on a more regional or global scale, but the collective glory was more immediately relevant for the *genos* as kin group.

The continuation and preservation of the *genos*, both through reproduction and defense against external enemies, was held as one of the highest ideals in medieval Byzantium. There is every reason to believe that this held true for the *genos* as kin group as much as for the *genos* of the Romans, at least by the former concept's maturity among the aristocracy of the twelfth century. The similarities between the two forms of *genos*, and the consequences of the shared vocabulary and ideals associated with them, extended beyond such lofty virtues. It can also be witnessed in the functions of "ethnic" and private monastic foundations.

Monasteries and the *Genos*

Monastic communities were almost always consciously and overtly imagined as substitute families in Byzantium, even if monks or nuns failed to live up to the ideal of cutting all

---

[162] Magdalino, "Honour among the Romaioi," pp.193-96.
[163] Attaleiates, *History*, 27.11; Kaldellis and Krallis, eds. and trans., pp.400-01: Οὐ γὰρ πρὸς ἀργυρίου καὶ πλούτου ἐπίκτησιν οἱ εὐγενέστατοι Ῥωμαῖοι τοῦ κατ'ἐκεῖνο καιροῦ ἠγωνίζοντο, ἀλλὰ δι'εὔκλειαν μόνην καὶ ἀνδρείας ἐπίδειξιν καὶ τῆς ἰδίας πατρίδος σωτηρίαν τε καὶ λαμπρότητα.

ties with their "earthly" families.[164] In the period considered here, it became especially common

for Byzantine families, in particular amongst the aristocracy from the eleventh century onward,

to found private monastic establishments on or near their estates.[165] These were designed to act

as centers for the burial and commemoration of deceased family members, and also contributed

to each family's unique identity and cohesion.[166] So Eirene Doukaina's *typikon* of the monastery

of Kecharitomene restricted the foundation's leadership, if not its entire membership, to female

members of her immediate family and their descendants (i.e. her *genos*).[167] At the same time,

Byzantium was also home to numerous monastic foundations designed to house and cater to

people of a particular ethno-linguistic or religious affiliation. As we will see, such foundations

could serve many of the same functions for specific communities of foreigners living in the

empire as private, family foundations did for the families of their founders.

Gregory Pakourianos, who came from an old Armeno-Georgian aristocratic family, had a

successful career in the Byzantine military throughout the second half of the eleventh century.[168]

After retiring from public life, he founded a monastery dedicated to the Mother of God at

Petritzos, near Bačkovo, on some of the extensive lands he had been granted in the Balkans

thanks to his service to the Byzantine Empire and his close ties to Alexios I Komnenos. The

troops who had followed Gregory throughout his career seem to have been Georgian, and

---

[164] Talbot, "The Byzantine Family and the Monastery," passim.

[165] J.P. Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations in the Byzantine Empire* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1987).

[166] Talbot, "The Byzantine Family and the Monastery," p.120; Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations in the Byzantine Empire*.

[167] John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero, eds. *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*. Volume 2 (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), pp.649-724 (no. 27). Translation by Robert Jordan. An edition of the Greek text can be found in Paul Gautier, "Le typikon de le Théotokos Kécharitôménè," *REB* 43 (1985), pp.5-165.

[168] *ODB*, p.1553. The Pakourianos (Bakuriani) family, who had origins in the kingdom of Tayk'/Tao, is known from at least the tenth century. The question of Gregory's ethnic background, particularly whether he was in fact Georgian or Armenian, has been the topic of some debate. According to Kazhdan, with whom I am inclined to agree, the family probably "belonged to the mixed Armeno-Iberian Chalcedonian aristocracy, which dwelt in the border district of Tayk'/Tao."

Gregory himself maintained a strong sense of his Georgian identity, as is clear from the surviving *typikon* for his monastery.[169]

As in most private, family foundations, Gregory introduces himself in the prooemium of the *typikon*, including a brief description of his ancestry. He describes himself as "Gregory...the true son of Pakourianos now at blessed rest, the preeminent Prince of Princes, by birth from amongst those of the East from the most brilliant race (παμφανεστάτης φυλῆς) of the Georgians."[170] Gregory addresses the *typikon* to his "fathers and brothers", i.e. the band of Georgian troops who had followed him throughout his career.

Gregory speaks of his Georgian lineage in language remarkably similar to that used by aristocratic founders to describe their own illustrious genealogies. In the latter case, however, the *genos* in question is not an entire people, but an individual family. Thus, one finds the following phrases in the *typikon* of the monastery of the Virgin *Kecharitomene* ("of good hope," a Komnenian foundation). "Her most noble mother was herself most renowned (περιφανεστάτη) in all things, drawing the golden line of [her] *genos* from the Branai, those exceedingly glorious and famous [ones] (ἐνδόξων καὶ διαβοήτων)."[171] Again, "Their father was one of [i.e. a member] the most noble (πανευγενεστάτου) *genos* of the Palaiologoi…"[172] As in other written genres, the same stock of adjectives and modifiers, verbs and other linguistic constructions were

---

[169] P. Gautier, ed. "Le typikon du Sébaste Grégoire Pakourianos," *REB* 42 (1984), pp.5-145; An English translation can be found in John Thomas and Angela Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents* (Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), Vol. II, pp.507-63.

[170] *Typikon of Gregory Pakourianos*, proem. 17-18, ed. Gautier, p.21. τὴν γέννησίν τε ἐκ τῶν ἑῴων ἔχοντος ἐκ τῆς τῶν Ἰβήρων παμφανεστάτης φυλῆς… "The East" is a typical formulation in Byzantine contexts, typically indicating Georgia (Kartli).

[171] *Typikon of Kecharitomene*, proem. p.23, lines 22-4, in "Le typikon de le Théotokos Kécharitôménè," ed. and trans. P. Gautier, *REB* 43 (1985), pp.5-165.. "Ἡ μήτηρ δὲ εὐγενεστάτη μὲν ἦν καὶ αὐτὴ καὶ περιφανεστάτη ἐν πάσαις, ἐκ τῶν Βρανῶν, τῶν ἄγαν ἐνδόξων καὶ διαβοήτων ἐκείνων, ἕλκουσα τὴν τοῦ γένους χρυσέαν σειράν…"

[172] *Typikon of Kecharitomene*, ed. Gautier, p.23, lines 8-9. Ὧν ὁ μὲν πατὴρ τοῦ πανευγενεστάτου μὲν τῶν Παλαιολόγων γένους ἐτύγχανεν ἔν…

consistently employed both for ethnic backgrounds and for family lineages in these *typika*, thereby reinforcing the similarities already apparent in the shared vocabulary for the ethnic groups or families themselves (*genos*, *genea*, *phylon*, etc.). It is difficult to argue that the aristocratic families were using the language of ethnicity or that those like Pakourianos were consciously employing the language of kinship to describe ethnic origins. The two were effectively one and the same.

The similarities extended beyond merely the language in the foundation documents. The monastery at Bačkovo served two, related purposes. On the one hand, it served a similar function for Gregory as did the many private, family monasteries of the same period. It was intended to be the location of the burial and commemoration of Gregory and his immediate family (Gregory had the remains of his brother, Aspasios, reburied at the monastery after its completion).[173] Gregory himself did not have children, but, as argued by Rosemary Morris and suggested by Gregory's form of address to his band of followers, his fellow Georgians became a kind of substitute family.[174] The *genos* of the Georgians stood in for the *genos* of Pakourianos. At the same time, Pakourianos clearly envisioned the community as a home away from home for his loyal band of Georgian followers, who had been with him (and led by him) throughout much of his career. In one section of the *typikon* (ch. 25), Pakourianos stipulates the way in which the

---

[173] Michael Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081-1261* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.304.

[174] Rosemary Morris, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium, 843-1118* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.137. "So Gregory's action in donating lands to a monastic house in one of these regions was a sure sign of his own full identification with it. Though he had no children and was not perpetuating family ties in that sense, his prohibition on Greeks entering his foundation was a similarly exclusive action. In his case, fellow countrymen, his Georgian 'kin,' were charged with the perpetuation of the memory of the donor, but the process was essentially the same. It reflected the same concern as that shown by Symbatios Pakourianos' wish to be buried in the Georgian monastery of Iviron. In both cases, the Georgians still achieved burial among their own, but in a newly established 'native land', a replacement for their lost territories in the east."

monks should receive relatives of the monks and any Georgian visitors.[175] The two groups

("relatives" and "Georgians") are placed side-by-side, in a parallel linguistic construction.

The *typikon* is clear in its vision of a community of almost exclusively Georgian monks

who might find themselves within Byzantium's borders for whatever reason. This certainly

reflects and even reinforces the sense of solidarity (and exclusion of others) implicit in the

concept of *genos/phylon*. Pakourianos made explicit provisions in the *typikon* that tried to

exclude non-Georgian individuals from entering the monastery as monks (that is, from joining

the "family").[176]

The *vita* of John and Euthymios, founders (alongside Tornike) of the Georgian monastery

of Iviron on Mt. Athos, asserts that the holy men wished their new foundation to be equally

exclusive. "When Tornike came from the East [Georgia]," records the text, "he brought with him

many ryasophors [non-novices] and famous monks. His desire was that only Georgians should

inhabit the monastery."[177] Even when Euthymios' successor as hegoumenos of the monastery,

George, was forced to admit "Greek" monks into the community in order to bolster their

numbers, the vita stresses the special treatment reserved for Georgians who might come to

Iviron, even if just for a short time.[178] The account also suggests a certain solidarity felt among

"foreigners" who found themselves within Byzantium's borders, even those of disparate

backgrounds. It records a visit to the holy mountain by one Leo, who was the brother of the duke

---

[175] *Typikon of Gregory Pakourianos* 25, ed. Gautier 104-6.
[176] *Typikon of Gregory Pakourianos* 24, ed. Gautier pp.104-5.
[177] *The Life of our Blessed Fathers John and Euthymios*, in *Georgian Monks on Mount Athos: Two Eleventh-Century Lives of the Hegoumenoi of Iviron*, trans. Tamara Grdzelisdze (London: Bennett and Bloom, 2009), p.60, §7.
[178] *The Life of our Blessed Fathers John and Euthymios*, trans. Grdzelisdze, p.89, §24. "However, the truth must be mentioned that whenever a Georgian came, if he was capable of any service in the community, <George> provided anything he needed; if <this person> did not wish to stay within the community, he could remain in the hesychasteria of the monastery and there was no restriction in food for the Georgians."

of Benevento. Leo was reportedly given a warm welcome by John, who is supposed to have "pleaded with him [Leo] to stay there, saying: 'We are foreigners and you too are a foreigner.'"[179]

According to the *vita*, the impetus behind the foundation of Iviron came, in fact, from the renown and popularity of Tornike (who take the monastic name John). Specifically, their reputations were drawing large numbers of Georgian monks and pilgrims to the Great Lavra, where the two famous men were resident at the time. While obviously motivated, in part at least, by practical concerns, the account notes that the "difficult" task of establishing a new foundation on the holy mountain was done "only to give the souls of the Georgians peace."[180]

It is thanks to this function that the wills of Symbatios Pakourianos and his wife, Kale, two supremely important documents from the last years of the eleventh century, survive today. They each chose to designate the monastery of Iviron as an heir, and Symbatios even elected to be buried on its grounds, precisely because the monastery served as a replacement *patris*, a microcosm of the Georgian homeland left behind long ago, to which they and families like them maintained a very real attachment.[181] Gregory Pakourianos, too, is known to have had ties to Iviron, in addition to his own foundation near Bačkovo.[182] This kind of ethnic identity could remain intact over several generations, even as people and their families lived their lives and integrated themselves in Byzantine society.

---

[179] *The Life of our Blessed Fathers John and Euthymios*, trans. Grdzelisdze, p.70, §14.
[180] *The Life of our Blessed Fathers John and Euthymios*, trans. Grdzelisdze, p.59, §7.
[181] Morris, *Monks and Laymen*, p.137. "It [Bačkovo] reflected the same concern as that shown by Symbatios Pakourianos' wish to be buried in the Georgian monastery of Iviron. In both cases, the Georgians still achieved burial among their own, but in a newly established 'native land', a replacement for their lost territories in the east."
[182] *ODB*, p.1553.

Language, too, was an important factor linking the members of the early community at Iviron, which is presented quite clearly as a microcosm of the Georgian homeland left behind by many of its inhabitants. The vita of John and Euthymios records how Euthymios, when he was a boy, had not spoken fluent Georgian. After falling seriously ill, however, the saint was visited in a dream by the Virgin Mary, who commanded him to speak Georgian. Euthymios promptly obeyed.[183] The same source records numerous translation projects undertaken by the community at Iviron, many of which were sent back to Georgia (Kartli) and David Kouropalates.[184]

Viewed from the perspective of monastic foundations like those described here, it was more than just vocabulary that the two (indeed, multiple) definitions of the *genos* shared in the medieval Byzantine psyche. Private, family monasteries, which became commonplace by the eleventh century, served similar functions for the *genos* as kin group as those of "ethnic" foundations like Iviron did for the *genos* of the Georgians.[185] The conceptual overlap evident in the language of the sources provides a useful lens through which to view the very real, very important role of religious foundations in the social world of medieval Byzantium, and, thus, the importance of the *genos* as a more generalized concept.

Conclusion

In May 1294, famed scholar Maximos Planoudes wrote and delivered a panegyric dedicated to Emperor Andronikos II and his son, Michael (IX) to celebrate the latter's official coronation. The oration contains much of the praise and other rhetorical tropes familiar to

---

[183] *Life of John and Euthymios* 13, trans. Grdzelisdze, p.69.
[184] Ibid., trans. Grdzelisdze, p.67.
[185] For more complete coverage of these family monasteries, see Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations*.

imperial encomia of any period in Roman and Byzantine history. Yet this oration is of particular interest because Planoudes relies on precisely the kind of linguistic and conceptual similarities among the various meanings of genos to make one of his central arguments. As Dimiter Angelov describes it, "Playing on the multiple meanings of the Greek word *genos*, Planoudes pointed to the Romans as the emperor's [Andronikos II] real family and described them as a warlike people, who were not traders like the Phoenicians and not simple farmers like the Egyptians."[186] It was not only the linguistic, but also the deeper, conceptual similarities between the *genos* of the Romans and the *genos* as kin group that allowed Planoudes to successfully employ his metaphor and imbued his rhetoric with powerful meaning. Without the similarities in both form and function understood in the term, Planoudes' wordplay would be meaningless.

One's relationship with his/her *genos*, whether the *genos* of the Romans or the *genos* as family, carried with it much the same meaning, but on different scales, at least from the eleventh or twelfth century onward. Like other identity sets, which of the two forms of *genos* played a greater role in motivating a particular action or in defining an individual would depend on the circumstances and could, in fact, change from moment to moment.[187] Leonora Neville has argued, convincingly, that Byzantine society was one defined relationally, rather than in absolute terms.[188] That is, individuals understood their own position in society relative to those with whom they came in contact. Social rank was contextual, not absolute. So too, it would seem,

---

[186] Dimiter G. Angelov, "Byzantine imperial panegyric as advice literature (1204-c. 1350)," in *Rhetoric in Byantium. Papers from the Thirty-fifth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Exeter College, University of Oxford, March 2001*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys (Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), pp.55-74, p. 60. The text of the speech has been edited and published in three parts. L. Westerink, "Le basilikos de Maxime Planude," *Byzantinoslavica* 27 (1966): pp.98-103; 28 (1967): pp.54-67; 29 (1968): pp.34-50.
[187] See, for example, John Haldon and Hugh Kennedy, "Regional Identities and Military Power: Byzantium and Islam ca.600-750," in *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World: The West, Byzantium and the Islamic World, 300-1100*, ed. Walter Pohl, Clemens Gantner, and Richard Payne (Ashgate, 2012), pp.317-18.
[188] Leonora Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950-1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.66-8.

was the *genos* to which one looked as the core social group to which he or she belonged. This was probably truer in the twelfth century than it had been in the tenth or earlier.

Together with *patris* (fatherland), the *genos* formed the core of Byzantine identity in any period. Following the evidence, both concepts could be understood at varying levels. One's *patris* might alternately appear as Constantinople or the Empire of the Romans or, on a more local level, a particular region, theme, city, or even village. Similarly, it seems the *genos* taken to be of most importance or relevance in a given situation could be expressed as that of the Romans or Christians (or even mankind) on the one end of the spectrum, or an individual family or kin group on the other. In both concepts, certainly for the *genos* at least, it seems that the same set of ideals, expectations, and connotations rang true, regardless of the size or nature of the *genos* concerned.

One must be careful not to overstate the significance of a shared vocabulary for two or more distinct phenomena. Yet, as Dion Smythe has stated, "words and language are not passive reflectors of an observable, phenomenologically distinct object or range of objects out there, rather they are part of the symbolic screen that sifts, edits and rationalizes sense-impressions and perceptions into a recognizable form…ways of thinking are influenced by the ways in which those thoughts are communicated."[189] The object of Smythe's study from which this quote was taken may have been the study of gender and the question of "negative semantic space for women," but his argument is equally true for the study of the language of kinship (not least because of the close link between gender/sex and kinship).

---

[189] Dion Smythe, "Women as Other," in *Men, Women and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*, ed. Liz James (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p.154.

Changes in the language of kinship were certainly affected by larger cultural trends of the period. It is commonly acknowledged, for example, that in the eleventh century "Hellenism, humanism and individualism came to the fore."[190] For this reason (and others), shifts in the vocabulary of kinship cannot and should not be taken as necessarily indicative of social change, at least in a simple, one-to-one binary. This is especially true for changes in kinship structures, which tend to be conservative and slow to change in almost any culture. Still, there are examples of a linguistic approach proving insightful in the study of the medieval Mediterranean world and Europe.[191]

The aristocratic kin groups of the eleventh century and later were distinct in many ways from forms of the family found in earlier periods in Byzantium, and contemporary authors could have chosen any one of many terms to designate such families. The fact that, by the late eleventh century, Byzantine authors (and presumably many of those who have left no written record) had settled upon the ancient term *genos*, with all of the baggage such an important concept carried with it, to designate such family groups should not be brushed aside as a simple coincidence or meaningless choice. Indeed, it would only make sense that the designation of aristocratic kin groups as *genē* reflects certain characteristics seen by contemporaries as reflecting those already attached to the *genos* in its other uses. This very notion seems to be supported by the linguistic evidence of the tenth through twelfth centuries.

The link between *genos* as kin group and *genos* as ethnic group, as well as the combination of local and "natural" origins inherent within Blemmydes' *genos*, is more than a

---

[190] Paul Magdalino, "Cultural Change? The Context of Byzantine Poetry from Geometres to Prodromos," in *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-century Byzantium*, ed. Floris Bernard and Kristoffel Demoen (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), p.19.

[191] Lubich's study of the language of kinship and the ways in which linguistic changes shed light on social changes is an excellent example. See Lubich, *Verwandtsein*.

simple, linguistic coincidence. In all cases, whether speaking of an ethnic group or a much smaller family unit, the use of the term *genos* clearly indicated a certain set of shared characteristics that were considered inherent and inalienable within the in-group. Belonging to a *genos*, no matter on what scale, seems to have carried with it a certain set of obligations and ideals that were largely consistent whether one is speaking of the *genos* of the Komnenoi or the *genos* of the Romans.

Chapter Three: Marriage Impediments and their Consequences for the Genos

Ἐν τοῖς γάμοις οὐ μόνον τὸ ἐπιτετραμμένον, ἀλλὰ καὶ
τὸ εὐπρεπὲς καὶ σεμνὸν καὶ φύσει δίκαιον ζητοῦμεν.

"In marriages, we seek not only what is allowed [by law], but
also that which is seemly, honorable, and just according to nature."
- *Basilika* 28.5.7

Chapter one demonstrated that the Byzantine *genos* as kin group, comprising exclusively

an individual's consanguineous family, corresponded to what the legal sources refer to as

"natural kinship" (*physike syggeneia*). Impediments to marriage based upon consanguinity,

which effectively determined the limits of legally recognized "natural kinship" for the purposes

of legal marriage, may thus be understood as equally determining the structural limits of the

singular *genos*, at least from the perspective of those engaging with Byzantine civil and canon

law. The civil laws governing inheritance rights in the case of intestate death, the other major

area in which Byzantine law took an interest in the consanguineous family, remained largely

stable from the tenth through the twelfth century, setting the outer limit of relatives of the

deceased who might hope to claim some portion of his/her estate at the seventh degree of

consanguinity (children of one's second cousin). This fact would come to have a significant

impact on the eleventh- and twelfth-century debates over the extension of marriage impediments

and, thus, of the *genos*.

This chapter will demonstrate that debates over the degree to which consanguineous

kinship prevented intermarriage according to canon and secular law amounted to no less than

debates over the extent of the *genos* as a single family unit and that those engaged in these

debates understood this as their task. The extension of marriage impediments, more than anything else, marked the moments at which the Byzantine sense of the family "expanded," and the language used by those jurists and canonists who participated in these debates reflects an understanding of the *genos* in line with the definition established in the previous chapter. Finally, an analysis of the late twelfth-century debates over the union of man and wife as "one flesh" will show that both the definition of the *genos* and the significance of "shared blood" was at stake, particularly affecting the status of women as members of both their parental *genos* and, potentially, that of their husbands. A core concept of this chapter holds that the sources concerning marriage impediments and the theory undergirding them are some of the clearest and most important sources for the *genos* as a socio-cultural phenomenon. This is largely due to the fact that the *genos* consistently appears throughout all surviving sources as the most common form of the family explicitly mentioned in marriage law and litigation.

Marriage was one of the most important milestones an individual would expect to reach in Byzantium and, along with birth and death, appears in multiple sources as one of the most momentous occasions in an individual's life course not only for the individual but for his or her family as well. With the exception of eunuchs, some slaves, and those destined from an early age for the religious life, every Byzantine would expect to participate in the institution of marriage regardless of wealth or social standing, making marriage a near universal rite of passage in the Byzantine world. The wedding ceremony and celebration, in addition to one's choice of husband or wife, involved not only the individual, but each spouse's extended family, and its importance both to the individual and to their kinsmen is reflected in a wide range of sources from

Byzantium from all periods.[1] This near-universal significance is reflected in the language and arguments used by jurists and clergy in the eleventh through thirteenth centuries, as they grappled with issues that they understood to be fundamental to human kinship.

Marriage impediments, especially as they pertained to consanguineous relations, are of particular interest to the study of the *genos*, since, designed as they were to prevent incest, they give the clearest indication of Byzantine thinking regarding the outer limits of the singular, "natural" family (and thus, of the *genos*). Also of interest are debates that raged over the calculation of degrees of kinship as applied to affinity, necessitating as it did the clarification of the union of a husband and wife as "one flesh," for this was perhaps the only way in which, according to Byzantine reckoning, a *genos* might be expanded without the birth of a child. As evidenced by the words of Byzantines clergy and jurists themselves, the debates over the limits of non-marriageable kin amounted to no less than an interrogation of the nature of kinship and the family in a Byzantine context. It is in the surviving evidence from legal rulings and other contributions to these debates that Byzantine society formulated and altered their own, culturally specific understanding of kinship and the family. In this context, it was the *genos*, not the *oikos*/household, that was the form of family in question.

Marriage Impediments prior to 997

Over the *longue durée*, the story of Byzantine marriage impediments is one of gradual expansion. While Emperor Augustus' first-century attempts to legislate morality within the

---

[1] In general, see: Angeliki Laiou, *Mariage, amour, et parenté à Byzance aux XIe-XIIIe siècles* (Paris: De Boccard, 1992).

confines of marriage and the family are deservedly well-known, it was not until more than three

centuries later that Constantine the Great opened the door to imperial legislative efforts to govern

marriage (and divorce).[2] Already in 342, the emperors Constantius and Constans outlawed uncle-

niece marriages, which seem already to have been generally regarded as taboo even before it

became written into the law.[3] This prohibition remained largely uncontroversial and was almost

universally accepted (with the famous exception of Emperor Heraclius' marriage to his niece,

Martina). Another major change occurred in 691/2 CE at the so-called Quinisext Council (also

known as the Council in Trullo). Among other things, the Council prohibited marriages between

first cousins. It was also at this time that spiritual kinship was determined to be more powerful

than natural, thus extending marriage prohibitions to include relationships created by baptismal

sponsorship and other forms of spiritual bonds.[4] In the mid-eighth century, the emperor Leo III

oversaw the production of the *Ekloga*, the first major compilation of Byzantine law following the

great work of Justinian. The degree to which many of its laws were implemented in later years is

difficult to answer, as it was forever associated with Leo III's iconoclast policies (one motivating

factor behind the composition of the *Basilika* just over a century later). The *Ekloga* incorporated

much of canon law into its pages, which is in keeping with the heavily Christian tone of the

collection's preface.[5] It is partly for this reason that the collection devotes a great deal of space

to family law, broadly defined, especially marriage. It is here, for instance, that one finds for the

---

[2] Marie Theres Fögen, "Legislation in Byzantium: A Political and a Bureaucratic Technique," in *Law and Society in Byzantium, Ninth-Twelfth Centuries*, ed. Angeliki Laiou and Dieter Simon (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994), pp.57-8.

[3] Évelyne Patlagean, "Families and Kinships in Byzantium," in *A History of the Family, Vol. 1: Distant Worlds, Ancient Worlds*, ed. Burguière, Klapisch-Zuber, Segalen, and Zonabend (The Belknap Press of Harvard U Press: Cambridge, MA, 1996), pp.469-70.

[4] This prohibition did not extend to the same degree as that placed on consanguineous kin. See: Ruth Macrides, "The Byzantine Godfather." *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 11 (1987): 139-62; Macrides, "Kinship by Arrangement: The Case of Adoption." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 44 (1990): 109-18.

[5] Edwin H. Freshfield, ed. and trans., *A Manual of Roman Law: The Ecloga* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926).

first time in 'secular' law marriage between first cousins prohibited and the extension of this prohibition to include second cousins.

The reign of Leo VI (886-912) is widely recognized as a crucial moment in the history of the Byzantine family and marriage, at least from a legal standpoint. Not only did his reign see the completion of the *Basilika*, an achievement of obvious import for the rest of Byzantium's independent existence, but the emperor himself issued no fewer than 113 *novellae*, a large number of which deal with issues concerning family life, marriage, and inheritance.[6] Furthermore, Leo's desire for a legitimate heir to the throne led to his marrying four times (known as the Tetragamy affair), which triggered a bitter rift among the clergy and led to a schism within the Byzantine church that would only come to an end with the so-called Tome of Union in 920. Among Leo's many *novellae*, one in particular had a lasting impact on the way in which marriage was governed. Novel 89 made the blessing of a priest mandatory for a legitimate marriage, the first time in Byzantine history that this had been done.[7] Previously, while many people certainly received the church's blessing as part of their wedding celebrations, this had not been required to receive legal recognition of one's union. This change effectively laid the groundwork for the church's later claim to sole (or at least primary) control over the institution of marriage.[8]

---

[6] The monumental lawcode known as the *Basilika* was essentially a codification and translation of Justinian's *Corpus Iuris Civilis* with some updates and alterations. It became the foundation of all imperial law in Byzantium from the time of its completion until the end of the empire (and even into the early modern Greek state).

[7] P. Noailles and A. Dain, ed. and trans*., Les novelles de Léon VI le sage* (Paris: Société d'édition 'Les belles lettres,' 1944), pp.294-96. This had previously been done by the empress (Eirene? Theodora?), though it was not codified into law until Leo VI's *novella*.

[8] It has also been noted that, from at least Leo VI's reign, the language used for adoptions or baptismal sponsorship had become nearly identical, reflecting the further blending of spiritual and legal kinship. See: Ruth J. Macrides, "The Byzantine Godfather," Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies 11 (1987), pp.139-62.

This chapter utilizes evidence originating both from members of the clergy and from those holding positions in the imperial administration, often treating the two side-by-side. While the distinction is far from irrelevant, it would be a mistake to imagine a stark division between what we might call "secular" law (i.e. imperial law) and canon law (i.e. regulations emanating from the church or clergy), at least for laws regulating marriage and other aspects of family life. Nearly all the major milestones in the formation of regulations of marriage practices originated in the church, whether from ecumenical councils, patriarchal tomes, or decisions in specific cases brought before a bishop. Though the reign of Alexios I Komnenos is sometimes regarded as the time when the imperial throne more or less officially gave up its claim to authority in marriage law in deference to clerical authorities, the trend can be seen throughout most of the early and middle Byzantine periods.[9] Surviving evidence, fragmentary as it may be, suggests that the majority of cases involving marriage still went before civil judges in the first quarter of the eleventh century, while most such cases instead seem to have gone through episcopal courts less than fifty years later.[10] In many instances, imperial law codes (like the *Ekloga* or the *Basilika*) or *novellae* simply codified what had already been decided by church authorities, and, when Leo VI legislated that all marriages must be blessed by a priest (in the late ninth century), the struggle between church and state over marriage controls had more or less been decided. At the same time, however, both members of the aristocracy and even emperors themselves continued to exhibit a desire to control their own marriages (and, in the cases of emperors, those of other members of the elite) as a vital means of establishing links and support systems within Byzantine high society and even with foreign potentates. Even if the church had gained the upper hand in the contest for authority over marriage policies, this authority did not remain uncontested, nor

---

[9] Angold, *Church and Society under the Comneni*, esp. p.412.
[10] Angold, *Church and Society under the Comneni*, p.407.

would it be accurate to speak of the church as a monolith throughout the period. Some of the

most stinging critiques of several, important rulings on marriage issued by the patriarchate of

Constantinople in the tenth through the thirteenth century came from members of the clergy.

In general, the views developed by the church on questions of marriage tended to be

stricter than those laid out by 'secular' law, though the latter was continually adjusted to fall in

line with the former. This was true of the prohibition against fourth marriages, which was

already put forward by the likes of St. Basil of Caesarea in the fourth century, but which only

entered formally into Byzantine law books with the Tome of Union in 920. [11] The legislation of

Leo VI (r.886-912), who took a keen interest in marriage and inheritance in his many *novellae*,

took measures to make betrothal more or less the equivalent of marriage, and, in doing so,

referred specifically to canon 98 of the late seventh-century Council in Trullo (691/2).[12]

Marriage impediments for collateral and affinal kin as they appear in the law code of 741, the

Ekloga, fell more or less completely in line with the rules agreed upon by the same church

council.[13] While marriage between individuals related to the seventh degree of kinship was only

deemed forbidden officially in 1166, in practice, this had been the position of the church

throughout most of the eleventh century.[14] Still, despite the apparent victory of the church over

the state in the competition for control over the institution of marriage, the issue was never

completely settled. Even in 1199, for example, the marriage of one Kapandrites to Eudokia, the

---

[11] Angeliki Laiou, "Marriage Prohibitions, Marriage Strategies and the Dowry in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium," in *La transmission du patrimoine: Byzance et l'aire méditerranéenne*, eds. J. Beaucamp and G. Dagron (Paris: De Boccard, 1998), p.132.
[12] See especially Novels 18 and 93, in Noailles and Dain, ed. and trans., *Les novelles de Léon VI* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1944), pp.68-72, 306-8.
[13] Angeliki Laiou, "The Evolution of the Status of Women in Marriage and Family Law," in *Mother, Nun, Deaconess: Images of Women According to Eastern Canon Law (Kanon XVI)*, ed. E.M. Synek (Egling: Edition Roman Kovar, 2000), pp.71-2.
[14] Rhalles and Potles V, pp.95-8. The ruling came in the form of an official decision of the synod of bishops during the tenure of Luke Chrysoberges as Patriarch of Constantinople. It was issued both in his name and in the name of Emperor Manuel Komnenos.

second cousin of Kapandrites' first wife, was at first permitted by a civil tribunal, but the decision was then overturned by the Patriarch John Kamateros.[15]

The decisions or statements established by canon law "did not really have the force of law until and unless they were incorporated in imperial legislation, either formally, or more informally, i.e., with a statement that a particular piece of legislation was ordered or accepted by the Emperor."[16] A further complication arises from the overlapping and, at times, conflicting spheres of influence and authority in matters concerning marriage between the church and the state. An individual in eleventh-century Byzantium could choose to take his suit or legal question either to a civil judge or an episcopal court (or perhaps both) depending on circumstances. Our current knowledge of Byzantine legal practice does not allow for a comprehensive description of the interaction between civil judges or jurists and clergy in the practice of law, especially outside of Constantinople, but this is not of immediate consequence here. Instead, the focus of this chapter remains on the philosophical, theoretical, and theological underpinnings of changing definitions of the *genos* (i.e. the singular, consanguineous family) in tenth- through twelfth-century Byzantium as presented by the evidence emanating both from the church and from the state.

---

[15] Rhalles and Potles V, pp.395-6; Grumel, *Regestes*, n. 1193; Jean Darrouzès, "Questions de droit matrimonial: 1172-1175," *REB* 35 (1977), p.113.

[16] Angeliki Laiou, "The Evolution of the Status of Women in Marriage and Family Law," p.71.

Debates surrounding the Seventh Degree of Consanguinity, ca. 997-1166[17]

Perhaps the single most important event of the tenth century for the future of marriage

controls in Byzantium occurred in February 997 with the issuing of the so-called Tome of

Sisinnios, Patriarch of Constantinople.[18] At its most basic level, the tome prohibited the marriage

of two siblings to two first cousins, of and uncle and nephew to two sisters, or of an aunt and her

niece with two brothers.[19] Beyond this (ostensibly limited) scope, however, the Tome of

Sisinnios initiated a period of intense debate among jurists and canonists, even including

emperors at times, over the definition of the family and the limits of kinship as it affected the

theoretical basis for arguments designating allowable marriages among both consanguineous and

affinal kin. Most of these arguments, which took place over a long period between the early

eleventh century into the early thirteenth, centered upon two core issues: the extension of

prohibitions of marriage from the sixth to the seventh degree of consanguinity and the

calculation of degrees of affinity based upon the biblical maxim that a man and his wife become

"one flesh" at the time of their marital union. The former issue stemmed from a combination of

factors, primarily the idea that consanguineous kinship was more powerful or more important

---

[17] It is the purpose of this section to illustrate the place of the *genos* in the major debates over the extension of marriage impediments to include the seventh degree of consanguinity that occurred among the clergy in this period. It is not intended to be an exhaustive analysis of the broader intellectual or theological currents of this time, a project which would take up much more time and space. For more complete analyses, see especially: Konstantinos G. Pitsakes (Κωνσταντίνος Γ. Πιτσάκης), Το κώλυμα γάμου λόγω συγγενείας εβδόμου βαθμού εξ αίματος στο βυζαντινό δίκαιο [*The prohibition of marriage by reason of the seventh degree of consanguinity in Byzantine law*] (Athens: Nomikes Ekdoseis-Ant. N. Sakkoula, 1985); J. Zhishman, *Das Eherecht der orientalischen Kirche* (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1864); Laiou, *Mariage, amour et parenté*.

[18] Andreas Schminck, "Kritik am Tomos des Sisinnios," *Fontes Minores* II (1977), pp.215-54. In Schminck's words, "Der am 21. Februar 997 von einer Synode des Patriarchen Sisinnios II. (996-998) erlassene Tomos über das Ehehindernis der Schwägerschaft ist aus mehreren Gründen das bedeutendste Dokument des byzantinischen Eherechts." (p.215).

[19] Rhalles and Potles V, pp.11-19. Prior to the issuance of the Tome of Sisinnios, Canon 54 of the Council in Trullo had set the regulations on affinity, forbidding marriage of father and son with a mother and daughter, two sisters with father and son, two brothers with a mother and daughter or two brothers with two sisters. Ludwig Burgmann, "Turning Sisinnios against the Sisinnians: Eustathios Romaios on a Disputed Marriage," in *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, ed. Paul Magdalino (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p.164.

than affinity, and a desire among some thinkers to link marriage impediments to inheritance law, which was equally governed by the calculation of degrees of consanguinity according to the *Basilika*.[20] The latter debate focused on the interpretation and application of the Tome of Sisinnios in proposed marriages between affines, in particular the question of whether the Tome prohibited all marriages between those related to the sixth degree of affinity or simply those cases specifically mentioned by the patriarch. In both instances, it was the Tome of Sisinnios and, more importantly, its interpretation as a more or less broadly defined prohibition, that prompted the flurry of discussion and the large number of documents that survive pertaining to such questions.

The Tome was so influential and spurred so much discussion that Sisinnios the man became something of a legendary figure. He was so highly regarded as an authority on marriage that numerous later works were spuriously ascribed to him. He was, among other things, credited with finally resolving the rift in the church created by Leo VI's fourth marriage.[21] An act of patriarch Michael Keroularios, dated to 1051/2, claims that Sisinnios "had frequented the law-courts from childhood and was still leafing daily through the law-books when he was grey-haired."[22] Importantly, it was not only the law in which various sources claim Sisinnios was especially well-versed. In Skylitzes' history, he is described as "a man of great renown and most highly skilled in the art of medicine."[23] This assertion is not without significance.[24]

---

[20] Primarily found in Book 45, Title 3.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ludwig Burgmann, "Turning Sisinnios against the Sisinnians: Eustathios Romaios on a Disputed Marriage," in *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, ed. Paul Magdalino (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p.161; V. Grumel-Darrouzès, *Les Regestes des actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople,* no.858.

[23] John Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811-1057*, trans. John Wortley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.323.

[24] For more on this, see chapter four of this dissertation.

Unsurprisingly, the Tome of Sisinnios has attracted a large amount of attention by modern scholars, including historians of Byzantine law, church, aristocracy, and, of course, family. Andreas Schminck sees the Tome of Sisinnios as the singular moment in which the church effectively "annexed" control over the institution of marriage from the state,[25] as did Laiou (along with Novel 26 of Emperor Leo VI).[26] Not all scholars have interpreted the Tome in such a way, however. Some have seen primary drive for its issuance coming not from the patriarch himself, but rather from Emperor Basil II, and have argued that the decree should be understood as part of Basil's attempts to curb the growing power of the aristocracy by making it more difficult for such powerful families to reinforce their ties to one another through multiple marriages and, in the process, to accumulate ever greater wealth.[27] Whatever the impetus behind its issuance or its intended purpose, there can be no doubt that it was a highly influential document that instigated and shaped intense discussion among Byzantine thinkers for the next few centuries.

The *genos* and related ideas feature prominently in the Tome. The patriarch describes marriage as the "root and pedestal of the *genos*" and "the workshop of our nature."[28] Interestingly, this language is known from Late Antique texts, where the "workshop of nature" was used to refer to the womb.[29] Such language, combined with the fact that the patriarch opens his statement with a prolonged metaphor comparing his efforts in expanding marriage prohibitions to the work of a medical doctor, seems to support Skylitzes' claim that Sisinnios was

---

[25] Schminck, "Kritik am Tomos des Sisinnios," p.215.
[26] Laiou, *Mariage, amour, et parenté*, p.9. Leo VI's *novella*, among other things, extols the virtue of having children as not only ensuring the continuation of the human race, but also as providing joy to parents.
[27] Laiou, *Mariage, amour, et parenté*, pp.170-1.
[28] Rhalles and Potles V, p.12. "Καὶ ἐπεὶ ῥίζαν καὶ ὑποβάθραν τοῦ γένους, καὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας φύσεως ἐργαστήριον, τὸν σεμνὸν γάμον ᾔδεσαν ὄντα..."
[29] G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.545.

at least familiar with some medical teachings of the likes of Galen.[30] Consistent with many of the

opinions expressed before and after him, Sisinnios seems quite clearly to have understood his

task not as the extension of the legal bounds of non-marriageable kin, but as the continuing

search for the limits that God and nature had already established. As part of this search, one of

the most influential ideas to come out of the Tome did not belong to Sisinnios himself, but was

drawn from the works of St. Basil of Caesarea penned nearly half a millennium before Sisinnios'

Tome.

As quoted in the Tome, Basil's Canon 87 states that any marriage that would cause "the

confusion of the names of the *genos*" is to be regarded as "incestuous" (ἀθέμιτος).[31] That is, any

marriage that would create a situation in which the same individual might be described using two

different kinship designations (e.g. uncle and cousin) contravenes the pre-ordained limits,

established by nature itself, within which a marriage is incestuous. Basil and later Byzantine

thinkers were of the opinion that these "names" (i.e. kinship designations) had been determined

by nature itself, and thus acted as indicators of the natural order in questions of marriageability.

Many of the individuals who would weigh in on the various debates over marriage impediments

in the wake of the Tome of Sisinnios would borrow not only the patriarch's final decision (the

new list of un-marriageable kin), but also his language, sources, and methods of argumentation.

The Tome of Sisinnios prompted the use of degrees to calculate prohibitions based on

affinity (in addition to consanguinity) for the first time in Byzantine history, the first known use

of which was in 1025 by Eustathios Romaios.[32] According to some Byzantine commentators,

---

[30] Rhalles and Potles V, pp.11-12.
[31] Rhalles and Potles V, p.16. Ἐν οἷς, φησὶ, τὰ τοῦ γένους συγχέονται ὀνόματα, ἐν τούτοις ὁ γάμος ἀθέμιτος. The same idea is later expressed in the Tome simply as the "intermingling of the *genos*" (συγχύσεις τοῦ γένους).
[32] Burgmann, "Turning Sisinnios against the Sisinnians," p.174.

Sisinnios' Tome did not simply prohibit marriages between the specific relations mentioned in the text, but between any two people related to the sixth degree of affinity.[33] Others, many of whom were serving or had previously served as judges in the imperial bureaucracy, preferred a stricter interpretation of the text. The former party seems to have gained the upper hand rather quickly, and, as a result, the debate quickly moved from the issue of affinity to that of marriage among consanguineous kin. For, the reasoning went, if marriage was prohibited for reasons of affinity to the sixth degree, it would only be right that the prohibitions among consanguines (then also set at the sixth degree) should be extended to reflect the relative strength and importance of the bond of blood.[34] The number of known decisions (either surviving in full or partial text or mentioned in some other sources) concerning marriage impediments stemming from either the patriarchal synod or individual bishops increase dramatically after the issuance of the Tome of Sisinnios. Some of this may be the result of chance survivals, but the lack of mention in contemporary sources strongly suggests that the church and state simply were not as interested in marriage impediments prior to this period.[35] Extensions of marriage impediments, especially among consanguines, were relatively rare occurrences in Byzantium, marking the explosion of debate in the aftermath of the Tome's dissemination all the more significant.

---

[33] Degrees of affinity, a new phenomenon in eleventh-century Byzantium, were typically found by first identifying the marriage that produced the affinity between the man and woman in question. Then the number of degrees separating each of these individuals with their respective kinsman (by blood) in the marriage that linked the two families were simply added together. So, for example, if a man and a woman who wished to marry one another were already bonded through ties of affinity because of the marriage of his first cousin (related to him to the fourth degree) with her sister (her relative at the second degree), the two of them would then be considered relatives at the sixth degree of affinity.

[34] Angold, *Church and Society under the Comneni*, p.408. "The prohibited degrees [of marriage] would be extended to the seventh degree of consanguinity, the argument being that blood relationships were a more serious bar to marriage than relationships by marriage."

[35] It is worth noting that the monumental work of Pitsakes, still the only major work dedicated solely to the extension of marriage prohibitions to the seventh degree of consanguinity, begins his study in the patriarchate of Alexios the Stoudite. Pitsakes, *Τὸ κώλυμα γάμου*.

For much of the eleventh and early twelfth century, the debate raged over the issue of the seventh degree of consanguinity, which was not prohibited by the *Basilika* or imperial *novellae* (at least until 1166), but which the church increasingly viewed as off limits beginning in the 1020s.[36] Seemingly triggered by the Tome of Sisinnios, jurists and clergy were able to assert their positions based largely on a truism found repeated in both secular and canon law throughout this period (and earlier), which stated that, in questions of potential marriages, one ought to seek out "not only that which is allowed by law, but also that which is seemly, honorable, and just according to nature."[37] This clause, which was perhaps the single most foundational precept guiding nearly all inquiries into marriage impediments in Byzantium from the fourth century to the fourteenth, was originally stated by the famed jurist Herennius Modestinus in the mid-third century CE and subsequently repeated in both Justinian's sixth-century *Digest* and the tenth-century law code known as the *Basilika*. It allowed both imperial officials and, especially, clergy a certain amount of freedom of movement when it came to deciding marriage impediments. Significantly, it also opened the field for theological or philosophical arguments designed to establish the limits of the individual *genos*, thereby deciding the theoretical underpinnings of what could be deemed "seemly."[38]

---

[36] Ibid.

[37] D 23.2.42 = *Basilika* 28.5.7.; Pitsakes, *Τὸ κώλυμα γάμου*, p.4. Ἐν τοῖς γάμοις οὐ μόνον τὸ ἐπιτετραμμένον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ εὐπρεπὲς καὶ σεμνὸν καὶ φύσει δίκαιον ζητοῦμεν.

[38] A case from the mid-twelfth century illustrates the use of this phrase alongside Basil the Great's Canon 87. Basil Achridenos, archbishop of Thessaloniki in the 1150s, wrote an *apokrisis* (ἀπόκρισις, lit. "reply" or "answer") concerning two proposed marriages. Basil's short ruling on the case, in which two siblings wish to marry another man and woman related to the fifth degree of consanguinity, contains several informative references to the *genos* as understood by the twelfth-century bishop. The opening paragraph describes how Ioulianos and Ioanno, siblings "from another *genos*" (ἕτεροι δύο αὐτάδελφοι ἐξ ἑτέρου γένους), desired to marry one Sophia and Symeon, whose ties of consanguinity have just been described. Central to the argument made by Basil, like many of his contemporaries, is Canon 87 of Basil the Great."Any marriage that causes the confusion of [names] of the *genos*, these marriages are incestuous (ἀθέμιτος)." The bishop explains how "such a confusion [of names] is unseemly (τὸ ἀπρεπές)." This short phrase links Basil of Caesarea's theory of names, as determined by nature and thus indicative of certain natural restraints, with the oft-cited passage from the *Basilika* that held that, in the case of marriage, not

Patriarch Alexios Stoudites (1025-43), along with the synod of bishops, summed up the law regarding marriage impediments in the first half of the eleventh century in a synodal decision (*apophasis synodike*): "The law allows the marriage of those who are of the eighth degree [of consanguinity] to one another, and prohibits those of the sixth. As for those related to the seventh degree, [the law] nowhere allows it [explicitly], nor is it completely denied, and because of this, [when] doubts similar [to this case] have often been put in motion...such a marriage has not been allowed before it has taken place, but after it happens, it is not dissolved, though those who have thus been joined [in marriage] are subjected to punishments (i.e. penance)..."[39] The list of known decisions emanating from the synod of bishops in the eleventh century bears out the unsettled nature of this question in episcopal courts.

The decision in which Stoudites delivered the summary quoted here, issued in April of 1038, declared that, since the marriage in question had already been contracted, the spouses were allowed to maintain their relationship and suffered only some requisite penance.[40] In a case less than fourteen years later, however, the metropolitan bishop of Corinth prevented a proposed marriage between a man and woman related to the eighth degree of consanguinity, a decision that received support from then-patriarch Michael Keroularios.[41] Another case dated to March or April 1092 saw the patriarchal synod sanction the contested marriage of an uncle and his niece with an aunt and her nephew (amounting to the sixth-degree of affinity), long after the broader interpretation of the Tome of Sisinnios, according to which such a marriage would be off limits,

---

only that which is allowed must be sought after, but also that which is "seemly" (εὐπρεπὲς) and "honorable/holy" (σεμνὸν). Rhalles and Potles V, pp.389-90.

[39] Rhalles and Potles V, pp.36-7: ὁ δὲ δὴ νόμος ἐπιτρέπει τοῖς ὀγδόου βαθμοῦ πρὸς ἀλλήλους οὖσι τὸν γάμον, ἀπαγορεύει δὲ τοῖς τοῦ ἕκτου, τοῖς γε μὴν ἑβδόμου οὐδαμοῦ οὔτε ἐπιτρέπει, οὔτε ἀπαρνεῖται, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πολλάκις ὁμοίων ἀμφισβητήσεων κινηθεισῶν...τὸν τοιοῦτον γάμον, πρὸ μὲν τοῦ προβῆναι, μὴ ἐπιτρέπεσθαι, μετὰ δὲ τὸ γενέσθαι, μὴ διασπᾶσθαι μὲν, ἐπιτιμίοις δὲ τοὺς οὕτω συναφθέντας καθυποβάλλεσθαι..."
[40] Grumel, *Regestes*, No. 844.
[41] Grumel, *Regestes*, No. 858; Rhalles and Potles V, pp.40-5.

had gained a consensus of support among the clergy.[42] Such flexibility in the enforcement of canon law was not unique to this period, especially in marriage litigation, because of the principle of *oikonomia*, which allowed bishops acting as judges to freely grant exceptions to some individuals based upon context. This is precisely why many cases came before episcopal rather than civil courts, especially for marriages.[43]

The patriarchate of Alexios Stoudites (1025-43) was an important moment in the church's position on marriage impediments (in addition to the patriarch's relationship toward the imperial throne).[44] His time as Patriarch of Constantiople saw the controversy over the seventh degree of consanguinity reach the imperial throne in the contested marriage of soon-to-be emperor Romanos (III) Argyros. Romanos, who at the time held the position of Eparch of the City (of Constantinople), was handpicked by Constantine VIII to be his successor. Part of the agreement, however, was that the candidate marry one of Constantine's two eligible daughters. There was one major issue: Romanos was already married. Sources differ on the details, but one way or another, his first wife took the monastic habit, which allowed Romanos to re-marry. The difficulties of the proposed match, however, were not over. Nearly all sources agree that Romanos was a blood relative of Constantine's daughters. While most regarded him as a third cousin (thus related to the eighth degree), Yahya of Antioch records that Romanos' grandfather (not great-grandfather) was brother-in-law to Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, meaning

---

[42] Grumel, *Regestes*, No. 961.

[43] Ioannis M. Konidaris, "The Ubiquity of Canon Law," in Law and Society in Byzantium, Ninth through Twelfth Centuries, ed. Angeliki Laiou and Dieter Simon (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994), pp.134-5. "*Oikonomia* means that the church, for reasons of equity, may refrain from applying the otherwise applicable law, either in the future or in retrospect, in such a way that in the former case one does not suffer the consequences, and in the latter the consequences become milder...something which in a certain situation and at a particular time is forbidden, may be forgiven and allowable under other circumstances and at a different time." *Oikonomia* was especially common in cases involving questions of marriage, which made canon law considerably more flexible than its imperial counterpart.

[44] Pitsakes, pp.149-83.

151

Romanos and his new wife were related to the seventh degree of consanguinity.[45] Theodora, the younger of the two sisters, is recorded as having refused the proposed marriage, perhaps on the grounds of kinship, though her older sister, Zoe, acquiesced to her father's wishes.[46] The marriage of Romanos to Zoe was eventually permitted by Patriarch Alexios, who received the support of the synod of bishops, though it was long remembered as a controversial union whose legitimacy was forever suspect.[47] Alexios Stoudites was, after all, widely known as a hardline supporter of the dynasty of Constantine VIII, to whom he owed his throne.[48]

The link between the Tome of Sisinnios, which ostensibly affected only marriages between individuals related through marriage, and the eventual expansion of marriage prohibitions to the seventh degree of consanguinity also emerges for the first time in surviving sources dating to the patriarchate of Alexios the Stoudite. An *hypomnema* (legal recommendation) issued in 1025 in the name of Eustathios Romaios, the most well-known secular jurist of eleventh-century Byzantium, is the longest of three texts of this genre to survive from first half of eleventh century. [49] In the lengthy text, which contains a wealth of information about marriage law in the first quarter of the eleventh century, Eustathios carefully avoids explicit mention of the seventh degree of consanguinity, probably an indication that it was

---

[45] Pitsakes, *Το κώλυμα γάμου*, pp.149-50; Angeliki Laiou, "Imperial Marriages and their Critics in Eleventh-Century Byzantium," *DOP* 46 (1992), pp.165-76.

[46] Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories*, 374; Zonaras, *History*, III.573. Some sources claim that Theodora's refusal was motivated by the fact that Romanos Argyros' previous wife still lived, while others suggest that either this fact or her kinship with Romanos was the primary reason.

[47] Grumel, *Regestes*, no. 836. The full text of the synod's decision does not survive. All that remains is a brief notice indicating that the "doubt" surrounding the issue had "been resolved" by the church.

[48] Pitsakes, *Το κώλυμα γάμου,* p.150.

[49] Burgmann, "Turning Sisinnios against the Sisinnians," p.163. The full text has been published by Rhalles and Potles V, pp.341-53. The lengthy decision is reproduced in part in the *Peira*. In fact, all three *hypomnemata* surviving from the first half of the eleventh century are attributed to Eustathios, a testament to his importance to Byzantine jurists after him as much as for modern scholarship.

already a controversial topic.[50] Nevertheless, the opposing counsel seems to have argued that the biblical contention that a husband and wife become "one flesh" meant that the bonds of affinity were even stronger than those of shared blood. Eustathios reduces this argument to absurdity and, in the process, makes clear his opinion that the bonds of blood were far stronger and, indeed, more important than those produced through the marriage of a relative.[51] "For who would rightly say that the kinsman through marriage is closer than one through blood...? No one, I think, in their right mind."[52] It is precisely this opinion that paved the way for the expansion of impediments from the sixth to the seventh degree of consanguinity. For if the Tome of Sisinnios should be understood as expanding marriage impediments to anyone related to the sixth degree of affinity, as proponents of the text's broader interpretation argued, then it would only be right that such impediments among consanguineous kin be expanded beyond the sixth degree, since the majority of jurists and clergy who weighed in the matter seem generally to have agreed that the latter bonds were indeed that much more potent than the former.

In addition to its significance in expanding the debate over the Tome of Sisinnios from questions of affinity to include the expansion of marriage impediments among consanguineous kin, the *hypomnema* of 1025 offers a wealth of other information of value to the study of the *genos* as the form of 'the family' most involved in questions of marriage. Eustathios takes up the oft-quoted passage from Modestinus that a legislator should look not only for what is allowed,

---

[50] Burgmann, "Turning Sisinnios against the Sisinnians," p.163-6. The case on which Eustathios was commenting involved the proposed marriage between two male first cousins with two female first cousins.
[51] Rhalles and Potles V, p.345; Burgmann, "Turning Sisinnios against the Sisinnians," p.166.
[52] Rhalles and Potles V, p.345. "...τὶς ἂν ὀρθῶς εἴποι τὸν ἐξ ἀγχιστείας συγγενῆ, οἰκειότερον εἶναι τοῦ ἐξ αἵματος...; Οὐδεὶς οἶμαι νοῦν ἔχων." It has been pointed out that Eustathios is most probably addressing the opposing counsel's argument, which appears to have been that the bonds created by affinity were even more powerful (and therefore more important in marriage impediments) than bonds of consanguinity. See Burgmann, "Turning Sisinnios against the Sisinnians," p.166.

but that which is "decent and noble."[53] He contends that the original purpose of this phrase was not to prevent the mingling of blood, but to "procure solemnity for the senatorial class (γένος)."[54] Eustathios' use of the term *genos* to describe the older Roman senatorial class is probably not accidental.[55] Rather, it may have been meant to evoke the arguments made by his opponents, who tended to cite Modestinus' admonition in order to claim that their extension of marriage prohibitions was designed to prevent the co-mingling of individuals within the same *genos*, here understood as the group of consanguines within which marriage would be deemed incestuous. For, while Eustathios may have opened the door to arguments proceeding from the Tome of Sisinnios to the seventh degree of consanguinity, his primary argument in the *hypomnema* was, in fact, for a more limited reading of the Tome's prohibitions targeting affinal kin and an approach generally more conservative and more grounded in Roman law and legal precedence.

Eustathios also engages with the widespread use of Basil of Caesarea's theory of kinship designations, and, in fact, finds fault with it. He notes that even a marriage between third cousins, related to the eighth degree of kinship (and, thus, legal), produced a confusion of designations. Since Byzantine Greek was capable of indicating "third cousins" (τρισεξάδελφος), the marriage would have made the couple simultaneously third cousins and spouses to one another.[56] From this, Eustathios concludes that the simple "clash of designations" (σύγκρουσις), i.e. mixing of names, was not enough to invalidate a marriage if it was not explicitly forbidden by the law.[57] Eustathios insists that a marriage between third cousins did not produce a "mingling

---

[53] Burgmann, "Turning Sisinnios against the Sisinnians," p.171.
[54] Rhalles and Potles V, p.351.
[55] This point should not be pushed too far, since *genos* was not infrequently used by other late Roman and Byzantine authors to denote the senatorial class.
[56] The designation of "third cousin" (τρισεξάδελφος) is extremely rare throughout most Byzantine sources, but it appears regularly in legal writing concerning kinship.
[57] Burgmann, "Turning Sisinnios against the Sisinnians," pp.168-9. He argues that it is not the name that determines form, but rather the form/thing that determines the name.

of the blood" and was therefore perfectly legal. His argument further supports the view that such

debates over marriage impediments were, in part at least, debates over the extent of the natural

family (linked as it was with the idea of shared blood), and, thus, the *genos*.[58]

Parts of Eustathios Romaios' opinion were repeated roughly two decades later by

Patriarch Michael Keroularios, who argues that "no one in their right mind would say that one

related [to another] through marriage, called 'kinsman' in a misuse of language, is just as close or

closer [to that person] as one related by *genos* and blood."[59] Keroularios, or at least the synod

over which he presided, was, consciously or unconsciously, echoing the opinion of Eustathios

Romaios and, in so doing, furthering the case for the expansion of marriage impediments among

those who shared the bond of blood, i.e. the *genos*. Indeed, the patriarchates of both Alexios

Stoudites (1025-43) and Michael Keroularios (1043-59) are widely considered to be notable

turning points in the position of the church, both relative to the emperor/state and to lay society

as a whole.[60] Importantly, under these two successive patriarchs, marriage litigation began

appearing before ecclesiastical courts much more frequently than it had previously. In a broader

context, the eleventh century witnessed the expansion of the power and influence of the

patriarchate of Constantinople to the point that, from the mid-1050s until the coup of Alexios I

Komnenos in 1081, it was the patriarch of Constantinople who effectively held the upper hand in

the perpetual contest for influence between the church and the state (personified in the emperor),

---

[58] Ludwig Burgmann, "Turning Sisinnios against the Sisinnians," p.170. The few cases we have in which attempts were made to prevent marriage out to the eighth degree of consanguinity are viewed by Pitsakis as attempts to preserve the primacy of this form of kinship. See Constantin G. Pitsakis, « Parenté en dehors de la parenté : formes de parenté d'origine extra-législative en droit byzantin et post-byzantin, » in Alain Bresson, Marie-Paule Masson, Stavros Perentidis, and Jérôme Wilgaux, eds. *Parenté et société dans le monde grec de l'Antiquité à l'âge moderne. Colloque international, Volos (Grèce), 19-20-21 Juin 2003* (Bordeaux : Diffusion de Boccard, 2006), p.300.

[59] Rhalles and Potles V, p.42. "Οὐδεὶς οὖν ὀρθῶς εἴποι, τὸν ἐξ ἀγχιστείας συνημμένον, καὶ συγγενῆ καταχρηστικῶς ἐπωνομασμένον, οἰκειότερον ἢ ἴσον εἶναι τῷ ἐκ τοῦ γένους καὶ αἵματος."

[60] Angold, *Church and Society under the Comneni*, pp. 19-27. Michael Keroularios is, of course, best known for the part he played in the schism of 1054, though this event left barely a ripple in the Byzantine sources.

and several emperors from Isaac I Komnenos (r. 1057-59) to Nikephoros III Botaneiates (r. 1078-81) owed their thrones almost entirely to the favor of contemporary patriarchs and the church.[61]

Beyond the dissemination and discussion of the Tome of Sisinnios, a number of other social and cultural phenomena combined to make the eleventh century a pivotal moment in the history of the family and family law in Byzantium. The period witnessed repeated attempts by members of the aristocracy to reinforce family alliances through multiple marriages between the same two families, a form of "endogamy" that seems to have already begun in the tenth century, at least among the powerful families of Anatolia (e.g. the Phokades, Maleïnoi, and Skleroi).[62] It was during this same epoch, during which the Byzantine aristocracy intensified its collective efforts to entrench themselves as a kind of aristocracy by birth (with only limited success), that the surviving evidence of canonical debates over the extension of marriage impediments to relatives of the seventh degree becomes much more profuse. The eleventh century was also a high point for Byzantine jurisprudence, represented especially by the surviving records of Eustathios Romaios. This is largely the result of Constantine IX's establishment of a legal faculty in Constantinople.[63] It is in this context that the issue of marriage impediments and the definition and limits of the natal family were revisited by both clergy and secular jurists.

---

[61] Angold, *Church and Society under the Comneni*, pp.23-6. Keroularios' prominence became especially apparent when, in 1057, he played a crucial role in raising the usurper Isaac I Komnenos to the throne. The episode saw the Patriarch of Constantinople play the role of emperor-maker, and could perhaps be understood as indicative of the growing influence of the church, both vis-à-vis the emperor and in Byzantine society more broadly. In recognition of his instrumental role in the episode, Isaac granted Keroularios greater autonomy when choosing patriarchal administrators.

[62] Laiou, *Mariage, amour, et parenté*, pp.23-5.

[63] A. Schminck, "Vier eherechtliche Entscheidungen aus dem 11. Jahrhundert," *Fontes Minores* III (1979), pp.221-79.

By the second half of the eleventh century, the broader interpretation of the Tome of Sisinnios had gained the upper hand. Patriarch John Xiphilinos (1064-75) tried to extend the Tome of Sisinnios even further to include betrothals, which formed a part of the movement toward regulating and treating betrothals more like marriages.[64] Though not entirely successful in this endeavor, Xiphilinos himself embodies many of the changes of the eleventh century that contributed to the increased interest in and flurry of legal activity surrounding marriage impediments and their underlying theories. Prior to his elevation to the patriarchal seat, Xiphilinos had received extensive legal training in Constantinople. Michael Psellos tells of the man's extraordinary efforts to bring a sense of order to the huge corpus of legal decisions and statutes that formed the foundation of the civil law in eleventh-century Byzantium. In particular, according to Psellos, Xiphilinos had tried to organize his legal knowledge into a system as he sought to understand the philosophical underpinnings of Byzantine (civil) law.[65]

Researchers examining the development and enforcement of marriage impediments in both Byzantium and medieval Western Europe have frequently sought economic motivations behind the expansion marriage impediments, especially among consanguines.[66] More stringent controls exerted by the church or state over marriage, it is argued, could serve to prevent the greater accumulation of wealth by a single, powerful family and its allies and might even help to disperse some of their property among other, less influential families. Byzantine laws and customs governing marriage practices, as with inheritance, certainly had such an effect, at least in some cases, but arguments focused solely on these outcomes tend to discount the genuine

---

[64] Angold, *Church and Society under the Comneni*, pp.408-10.
[65] Sathas, *Mesaionike bibliotheke* IV, pp.427-33; Oikonomides, "The 'Peira' of Eustathios Romaios," p.189.
[66] Angeliki Laiou, "Marriage Prohibitions, Marriage Strategies and the Dowry in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium," pp.61-5.

belief and heartfelt convictions of the jurists and, especially, the clergy members behind such regulations. As Constance Bouchard has argued for Western Europe at this time, these arguments assume that "the church" consistently represents a single, unified entity, which is a gross simplification in Byzantium as in the West, and, besides, "most church leaders were themselves the brothers and cousins of secular nobles, more favorably disposed to their interests than otherwise."[67]

Angeliki Laiou argues that the extension of marriage impediments in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was not an attempt to limit the possibility for families to concentrate or reconstitute wealth, though this was certainly a constant concern in a society that favored (and legislated) partible inheritance. Rather, the move toward stricter regulations and increased enforcement probably had more to do with "the inherent logic of the moral, religious and legal precepts that had governed the earlier prohibitions."[68] The particular logic for this extension of marriage impediments to the seventh degree (rather than the sixth, as prescribed by the *Basilika*) seems to have varied and, especially in the first half of the eleventh century, to have largely depended on the individual judge or clergy member whose written opinion survives to today.[69] Nevertheless, surviving evidence does suggest that certain ideas played a highly influential role in the thought of numerous clergy and jurists who were instrumental in the expansion of marriage prohibitions to the seventh degree of consanguinity.

The Seventh Degree of Consanguinity and the "Life of Men"

---

[67] Constance Bouchard, *Those of my Blood* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p.43.
[68] Angeliki Laiou, "Marriage Prohibitions, Marriage Strategies and the Dowry in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium," p.133.
[69] For a detailed analysis, see Pitsakes, *Το κώλυμα γάμου*, pp.1-83.

Perhaps second only to the theory of names put forth by Basil the Great in his Canon 87, jurists and clergy of the eleventh-century and later repeatedly cite a statement found in the *Basilika* in order to justify the extension of marriage prohibitions from the sixth to the seventh degree of consanguinity. Near the end of the section on inheritance, there is an enigmatic sentence apparently designed as a rationale for limiting those family members who might be eligible to receive some portion of the inheritance at the seventh degree of consanguinity. The passage reads, "We have not passed beyond the seventh degree in [our discussion of] natural kinship, for nature does not allow the life of men (τὴν ζωὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων) to extend beyond this degree."[70] The question of what, exactly, is meant by "the life of men" is not at all clear, and there is considerable evidence that eleventh- and twelfth-century Byzantines may have felt the same way. Still, it became a cornerstone in arguments made by jurists and, especially, clergy who sought to extend marriage impediments from the sixth degree to the seventh. Unpacking its meaning, then, offers important insight into Byzantine thought on the nature of kinship itself and its limits.

Though the original, Latin text of the phrase can be traced to Late Antiquity, it continued to be reproduced in the Byzantine period, appearing not only (in Greek translation) in the *Basilika*, but also in Michael Attaleiates' widely circulated legal handbook, the *Ponema Nomikon*, produced in the mid-eleventh-century.[71] Importantly, the phrase begins to appear from

---

[70] *Basilika* 45.2.2 (= *Synopsis Basilicorum* B.I.5): Ἐν τῇ φυσικῇ συγγενείᾳ τὸν ἕβδομον βαθμὸν οὐ παρεξερχόμεθα. οὐ γὰρ ἡ φῦσις ἀνέχεται ὑπὲρ τοῦτον τὸν βαθμὸν τὴν ζωὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπεκτείνεσθαι. Note that ζωή was, in patristic literature, frequently contrasted with βίος. The latter designated mere physical existence, while ζωή signified eternal or spiritual life. The distinction between the two terms was also important in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, in which ζωή appears "as the life which humans share with all living things," while βίος indicates "the way of life of a particular person or group." Bryan Turner, *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*, third edition (Los Angeles; London: Sage, 2008) (first published in 1984), pp.1-2.
[71] *Dig*. 38.10.4 proem.: "Non facile autem, quod ad nostrum ius attinet, cum de naturali cognatione quaeritur, septimum gradum quis excedit, quatenus ultra eum fere gradum rerum natura cognatorum vitam consistere non patitur."

the early eleventh century in support of arguments over marriage impediments, being cited and

discussed by several bishops and the well-known jurist Eustathios Romaios. Despite the fact that

it originally appeared in a legal context regarding inheritance, its use by bishops and judges

ruling on marriage impediments from the eleventh century is symptomatic of a larger trend at

this time both to impose greater social control by the church and state (sometime acting in

concert, sometimes independently) and to find what might be termed a "unified theory" of the

limits of the singular, consanguineous family. In some ways, at least, this was a theory of the

limits of the *genos* as a family group.

While the passage was cited in several cases involving contested marriages in the

eleventh and early twelfth century, most such instances are devoid of any additional comment on

the phrase's precise meaning. So, for example, is the case Demetrios Sygkellos, the Metropolitan

bishop of Cyzicus in the early eleventh century, who uses the enigmatic passage to defend his

approval of a contested marriage between two people related to the eighth degree.[72] Demetrios,

who served as the Metropolitan bishop of Cyzicus during the reigns of Romanos III Argyros (r.

1028-34) and Michael IV the Paphlagonian (r. 1034-41), wrote at least two decisions regarding

contested marriages that the collection of Rhalles and Potles contains. Like many of his

contemporaries, Demetrios describes marriage partners as coming from different *genē*, and uses

primarily Basil of Caesarea and the *Basilika* to defend his positions. Where Demetrios' work

becomes interesting is in his defense of marriages between those related to the eighth degree of

consanguinity. In a reply (ἀπάντησις) to another, unnamed individual who had declared such a

marriage invalid, Demetrios utilizes a portion of the *Basilika* not often seen in discussions of

marriage impediments. Speaking of marriages contracted between those related beyond the

---

[72] Rhalles and Potles, V, pp.566-68.

seventh degree of kinship, the bishop says, "such a degree [of kinship] has never been forbidden. 'In natural kinship we do not pass beyond the seventh degree, for nature does not permit the life of men to extend beyond this degree.'" The metropolitan does not comment further upon the quote, but the very fact of its use in this context is a testament to the impulse found in many, similar works from the eleventh century onward, which attempted to unify the limits of the singular family found in inheritance and marriage law. In fact, Demetrios himself cites inheritance law in two separate cases to support his position on the prohibition of marriage between those related to the seventh degree of consanguinity.[73] Nor was Demetrios the only eleventh-century author to utilize this passage in defense of extending the limits of prohibited marriages.

The intriguing passage is also discussed in another work sometimes ascribed to Eustathios Romaios, this one a short commentary on the so-called *hypobolon* (ὑπόβολον), i.e. *donatio propter nuptias*, the husband's equivalent to the dowry.[74] Some modern scholars have been skeptical of Eustathios' authorship, though it almost certainly dates to the mid-eleventh century.[75] The text survives in a single manuscript, *Codex Monacensis graecus* 380, which also includes *hypomnemata* of Eustathios Romaios, which has led to the occasional attribution of the text to the famous jurist. Nevertheless, likely though Eustathios' authorship may be, the treatise will be referred to here as by an anonymous writer.

The commentary provides a hypothetical situation in which a marriage is proposed between a man and the daughter of his second cousin (i.e. related to the seventh degree). The

---

[73] Rhalles and Potles, V, pp.361, 366-7.

[74] Andreas Schminck, "Vier eherechtliche Entscheidungen aus dem 11. Jahrhundert," Fontes Minores III (1979), pp.221-79, esp. pp. 252-67.

[75] Pitsakes, Το κώλυμα γάμου, p.21, n. 23.

author relates how such a union is not explicitly prohibited by either canon or secular law (οὔτε νόμος οὔτε θεῖοι κανόνες εὑρίσκονται ῥητῶς διακωλύσαντες). Still, as the anonymous author shows, this marriage would not be without complications. He quotes the passage from the *Basilika* concerning the seventh degree of kinship, including the phrase about the "life of men." This commentary is especially important for this study thanks to the discussion of the difficult passage that immediately follows its introduction into the text, an apparent rarity among surviving sources. The discussion of the relationship between marriage impediments and inheritance law takes up more than two full pages of text in Schminck's edition.

The anonymous author, like several critics of the move to expand marriage impediments to the seventh degree of consanguinity, stresses the fact that this law was originally intended solely for inheritance law, not for marriage.[76] He then offers a critique of the troublesome passage by pointing out the difficulty in comprehending its intended meaning. "And it is necessary to clarify, whether nature has prevented the bearing of children beyond the seventh degree and, hence, withholds the [further] production of offspring, as if making the seventh degree a limit to that [particular] *genos*, or, that the first principle of birth [or of the offspring] is not alive long enough to survive beyond the seventh degree."[77] Importantly, while the anonymous treatise takes the position that the passage of the *Basilika* in question had no effect

---

[76] Ἀλλὰ τοῦτο μὲν τῷ βουλομένῳ διασκοπεῖν ἐάσω, πρὸς δὲ τὸ δοκοῦν ἀνθίστασθαι τὸν λόγον ἐπαναγάγω· τὸ εἰρημένον νόμιμον καὶ παλαιόν ἐστι καὶ γεγηρακὸς καὶ πρὸ τῆς μοναρχίας ἐκτεθέν· δίγεστον γὰρ καθίσταται. Τὰ δὲ τῆς κωλύσεως τῶν γάμων ὡς ἀπὸ μεταγενεστέρων διατάξεων καὶ νεαρῶν ἐκφωνηθέντα τὴν ἐπικράτειαν ἔχουσι· τὰ γὰρ ὕστερον νομοθετούμενα τῶν πάλαι νομοθετηθέντων ἰσχυρότερα. Καὶ οὐδέποτε ὡς ἀπὸ κληρονομίας κώλυσις γάμου γέγονε..

[77] Schminck, "Vier eherechliche Entscheidungen aus dem 11. Jahrhundert," pp.254-5. Καὶ πρῶτον μὲν ὁ εἰρημένος νόμος οὐ περὶ γάμου, ὡς εἴρηται, ἐκπεφώνηται, ἀλλὰ περὶ τῆς ἐξ ἀδιαθέτου κληρονομίας. Καὶ αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ νόμιμον βαθείας δεῖται φρενός, ὥστε ἀνεπίληπτον τὴν ἑρμηνείαν ἐκλαληθῆναι. Καὶ δεῖ εἰπεῖν, πότερον ὡς τῆς φύσεως ἀπαγορευσάσης μετὰ τὸν ἕβδομον βαθμὸν γεννᾶν καὶ ἐντεῦθεν συγκαλύπτεσθαι τὴν παιδοποιίαν καὶ ὡσανεὶ τῷ γένει ἐκείνῳ συντέλειαν ἐπάγοντος τοῦ ἑβδόμου βαθμοῦ ἢ ὡς τοῦ πρώτου αἰτίου τῆς γεννήσεως τὴν ζωὴν μὴ ἐξικανοῦντος ὑπερελάσαι καὶ τὸν ἕβδομον βαθμόν.

on marriage impediments (at least as far as the law was concerned), it does offer clear evidence that there were those legal thinkers who believed that it did (as further evidenced by its appearance in decisions of Demetrios Sygkellos and Niketas of Ankyra). While the commentator is arguing against the passage's use in legal cases involving contested marriages, he does offer an interpretation that explicitly links the idea with the limits of the *genos*. Also noteworthy is the language used when speaking of "the first reason/principle of birth," a concept familiar from the thought of Aristotle and Galen, particularly concerning human reproduction.

It seems that the idea expressed by "the life of men," at least as it was understood by the bishop Demetrios and others like him, may have been interpreted as follows. When a man and woman produce a child, that child reproduces some essential part of each parent, usually expressed in Byzantine thought by blood, though, it is of course reproduced imperfectly, as the two become intermingled. This is precisely why authors in eleventh-century Byzantium frequently refer to siblings (rather than parents and children) as "*homaimones*" (ὁμαίμωνες), "those of the same blood." With each successive generation, traces of the original man or woman's blood (or essence) become further diluted until, at some point, they effectively disappear altogether. The implication would thus be that the seventh degree of kinship is the outer limit within which shared blood is detectable.

This interpretation is supported by another opinion on marriage impediments, the same *hypomnema* of Eustathios Romaios discussed above. As part of the decision delivered in April of 1025, Eustathios describes how the "blood of the genitor" is divided amongst his offspring and how the process is repeated in each new generation.[78] Ludwig Burgmann describes this portion

---

[78] Rhalles and Potles, V, p.343. "Ἀπὸ πατρὸς τὸ ἐκ τῆς γονῆς αἷμα εἰς δύο σχισθὲν ἀδελφὰς, εἶθ'ἑξῆς εἰς τοὺς τούτων παῖδας..."

of Eustathios' text as a "metaphor," and he largely dismisses its utility as a window into the Byzantine jurist's thought.[79] A significant body of evidence, however, may suggest that the eleventh-century jurist was rather more serious in his assertion. Byzantine law, both civil and canon, differentiated between marriages that would be deemed incestuous and those that were simply forbidden by law. In most of the legal and canonical literature concerning marriage impediments for reasons of consanguinity, the chief concern is to prevent incest (ἀθέμιτος γάμος), an idea also expressed in Byzantium as the "mixing of blood" (αἱμομιξία).[80] The implication is that all those within the prescribed limits of consanguinity share too much of the same "blood," rendering any future marriages among them incestuous.[81]

Around 1092 Niketas, bishop of Ankyra, composed a treatise at the request of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos.[82] The purpose of the short work was to outline the basics of calculating degrees of kinship and the tenets of Byzantine law concerning prohibited marriages, including a very brief timeline of major changes in Byzantine policy, both imperial and ecclesiastical. In particular, the "prevention of incestuous marriages" is singled out in the title ascribed to the

---

[79] Burgmann, "Turning Sisinnios against the Sisinnians," p.165. "For didactic purposes or, one might suspect, to demonstrate rhetorical skill, Eustathios dwells a little longer on the problem of drawing the line between permissible and forbidden marriages. He does so by introducing two metaphors, both based on natural phenomena. Adopting the first from Sisinnios, he declares that the flow of blood, which starts from the father and through his two sons reaches their children and grandchildren, becomes weaker and finally runs dry. More aptly, it would seem, he compares kinship to magnetism that becomes weaker and weaker, the more pieces of iron are appended, chain-like, to the lodestone. To Eustathios' credit it has to be said, that for him it is the law again which defines where the bloodflow runs dry and the magnetism loses its force."

[80] Leviticus 18:6; *Basilika* 60.37.75; Laiou, *Mariage, amour et parenté*, p.21. There were also slight variants, such as the idea expressed in a decision of the synod in Constantinople in 1057, in which incestuous marriage is described as the "mixing of familial blood" (ἐπίμιξις τοῦ συγγενικοῦ αἵματος). Rhalles and Potles V, p.43.

[81] Angeliki Laiou has noted that the Byzantines themselves were, at times, loose in their use of the term "incest" or "incestuous." For some Byzantine jurists and clergy, any marriage that was deemed prohibited by reason of consanguinity or affinity might be called "incestuous" (ἀθέμιτος). Laiou argues that this might be because it allowed them to hearken back to ancient law and custom, even biblical precedents in their defense of stricter regulations. Related to this particularly Byzantine understanding of incest was the biblical idea of the "mixing of blood" (αἱμομιξία) found in Leviticus. Still, the Byzantines did, technically, have two different terms and concepts for prohibited vs. incestuous marriages. In most (though not all) cases, the accusation of incest was reserved for marriages between consanguines. Laiou, *Mariage, amour et parenté*, p. 21.

[82] Laiou, *Mariage, amour, et parenté*, p.22.

work.[83] Beyond the text's importance as an illustration of the interest of Emperor Alexios I in marriage law and practices, it also contains a reference to the passage in the *Basilika* regarding inheritance law and the seventh degree of consanguinity. "And in the [title of the *Basilika*] concerned with inheritance it is written explicitly thus: 'truly we have not continued beyond the seventh degree of natural kinship; for nature does not allow the life of men to extend beyond this degree.' And it seems to me from this, and not unreasonably, that marriages ought to be limited at this degree as well. For if the legislator extended the law to such [a degree] concerning these things, how would it not be right also that those overseeing decency should limit marriage in this way?"[84] This rationale, rarely made explicit, nevertheless seems to lie behind the majority of cases in which the problematic passage from the *Basilika* was used to support the extension of marriage impediments to the seventh degree of consanguinity.

There may even be evidence to support the interpretation of the "life of men" given here within the corpus of patristic literature. Amongst the surviving works of John Chrysostom is an intriguing discussion of the meaning of Christian marriage, an idea that was still in its formative period during Chrysostom's lifetime (ca. 347-407 CE). "Certainly, from the beginning, children were desirable, so that each man might leave behind a certain memorial and remnant of his own life" (διὰ τὸ μνημόσυνον καὶ λείψανα καταλιμπάνειν ἕκαστον τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ζωῆς). Chrysostom argued that the begetting of children should be merely a secondary concern in Christian marriage. For by his own day, he argues, the human race (*genos*) had already filled the world. In

---

[83] Λόγος διαλαμβάνων περὶ γάμων, τοῦ βασιλέως προστάξαντος γράψαι καὶ οὕτως κωλῦσαι τὰς ἀθεμιτογαμίας.
[84] J. Darrouzès, ed., *Documents inédits d'ecclésiologie byzantine. Textes édités, traduits et annotés* (Paris: Institut français d'Études byzantines, 1966), pp.271-2. Καὶ ἐν τῷ περὶ κληρονομίας διαρρήδην οὕτω γέγραπται · Ὄντως φυσικῆς συγγενείας τὸν ἕβδομον βαθμὸν οὐ παρεξερχόμεθα· οὐτὲ γὰρ ἡ φύσις ἀνέχεται ὑπὲρ τὸν βαθμὸν τὴν ζωὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐξεκτείνεσθαι.' Καὶ δοκεῖ μοι κἀκ τούτου καὶ οὐκ ἀπεικότως μέχρι καὶ τοῦ τοιούτου βαθμοῦ καὶ τὰ τῶν γάμων περικλείεσθαι. Εἰ γὰρ περὶ πραγμάτων ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον τὰ τῆς νομοθεσίας ὁ νομοθέτης ἐξέτεινε, πῶς οὐ πρέπον ἐν τούτῳ καὶ τὰ τῶν γάμων ὁρίζεσθαι τοὺς τὸ εὔσχημον ἐπισκοποῦντες;

the beginning, however, it may have been different, as, before the arrival of Jesus Christ, "death ruled [on earth]...so God provided the comfort of children, so that they could remain as living images of the deceased and the continuation of our [human] race (*genos*)."[85] Chrysostom's comments formed a part of a larger argument reflecting the distinctly Christian view of marriage that did not view childbirth "as an end in itself," a clear break with the Old Testament tradition.[86]

However one interprets the phrase, it is clear that it played a central role in producing a kind of "unified theory" of the (consanguineous) family as numerous authorities throughout the eleventh century cited the text to defend the extension of marriage impediments to the seventh degree of consanguinity. In doing so, they were consciously bringing marriage law into agreement with far older inheritance law. Judging by the universalizing statements found in much of the discourse surrounding this development, many of the jurists and canonists behind the expansion were probably pleased by it.

It is, perhaps, noteworthy that some of the most notable uses the enigmatic phrase concerning "the life of men" to support the extension of marriage impediments among consanguineous kin comes from the works of those who criticized the broad interpretation of the Tome of Sisinnios in cases involving affinity. Yet another (harsh) critic of the Tome, Michael Skribas, offers some of the best evidence both in support of the tentative interpretation of the

---

[85] J.-P. Migne, *PG* 51, p.213. "Παρὰ μὲν γὰρ τὴν ἀρχὴν ποθεινὸν τὸ τῶν παίδων ἦν, διὰ τὸ μνημόσυνον καὶ λείψανα καταλιμπάνειν ἕκαστον τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ζωῆς. Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἀναστάσεως οὐδέπω ἦσαν ἐλπίδες, ἀλλ'ὁ θάνατος ἐκράτει, καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἐντεῦθεν ζωὴν ἀπόλλυσθαι ἐνόμιζον οἱ τελευτῶντες, ἔδωκεν ὁ Θεὸς τὴν ἐκ τῶν παίδων παραμυθίαν, ὥστε τῶν ἀπελθόντων εἰκόνας ἐμψύχους μένειν, καὶ τὸ γένος ἡμῶν διατηρεῖσθαι..."
[86] John Meyendorff, "Christian Marriage in Byzantium: The Canonical and Liturgical Tradition," *DOP* 44 (1990), pp.99-108.

difficult passage given above and of the early eleventh-century Byzantine interpretation of the *genos* in questions of marriage law more generally.[87]

The so-called "*antirrhetikos logos*" (lit. "refutation" or "reply"), written by one Michael Skribas, in the 1030s offers what might be considered a typical critique of the Tome of Sisinnios.[88] Michael criticizes his contemporaries who supported the Tome of Sisinnios for their lack of understanding of the law, including the difference between incestuous and prohibited marriages.[89] Skribas also attacks the logic employed by those supporters of Sisinnios' Tome who wanted to extend his ruling further by reminding them of the very definition of the *genos*. For, he argues, a marriage between affines could never result in what Basil the Great called a "mixing of the names/designations of the *genos*," since the *genos* does not include affines. Michael here follows a strict reading of a passage in the *Basilika* that emphasizes the distinction between (legal) kinship (*syggeneia*) and affinity. "'Affinity then is the relationship of persons joined to us by marriage outside of/beyond kinship.' If, then, they are found placed outside of kinship by the new lawgivers, [there is] no mixing of the *genē*, no exchanging of names."[90] To clarify his point, Michael continues is exposition of the legal standing of affines by offering a hypothetical: "What kinship (συγγένεια) or relationship of blood (αἵματος οἰκείωσις) is observed between myself and

---

[87] Both Demetrios of Cyzicus and Michael Skribas, outspoken critics of the Tome, had served as *quaestors* (*koiaistores*) earlier in their careers. Angold believes that much of their fears could be attributed to the idea that the quaestor's office was losing control of marriage to the patriarchal synod.Angold, *Church and Society under the Comneni*, p.407.

[88] Andreas Schminck, "Kritik am Tomos des Sisinnios," *Fontes Minores* II (1977), pp.215-54. The opinion survives in a single manuscript housed in the Marcian Library of Venice, Codex Marcianus gr. 173. Schminck (pp.219-20) is of the opinion that Skribas should be read as a title ("Amtsbezeichnung"), rather than a family name, though the question is not yet settled.

[89] Skribas reiterates the position that only those marriages that joined an individual with his/her direct ancestors, offspring, or the designated set of collateral, consanguineous relatives constituted incest according to Byzantine law.

[90] Schminck, "Kritik am Tomos," pp.224-5. " δεῖ δὲ πρότερον τὸν ἀγχιστείας ὅρον ἐπελθεῖν καὶ δεῖξαι, ὡς ἐξ ἀγχιστείας συγγένεια οὐκ ἔστιν. ἀγχιστεία τοίνυν ἐστὶν, οἰκειότης προσώπων ἐκ γάμων ἡμῖν συνημμένη συγγενείας ἐκτός.' εἰ οὖν ἐκτὸς συγγενείας καὶ τὰ παρὰ τῶν νέων νομοθετῶν τιθέμενα πρόσωπα εὑρίσκονται, οὐδεμία σύγχυσις τῶν γενῶν, οὐδὲ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἄμειψις."

the cousin of my brother's wife? No kinship is recognized among said persons whatsoever, since they are of a different *genos* and blood."[91] Skribas reiterates his point a second time. "It is thus demonstrated that those entering [into a relationship based on] affinity share no kinship (συγγενείας) whatsoever."[92] Ever the meticulous jurist, Michael Skribas follows the letter of the law (as it appears in the *Basilika*), including the provision that legally recognized kinship (*syggeneia*) includes only consanguineous kin (and is thus equivalent to the *genos*).

A similar line of reasoning lies behind other portions of the text, as, for example, one in which Skribas accuses those who conflate prohibited marriage with incestuous marriage of ignorance, for there is a difference, reflected in the different penalties reserved for either case in Byzantine law. The crime of incest, Skribas explains, is "understood only among ascendants, descendents, and collateral kin by blood."[93] Michael even complains that his opponents cite the passage that one must seek "not only what is allowed [by law], but also that which is seemly, honorable, and just according to nature" left and right while remaining completely ignorant of the law.[94] Still, this ubiquitous statement held a great deal of relevance for Skribas, even if he thought many of his contemporaries were abusing its precepts. For example, he, like Eusathios Romaios and others, refers to the relevance of medical and philosophical knowledge of human reproduction when describing the prohibition against marriage with any ascendants or

---

[91] Schminck, "Kritik am Tomos," p.225. "ποία γὰρ συγγένεια θεωρεῖται μεταξὺ ἐμοῦ καὶ τῆς ἐξαδέλφης τῆς γαμετῆς τοῦ ἐμοῦ ἀδελφοῦ ἢ αἵματος οἰκείωσις;οὐδεμία γὰρ συγγένεια πρὸς τὰ εἰρημένα πρόσωπα κατανοεῖται, ἑτέρου γένους ἐκείνων καὶ αἵματος καθισταμένων..."

[92] Schminck, "Kritiak am Tomos, p.226. "Δείκνυται γοῦν ἐντεῦθεν τοὺς ἐξ ἀγχιστείας ἐρχομένους μηδεμίαν συγγενείας κοινωνίαν ἔχειν."

[93] Schminck, "Kritik am Tomos," p. 229. "Καὶ ὀνόματα καινὰ προσάγουσιν ἀθέμιτον γάμον ὀνομάζοντες, ὃν οὐδὲ κεκωλυμένον δύνανται δεῖξαι, ἀγνοοῦντες πολλὴν διαφορὰν τῷ νόμῳ ἀθεμίτου καὶ κεκωλυμένου καθίστασθαι· τὸ μὲν γὰρ καὶ ζώνης ἀφαιρέσει καὶ δημεύσει καὶ ἐξορίᾳ ὑπόκειται, τὸ δὲ κεκωλυμένον διαστάσει μόνῃ. καὶ τὸ μὲν ἐπὶ ἀνιόντων καὶ κατιόντων καὶ τῶν ἐξ αἵματος μόνων διαγινώσκεται, τὸ δὲ κεκωλυμένον ἐφ᾽ἑτέρων καί, ὧν ἴσασιν οἱ τῶν νόμων εἰδήμονες."

[94] Ibid.

descendants.[95] Even for him, the consummate lawyer, the observable, "natural" order was just as important as the written word of the law. Debates concerning kinship involved more than just those laws specifically pertaining to marriage. There was much more at stake, at least in the minds of those participating in such discussions.

Skribas, like many of his contemporaries, slightly altered the words of Basil of Caesarea, so that what appears in Basil's canons as the "mingling of the names of the *genos*" becomes the "mingling of *genos*/*genē*." The difference may be rather insignificant, perhaps a literary or rhetorical device above all else, but, if taken at face value, the alteration has real consequences for the image of the *genos* presented by those involved in marriage disputes in medieval Byzantium.[96] An anonymous critique of the Tome of Sisinnios sometimes attributed to Eustathios Romaios displays the same tendency for eleventh-century commentators to separate Basil of Caesarea's ideas about the "mixing of names of the *genos*" into two separate ideas, the "confusion of names" and the "mixing of the *genē*." The desire to avoid incestuous marriage and to follow the law regarding prohibited marriages is described as the desire "that the *genē* will not be comingled and the order of names [i.e. kinship designations] be confused."[97] It is worth remembering that eleventh- and twelfth-century canonists nearly always refer to potential marriage partners as coming from separate *genē*, even if they were related to the eighth degree of consanguinity. For them, at least, the *genos'* limits were equal to those within which marriage

---

[95] Schminck, "Kritik am Tomos," p.224. "καὶ κατὰ τοὺς ἰατρικοὺς ἤτοι ἐμφιλοσόφους νόμους, οἵ φασι μὴ ὅσιον εἶναι τὸ αἴτιον τῆς γεννήσεως ὑποβαίνειν τῷ γεννωμένῳ (ὡς εὐχερεστέρας οὔσης τῆς τῶν βαθμῶν καταλήψεως) καὶ πολλὰ τοῦτο καὶ τῶν ἀλόγων ἀποσείεσθαι ζώων."
[96] Ibid. "It is not possible for two cousins (called here both *anepsious* and *exadelphous*) to take in marriage two sisters, so that the gene are not mixed and the order of names are not changed/exchanged (ἵνα μὴ συγχέωνται τὰ γένη καὶ ἡ τάξις τῶν ὀνομάτων ἀμείβηται).
[97] Schminck, "Vier eherechtliche Entscheidungen," p.252.

was prohibited. Incestuous marriages, then, would be tantamount to the marriage of two individuals within the same *genos*, hence the phrase "the intermingling of the *genos*."

For example, in one decision of the synod of bishops (συνοδικὴ ψῆφος) in Constantinople, issued in the name of Patriarch Michael Keroularios in 1057, two women (a great aunt and her niece) are described as coming "from a different line (σειρᾶς) and *genos*" than their respective marriage partners (two male first cousins). The same piece describes marriage itself as "the union of distinct *genē*" (τὴν τῶν διῃρημένων γενῶν συνάφειαν).[98] The opinion also states that the potential union, deemed to be incestuous, produces the "confusion of names" familiar from Basil of Caesarea's writings, borrowing Basil's words in describing it as the "mingling of [names/things] of the *genē*" (something entirely different from the harmonious joining of two distinct *genē* in a more agreeable marriage).[99] Here, the correlation between the "confusion of [the names] of the *genos*" and the "mixing of the blood of kin" is made explicit.[100] A marriage that would contravene the established regulations governing marriage between consanguines would result, in the words of Keroularios' decision, in the "defilement and destruction of the *genos*, the disorder of kinship, unbridled mixing (or intercourse?), and [would be] inconsistent with the legal order."[101]

Incidentally, this same synodal decision was one of the first to openly and forcefully declare that marriage between individuals related to the seventh degree of consanguinity was to be prohibited, a position that would continue to be challenged both by potential marriage

---

[98] Rhalles and Potles V, p.41. The potential marriage partners are described as "δύο γὰρ ἐξάδελφοι πρῶτοι πρὸς θείαν μεγάλην καὶ ἀνεψιὰν, [ἐξ] ἑτέρας σειρᾶς καὶ γένους ὡρμημέναι."

[99] Rhalles and Potls, Vol. V, p.44. "ὡς ἐκ τούτου συγχύσεως τῶν γενῶν ἐπισυμβαινούσης, καὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων συμπτώσεως..."

[100] Rhalles and Potles V, p.43. "...καὶ τὴ σύγχυσιν τοῦ γένους, καὶ τὴν ἐπιμιξίαν τοῦ συγγενικοῦ αἵματος..." This correlation has important implications, explored in the following chapter.

[101] Rhalles and Potles V, p.42. "μολυσμὸς γὰρ τοῦτο γένους καὶ φθορὰ, καὶ συγγενείας φυρμὸς, καὶ μίξις ἀκόλαστος, καὶ τῇ νομικῇ διατάξει ἀντίθετος."

partners and their families as well as by dissenting clergy and judges until it was codified into imperial and canon law in 1166. As a result, this particular decision would be frequently cited by canonists and other clergy dealing with issues of marriage impediments well into the thirteenth century. In fact, Demetrios Chomatenos, the early thirteenth-century metropolitan of Ochrid famous for his large collection of legal decisions (almost all of which dealing with family and marriage law), very often repeats portions of this very decision when responding to questions regarding the calculation of degrees of kinship.[102]

The *genos*, as it appears in the arguments and decisions of bishops and jurists arguing over the limits of marriage impediments, is equally reflected in some contemporary sources of far different genres. So, for instance, the anonymous author of the preface to Nikephoros Bryennios' twelfth-century history also uses the term *genos* to refer to each of the two family units joined through matrimony. The author, whose preface appears largely in the form of an encomium, praises the emperor Alexios Komnenos, in part by recounting how, through his marriage to Eirene Doukaina, the two great houses of Komnenos and Doukas had become one. Utilizing the kind of botanical imagery often found in descriptions of genealogies both inside and outside of Byzantium, the oration concludes how Emperor Alexios I had "joined both *genē* into a single harmonious union (συμφωνίαν) and bound [them] into a single offshoot (εἰς ἓν φυτὸν συνεδένδρωσεν)."[103] Just before this, in the same oration, the speaker defends Alexios I's claim to the throne (he had, after all, usurped it) by describing it as his right through the "legitimacy by blood to the Komnenian *genos*" and his "closeness to the *genos* of the Doukai through

---

[102] Günter Prinzing, ed. *Demetrii Chomateni Ponemata Diaphora*. CFHB 38 (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002). Especially relevant are *Ponemata* nos. 1, 6, and 7.

[103] P. Gautier, ed. and trans., Nicéphore Bryennios, *Histoire*, ed. and trans. Paul Gautier (Bruxelles: Byzantion, 1975), p.67. "...ἐκ Δουκῶν γὰρ ἁρμοσάμενος [Ἀλέχιος Α'] τοῦ βίου τὴν κοινωνόν, εἰς μίαν συμφωνίαν ἄμφω τὰ γένη συνῆψε καὶ εἰς ἓν φυτὸν συνεδένδρωσεν..."

marriage."[104] This assertion would have been immediately comprehensible to his readers or listeners, as both a Komnenos (Isaac I) and two Doukai (Constantine X, Michael VII) had sat on the Byzantine throne less than half a century before Alexios himself did (beginning 1081). The passage illustrates not only the use of surnames as markers specifically of one's *genos*, but also the different language used for a relation to a particular *genos* through marriage. Alexios was linked to the Komnenoi through the "legitimacy of blood," while his connection to the *genos* of the Doukai is described as a "nearness" (ἐγγύτητος) created through his union with Eirene Doukaina. While this marriage had indeed created a strong alliance between two powerful, aristocratic *genē*, they remained fundamentally distinct even after the wedding.

Though the debates over the seventh degree of consanguinity seem to have been most heated in the mid-eleventh century, marriage impediments and marriage law more generally remained important issues throughout the reign of Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081-1118) and beyond. Marriage law, in fact, became a kind of flashpoint in the on-going redefinition of the relationship between the church and the state (as embodied by the emperor), as well as between the church and society more broadly. Alexios issued a number of *novellae* concerning marriage, though he eventually deferred most such matters to the church. Under the rule of the Komnenoi (1081-1261), the emperors continued to present imperial power as holding dominion over the Byzantine church. Michael Angold has argued, however, that this, was only "a veneer. The balance of power was shifting decisively towards the church, as it came to assume greater responsibility for the direction of society."[105] Prior to mid-eleventh century, the church had exercised little social control. This situation had completely changed by the first half of the

---

[104] Ibid. "...δικαίῳ τε δηλαδὴ τῆς πρὸς τὸ Κομνηνικὸν γένος ἐξ αἵματος γνησιότητος καὶ τῆς πρὸς τὸ Δουκικὸν ἐξ ἀγχιστείας..."
[105] Angold, *Church and Society under the Comneni*, p.6.

thirteenth century, due in part to a series of reform-minded patriarchs of Constantinople in the

eleventh century and in part to the *modus vivendi* developed by Alexios I Komnenos and his

successors vis-à-vis the church hierarchy.[106] It almost certainly contributed to the weakness of

imperial authority, as Angold argues, but it also meant that canon law and debates among clergy

regarding marriage impediments had a much more immediate effect on Byzantine society as a

whole. "The church emerged from Alexius' reign politically weaker, but institutionally

stronger."[107]

The imperial dynasty of the Komnenoi have long been known for their attempts to

control the marriage alliances contracted by both members of the imperial family and even those

among the elite not directly linked to them. This was especially true for Alexios I's grandson,

Manuel I Komnenos (r. 1143-80), who truly seems to have treated marriages among the extended

imperial family as "matters of state."[108] His concern in such matters was so great, in fact, that he

is known to have personally weighed in on several of the most important ecclesiastical debates

concerning marriage impediments during his reign, in addition to legislating the expansion of

marriage impediments to the seventh degree of consanguinity.[109] Manuel even tried to have the

Tome of Sisinnios repealed, which met with considerable opposition from the clergy, including

---

[106] Angold, *Church and Society under the Comneni*, passim. This statement is an important part of Angold's argument throughout his excellent study.
[107] Angold, *Church and Society under the Comneni*, p.7.
[108] Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.205.
[109] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, p.214. "The external context of Manuel's internal dynastic marriage policy is further apparent in his concern to interfere with and legislate on ecclesiastical debate about the degrees of kinship and affinity within which marriage was forbidden. In 1166 he issued a prostagma confirming a recent decision by the patriarch and Synod to extend the prohibition from the sixth degree of kinship (second cousins) to the seventh (the child of a second cousin). In 1172 he addressed a pittakion to the patriarch claiming to deny rumours that he proposed to legalise the marriage of a widower to the second cousin of the man's first wife. In 1175, after consultation with the patriarch and on the basis of recently compiled treatises, he effectively abolished the 'Tome of Sisinnios', which since the end of the tenth century had prevented marriage between affines in the sixth degree."

Theodore Balsamon, who is otherwise known as a champion of patriarchal cooperation with the imperial seat.[110] Michael Angold argues that these attempts were the result of Manuel's "foreign and dynastic policies," an important part of which was a large degree of control over marriages, including those among the Byzantine elite.[111] At the same time, the first half of the twelfth century also saw the continued expansion of the control over marriage exercised by patriarchs of Constantinople, who seem increasingly to have viewed the "moral supervision of marriage as an important element in their pastoral duties."[112]

Paul Magdalino has shown that Manuel I's dynastic policies and attempts to control marriages among the Byzantine elite were closely linked with his foreign policy, a fact that would have given his interventions in various spheres of marital controls an added urgency.[113] As Magdalino himself attests, however, it is very difficult to link any of Manuel's edicts or particular interventions in canon or secular law with any specific betrothals or marriages. In fact, most of Manuel's interventions in marriage law did not originate from the imperial throne. Rather, he most often simply confirmed statements made by the patriarchal synod (a phenomenon well-attested in earlier centuries as well). It has been pointed out that the language employed in Manuel's edicts regarding marriage is often "academic" and "disinterested," which seemly contradicts the enthusiasm with which Manuel attempted to ensure the continued success

---

[110] Rhalles and Potles I, p.291; Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, p.214. Balsamon reportedly supported Manuel's Novel of 1175 (abrogating the Tome of Sisinnios) while Manuel lived, but he later "expressed the hope that the clauses in the Novel abrogating the Tome of Sisinnios would never become effective, 'since I know that the reason for which they were formulated was arbitrary.'"

[111] Angold, *Church and Society under the Comneni*, pp.412-13.

[112] Angold, *Church and Society under the Comneni,* p.416.

[113] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, pp.215-7. As Magdalino points out, the 1166 prohibition of seventh degree may, possibly, be linked with betrothal of Bela-Alexios to Maria Porphyrogennete, giving him the potential grounds to annul it should the situation call for it (it was indeed absolved in 1169/70 on the grounds of consanguinity). Magdalino, however, remains doubtful of the connection because of the 3 years between the two occurrences. The acts of 1172 and 1175 are even harder to pinpoint. One might try to connect them with "his views on the composition of the Comnenian nobility," but, again, Magdalino is unconvinced, since the acts of 1166 and 1175 would have had contradictory effects (one encouraging endogamy, the other exogamy).

of his dynasty through effective control of marriage policy.[114] The contradiction is made even more apparent in a *pittakion* issued by Manuel I in 1172. In it, Manuel speaks of the "Latins." They might err when it comes to the procession of the Holy Spirit, and they ignore the prohibitions of marriage between affines, but "they are punctilious in their respect for ties of consanguinity - and in this they put the Byzantines to shame."[115] It is significant that Manuel wished to make Byzantine practice more in line with the West, at least in terms of marriage impediments among consanguines. This is all the more true when one realizes, as even the patriarch of Manuel's time did, that this sentiment was contradictory (or at least irrelevant) to the matter at hand in the *pittakion*, and certainly relative to the decree of 1166 (either the latter was too lax or wasn't being enforced, yet that would really run against Manuel's own obvious desire to control marriage policies within the aristocracy).[116]

Perhaps the most important point to take away from the reign of Manuel I in this context is the simple fact that marriage and marriage impediments were primary concerns of the emperors of the twelfth century, yet, in theory at least, they directly affected even the most humble individual living within the empire's borders.[117] From this perspective, marriage, and with it, the *genos*, emerges as one of the most far-reaching aspects of Byzantine society in this period.

---

[114] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, p.214.

[115] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, p. 216. For the full text of the pittakion, see Jean Darrouzès, "Questions de droit matrimonial," *REB* 35 (1977), pp.107-57.

[116] Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, p.216.

[117] The number of specific cases of marriages contested on the grounds of consanguinity in the eleventh and twelfth centuries for which evidence exists remains extremely small. The few surviving cases illustrate a great degree of flexibility in their outcomes, especially when they involve members of the aristocracy, presumably because they could exert a certain amount of political pressure or could otherwise influence decisions. Angeliki Laiou has gathered the data from most known cases in this period and produced an accompanying table that summarizes their outcomes. The decisions vary so much, in fact, that Laiou herself refers to them as a kind of "anarchy." Laiou, *Mariage, amour et parenté*, p.113.

It was in 1166 that a synodal decree (σημείωμα συνοδικόν), issued jointly in the names of Patriarch Luke Chrysoberges and Emperor Manuel I Komnenos, finally gave the force of law (both 'secular' and ecclesiastical) to the prohibition of marriages between those related to the seventh degree of consanguinity.[118] Yet, this was not the end of all debates surrounding the institution of marriage that held direct relevance for the *genos*. The final decades of the twelfth century saw yet another dispute flare up, this time over the precise nature of the union of husband and wife. While the lengthy debate over the extension of marriage impediments among consanguines amounted to a debate over the limits of the singular *genos* and of "shared blood," this later dispute would determine the church's position on the question of whether a woman became a member of her husband's *genos* at the time of marriage or maintained her membership in her natal *genos*.

The Late Twelfth-Century Debate over the Meaning of "One Flesh"

In the late twelfth century, yet another a debate erupted among the clergy, this time focused on the calculation of degrees of kinship among affines. This debate centered upon the interpretation of the biblical passage that states that, when a man and a woman entered into a marital union, the two become "one flesh" (μιὰ σάρξ).[119] One party held that a husband and wife should be reckoned at two degrees of kinship, for, if they were regarded as one and the same degree (i.e. literally one flesh), this would result in them having become siblings. Taken one step further, it was argued that all marriages would thus have created an inherently incestuous (and

---

[118] Rhalles and Potles V, pp.95-8; Laiou, "Marriage Prohibitions, Marriage Strategies and the Dowry in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium," p.132.
[119] Genesis 2:24; Mark 10: 6-8.

illegal) union. The opposing party, led by the famous canonist Theodore Balsamon, argued that the two spouses became one flesh only in the sense that marriage united their "common human nature," but that this did not mean a complete union of their respective "lineages."[120] Over the course of the debate, neither side argued that the union of man and wife into one flesh amounted to their union into a single *genos*, which is perhaps the strongest argument of all in favor of the *genos* as a descent group that was immune to alterations beyond reproduction, including even the marital union.

By the third quarter of the twelfth century, the Tome of Sisinnios had been in force for over a century and a half, during which time the majority opinion seems to have favored a broad interpretation of its contents. This meant that, throughout most of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, any marriage between individuals related to the sixth degree of affinity, in whatever combination, was deemed prohibited.[121] The number of degrees separating two people related through marriage was typically found by first identifying the married couple whose union created the affinity between the two potential partners. Next, one would determine the number of degrees separating one potential marriage partner with his or her consanguineous relative currently in the connecting marriage. The same was then done for the other potential partner and his or her relation to the other partner in the connecting marriage. These two figures were then simply added. So, for example, the number of degrees between two brothers-in-law would be found by demonstrating that the first man was related to his (married) brother by two degrees, while the other man was also related to his sister (married to the first man's brother) by two

---

[120] Patrick Viscuso, "Marital Relations in the Theology of the Byzantine Canonist Theodore Balsamon," *Ostkirchliche Studien* 39 (1990), pp.281-88.

[121] This should not be confused with incestuous marriage, which could only occur, according to Byzantine reckoning, among consanguineous kin. These so-called Sisinnians were the ones behind the "unified theory" of the family and the eventual prohibition of marriage to the seventh degree of consanguinity, as well.

degrees. The result is that the two brothers-in-law are related to the fourth degree of affinity. A complication occurred when several cases came before civil and ecclesiastical courts involving a widow or widower who wished to marry a relative of his or her deceased spouse.

This debate affected the *genos* insofar as the union of two individuals created by marriage may, in theory, have been the one instance in which human action (beyond the reproductive act) might alter the composition of a single *genos*. In general, individuals in Byzantium seem to have retained their identification with their parental *genos* throughout their adult lives, especially since, as a descent group, the *genos* always evoked a strong connection with one's ancestors.[122] This was true of women as much as men.[123] Nevertheless, a close examination of the arguments put forth by Theodore Balsamon demonstrates that even those who argued that a husband and wife shared "one flesh" to such an extent that they were counted as one and the same degree in calculations of affinity still did not view them as sharing a single *genos*.

Balsamon's opponents apparently held that "his reckoning of husband and wife as a unity might change them into blood relatives, and their marital union into an incestuous relationship."[124] In response, Balsamon found a creative means to defend his position by using the theology of the Trinity, describing the union created by marriage as uniting two individuals in the flesh while each maintained their own, distinct hypostasis (ὑπόστασις), an important innovation in the history of the orthodox theology of marriage.[125] In an effort to deflect inevitable criticism from his opponents, Balsamon lays out his vision of the hypostatic union between husband and wife in such a way that the effect, or lack thereof, that this union would

---

[122] The link between an individual's *genos* and his/her ancestors is evident in an extremely wide range of sources, especially within the genre of oratory/rhetoric. For more on this, see Chapter One of this dissertation.
[123] For more on the role of women in the genos, particularly in the calculation of lineage, see Chapter Three.
[124] Viscuso, "Marital Relations," p.285.
[125] Viscuso, "Marital Relations," pp.283-4.

have on each person's respective *genos* is made explicit. He describes each spouse as "those not having the same root (ῥίζαν) and birth/origin (γέννησιν),"[126] language not only suggestive of the maintenance of distinct *genē* by each spouse but also highly reminiscent of the definition of *genos* offered by Nikephoros Blemmydes.[127] At another point in the same text, Balsamon makes his views even clearer. "Each of the *genē* is preserved after the union [i.e. marriage]."[128] Even for Balsamon, who argued passionately for the complete union of husband and wife in one and the same flesh, the *genos* as natal kin group remained unaffected after marriage had taken place.

Marriage and the *Genos* in the Early Thirteenth Century: Demetrios Chomatenos

Demetrios Chomatenos was the metropolitan bishop of Ochrid between 1216 and 1236. His *magnum opus* consists of a collection of a large number (152 to be exact) of shorter decisions, letters, and other legal rulings normally called *Ponemata Diaphora* (lit. "Various Works").[129] The compilation, which comes close to approximating western European episcopal registers,[130] was probably compiled during the bishop's lifetime and was intended to be used as a teaching tool. This has made it especially attractive to modern scholars, especially when compared to the otherwise similar collection of John Apokaukos (roughly contemporary).[131] The *Ponemata* are legal rulings or opinions, but their subjects reflect the particular legal purview of a metropolitan bishop in the early thirteenth century. Thus, in addition to cases involving issues

---

[126] Rhalles and Potles IV, p.561.
[127] For a full treatment of this definition, see Chapter One.
[128] Rhalles and Potles IV, p.558. "Τούτου δὲ οὕτως ἔχοντος, καὶ τῶν γενῶν σωζομένων ἑκατέρων μετὰ τὴν ἕνωσιν..."
[129] Günter Prinzing, ed. *Demetrii Chomateni Ponemata Diaphora*. CFHB 38 (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), p.46.
[130] Michael Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni,* p.4.
[131] Laiou, " Contribution à l'étude de l'institution familiale en Épire au XIIIème siècle," Fontes Minores VII, ed. Dieter Simon (Frankfurt am Main: Löwenklau Gesellschaft, 1984), pp.275-324.

specific to the clergy and monastics, much of the corpus deals with family law (broadly defined), especially disputes arising from contested inheritance, the use or alienation of the dowry, divorce, and, most important for this dissertation, marriage impediments.[132] The surviving documents produced by Demetrios Chomatenos demonstrate a use and understanding of the *genos* that conforms to the picture developed here, and, coming as it does in the early thirteenth century, that is, at the very end of the period under investigation, it may thus serve as a kind of test case.

The *Ponemata Diaphora* is a veritable treasure trove of information for an historian of the Byzantine family. The utility of *Ponema* 10 in producing a Byzantine definition of the *genos* has already been shown in the previous chapter.[133] In *Ponema* 2, Demetrios informs the addressee of his opinion, Ioannes Plytos, that some of his contemporaries were still calculating a man and his wife under one and the same degree of kinship, an issue that, as previously shown, had been hotly debated, though also seemingly put to rest, more than a generation before.[134] *Ponema* 5 offers a rare and fascinating glimpse into the (according to Chomatenos, illegal) practice of *adelphopoiia*, or "brother-adoption," among adult males. In this case, a soldier by the name of Alexandros Neokastrites wished to marry the niece of one Chydros, with whom Alexandros had earlier become adoptive brother. Chomatenos finds no issue with the proposed marriage because, he argues, adoptive brotherhood is not legally recognized (οὐκ ἔστι τοῖς νόμοις δεκτὴ). In addition to offering evidence of the continuation of the practice of *adelphopoiia* into the thirteenth century,[135] *Ponema* 5 is also noteworthy for Chomatenos'

---

[132] Angold, *Church and Society under the Comneni*, p. 419.
[133] See Chapter One.
[134] Prinzing, *Demetrii Chomateni Ponemata Diaphora*, pp.26-7.
[135] The practice of *adelphopoiia/adelphopoiesis*, which was a legal convention held over from pre-Christian Rome, was controversial amongst the clergy throughout most of Byzantine history. Despite accusations that it was used as a cover for homosexual relationships and repeated attempts to stamp out the practice, it seems to have persisted well

description of the relationship between "nature" and legal adoption. Since adoption "mimics nature," and nature produces sons, but not brothers, through reproduction, the adoption of brothers cannot be legitimate.[136]

The first item in Demetrios' collection is especially informative for the effect that eleventh- and twelfth-century debates over marriage impediments had on the theoretical underpinnings of the *genos*. *Ponema* 1 is written as a response to a letter of inquiry sent to Chomatenos by one Gregorios Kamonas, who held the title of *sebastos*. Gregorios had perviously taken as wife the daughter of a now deceased archon (local magnate) of Arbanos, though their marriage ended in divorce. Gregorios then proceeded to marry a woman bearing the name Komnene, a daughter of the Grand Zhupan of Serbia, Stephan, after her own first husband had died.[137] Komnene's first husband had been the brother of Gregorios' first wife's father, which had led some people to object to Gregorios' second marriage. Chomatenos' lengthy reply amounts to a summary of Byzantine imperial ("secular") and canon law regarding the prohibition of marriage, which is where its usefulness for this chapter lies.

Chomatenos summarizes the basics of calculating degrees of kinship found in Book 28, Title 5 of the *Basilika*, saying that the law "arranges the persons of the *genos* in degrees," thus displaying the tendency for "natural kinship" to be described simply as the *genos*.[138] Demetrios

---

into the thirteenth century and beyond, at least to a certain degree. For more on the practice, see John Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* (New York: Vintage, 1994); Claudia Rapp, "Ritual Brotherhood in Byzantium," *Traditio* 52 (1997), pp.285-326; Ruth Macrides, "Kinship by Arrangement: The Case of Adoption," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 44 (1990), pp.109-18.

[136] Prinzing, *Demetrii Chomateni Ponemata Diaphora*, p. 41.

[137] The use of the name Komnene by Stephan's daughter is an obvious, though interesting attempt to associate his family with that of the Byzantine family of Komnenos/-e, which, by the early thirteenth century, had become more or less synonymous with nobility and imperial aspirations. See Ruth Macrides, "What's in the name 'Megas Komnenos,'" Ἀρχεῖον Πόντου 35 (1979), pp.238-45.

[138] Ed. Prinzing, *Demetrii Chomateni Ponemata Diaphora*, p.20. "Ἔστι γὰρ οὕτως εἰπεῖν, ὡς ὁ νόμος ἐν τῷ πέμπτῳ τίτλῳ τοῦ κη' βιβλίου τῶν κεκωλυμένων γάμων ποιούμενος ἀπαρίθμησιν καὶ εἰς βαθμοὺς ἀποτάττων τὰ τοῦ γένους

then moves on to subsequent developments in legal and ecclesiastical thought regarding such impediments from the early tenth century to his own day. On the subject of marriage between those related to the seventh degree of consanguinity, which Chomatenos describes as "of the same *genos*," Demetrios tells Kamonas that the "silence of the law" on the matter had previously meant that such marriages were allowed, but it was later deemed "shameful and unseemly" because of the "nearness of the individuals."[139] The space of more than two pages in Prinzing's edition is devoted to the parsing of the words of Basil of Caesarea that sought to establish any marriage that resulted in the "mixing of the names of the *genos*" as incestuous. For Chomatenos, as for several jurists and clergy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it was Basil's use of the term "*genos*" in this prescription on which the matter truly hinged. As Chomatenos assures Kamonas, in marriages between two people related through marriage (ἐξ ἀγχιστείας), there can be no mixing of the names of the *genos*, since there is a distinction between affinity and the *genos*, "or kinship by blood."[140] After several additional paragraphs arguing this point, Chomatenos concludes by telling Kamonas that his second marriage was not prohibited by any authority and that it could proceed without impediment.

In this one decision, Demetrios Chomatenos not only summarizes the legal developments concerning marriage impediments from the previous two centuries, in particular the question of the seventh degree of consanguinity, he also demonstrates the use of *genos* as a distinctly and

---

πρόσωπα τῶν μὲν ἀνιόντων καὶ κατιόντων τοὺς γάμους ἀόριστον ἔχειν τὴν κωλύμην τεθέσπικε, τοῖς ἐκ πλαγίου δὲ τὸν ἕκτον βαθμὸν κωλυτικὸν ὅριον ἔθετο, ῥητῶς οὕτως εἰπών..."

[139] Ibid. "Ἐπεὶ δὲ ὁ τὸν ἕβδομον λαχὼν βαθμὸν ἐκ τῆς τοῦ αὐτοῦ γένους σειρᾶς γάμος ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ νόμου σιωπῆς ἔκτοτε ὡς εἰκὸς χώραν λαμβάνων καὶ παρρησιαζόμενος, ὕστερον αἰσχρὸς καὶ ἄσεμνος ἔδοξε διὰ τὴν τῶν προσώπων ἐγγύτητα..."

[140] Prinzing, *Demetrii Chomateni Ponemata Diaphora*, pp.22-3. "...ἔνθα δὲ οὐ γένους, ἀλλ'ἐξ ἀγχιστείας προσηγορίαι, οὐδεμία ὑποψία συγχύσεως. Ὅσον δὲ τὸ διάφορον ἀγχιστείας καὶ γένους, ἤγουν συγγενείας ἐξ αἵματος, δῆλον τοῦτο τοῖς εἰδόσι καθέστηκεν. Ὁ Καμωνᾶς δὲ καὶ ἡ Κομνηνὴ ἐξ ἀγχιστείας ἐλθόντες παρ'ἑκάτερα τοῦ γένους τοῦ Γίνη τῶν τῆς ἀγχιστείας προσηγοριῶν καταχρηστικῶς ἀλλήλοις, ἀλλ'οὐ κυρίως, μετέδωκαν καὶ οὕτως νῦν συναπτόμενοι οὐδαμῶς γένους ὀνομάτων ἐργάζονται σύγχυσιν."

182

solely natal kin group, he makes explicit the link between the *genos* and shared blood, he quite

openly understands the *genos* as the kin group within which marriage was prohibited (and, thus,

the limits of marriage impediments amount to the limits of the *genos*), and he expands upon the

Byzantine notion that the *genos* originated with and was governed by nature itself. The *genos* as

presented in the writings of Chomatenos is thus entirely consistent with the picture created by his

near-contemporary, Nikephoros Blemmydes, in his *Epitome Logica*.[141]

Conclusion

A focus on the use of the term "*genos*" in the legal and theological literature concerning

marriage impediments produced in Byzantium between the tenth and the early thirteenth century

shows consistent change over time that can rightly be described as a clear trend. There is a

marked, progressive increase in the frequency with which the *genos* appears over this period, in

part because the concept came ever more frequently to replace certain other formulations (e.g.

"relative by blood" vs. "relative by *genos*"). The *genos* appears much more often in Chomatenos'

thirteenth-century decisions than it does in similar documents from even a century earlier. This

tendency is reflected in many other sources from the same period, suggesting that the *genos* as

kin group was increasing in its social and cultural importance in many spheres of Byzantine

society.[142] Over the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the *genos* moved to the center of the

Byzantine concept of kinship and its significance.

---

[141] For more on Blemmydes' significance for understanding the nature of the *genos*, see chapter one.
[142] This phenomenon is explored more fully in Chapter Five.

Marriage was one of the most common ways that a Byzantine individual's *genos* would have directly impacted their lives. In cases of marriage, all people belonged to a *genos*, meaning it was not a social group limited to the aristocracy, at least in some respects. The extension of marriage impediments is perhaps the nearest Byzantium came to an expansion of the family, as described by Kazhdan and Epstein, at least inasmuch as the Byzantine clergy and jurists themselves seem to have understood these extensions as the expansion of the limits of the singular *genos*.[143]

Byzantine law, both canonical and 'secular,' did assign certain "orders" (τάξεις) to affinal relations that were regarded as the equivalent of a consanguineous relative (e.g. "mothers-in-law have the same order as mothers"), which encouraged their treatment as kin in calculations of degrees of kinship for the purpose of, for example, marriage or inheritance. They also enjoyed certain other privileges in people's daily lives that were normally reserved for kin, such as access to the household or shared meals. Still, the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that affinal relations were never considered part of one's *genos*. This was certainly true for those authorities involved in legal issues surrounding marriage.

The surviving decisions analyzed above offer strong evidence for the wide variety of authorities informing and supporting the arguments put forward. Eustathios Romaios' decisions draw from both civil, "secular" law and the canons of the church, and the same is true of decisions originating with members of the church hierarchy. Perhaps even more interesting is the fact that it is not simply legal sources, civil or canonical, that appear in such a role in these texts. Equally relevant for bishop and civil judge alike were nearly any written authorities that carried

---

[143] Alexander Kazhdan and Ann Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985)*,* pp.100-101.

the weight of tradition and were deemed to hold some relevance for the issue at hand.[144] Thus, Eustathios' adaptation of Porphyro-Aristotelian philosophy to support his argument in a contested marriage case or his assertion that some knowledge of human physiology was necessary for a full understanding of the degrees of kinship were not only acceptable, they were positively unremarkable (at least among his contemporaries). Sisinnios' supposed medical expertise can be viewed as bolstering his claim to authority in issues of marriage law in a similar vein.

In sum, a careful analysis of the language used by canonists and jurists of the eleventh through early thirteenth centuries shows that, according to these men, the *genos* was the primary form of the family involved in the determination of marriage impediments in the eyes of both secular and canon law. For them, the *genos* was defined as the natural, i.e. consanguineous, family within which marriage was prohibited based, in part, upon the idea that within these limits individuals shared too much of the same "blood." The expansion of prohibitions in the eleventh and early twelfth century was seen, or at least portrayed, as the legal recognition of the limits already put in place by nature itself, rather than purely an innovation on the part of legal thinkers. This expansion was, quite literally, the expansion of the *genos* as legally recognized kin group. Similarly, the debate over the reckoning of degrees separating a man and wife determined that each spouse remained a member of his or her natal *genos* even after they had become "one flesh" through the institution of marriage, effectively maintaining what seems to have been the common opinion for some time previous.

---

[144] Burgmann, "Turning Sisinnios against the Sisinnians," p.177. The phenomenon described here is not entirely dissimilar from the known practice among Byzantine jurists to cite legal precedents not seemingly relevant to the case at hand. "The quotation of several legal norms that are not--or at least not directly--relevant to the case serves to show the legal expertise of the author and illustrates the paradox that for Byzantine jurists the law was just an argument, albeit the most important one, and that they did not develop specifically legal dogmatics."

Among the many surviving documents related to the debates discussed here, it was not simply the law that was in question, either civil or ecclesiastical. In addition to philosophical precedents, several jurists and clergy throughout the period discussed here referred to medical knowledge of reproduction as relevant to their exploration of the nature and limits of kinship, in particular consanguineous kinship. The preceding pages have made it clear that, following the language of several eleventh-century commentators on marriage law and the reasoning offered by Theodore Balsamon in the late twelfth century, the *genos* as consanguineous kin group only expanded through the reproductive act. The Byzantine *genos* was, in a way, carried in the blood, and the Byzantines, like many western cultures, understood the bond among consanguines to be exactly that: the bond of shared blood. This realization logically leads to the question of just how human reproduction was imagined and the ways in which each parent passed on a part of themselves through biological reproduction. If marriage impediments among consanguineous kin were understood to be the limits of the singular *genos*, and all those individuals within that *genos* were thought to share a significant portion of the same "blood," how did Byzantine thinkers interpret the significance of "shared blood?" What kinds of traits or characteristics could be passed on from parent(s) to child? What role did medical knowledge play in the composite picture of the *genos* in the tenth through the twelfth century? These are some of the questions addressed in the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Shared Blood, Mixed Descent, and the Cultural Significance of Consanguineous Kinship

...ἐκ θηλείας τινός...οἱ τούτου [Constantine X] κατήγοντο πρόγονοι,
ὅθεν οὐδὲ Δούκας λελόγιστο καθαρός, ἀλλ'ἐπίμικτος καὶ κεκιβδηλευμένην
ἔχων τὴν πρὸς τοὺς Δούκας συγγένειαν.

"The ancestors of [Constantine X] descended from some female,
whence he was not considered a pure Doukas,
but as having mixed and adulterated kinship with the Doukai".
- John Zonaras, *History*, III, pp.675-6

John Zonaras, the twelfth-century theologian and author of a history of the world,

delivers an aside in one portion of his history regarding the family and ancestry of Emperor

Constantine X Doukas (r. 1059-67). In this aside, part of which is reproduced above, Zonaras

questions the legitimacy of Constantine's claim to membership in the *genos* of the Doukai.[1] The

sentiment is an odd one on its own, as no other surviving source seems to share Zonaras' view of

the emperor's descent, but it is made even more so by the reasons Zonaras gives for his critique.

He tells his readers that all the male members of the Doukas family were wiped out following the

failed revolt of Andronikos and Constantine Doukas in 913.[2] Constantine X was thus related to

the tenth-century family through the female line, which is apparently enough to have polluted his

---

[1] John Zonaras, *Epitome Historiarum*, XVIII, 8.12-14; T. Büttner-Wobst, ed. (Bonn, 1897), pp.675-6.
[2] Zonaras' claim that all male Doukai were killed or castrated after the failed revolts of Andronikos and Constantine would seem to have been inaccurate. According to Skylitzes' narrative, one Nicholas, "the son of Constantine Doukas," was given a military command against the onslaught of Bulgarian tsar Symeon sometime after the death of Emperor Alexander in 913. (John Skylitzes, Synopsis of histories, 9.9; John Wortley, trans., *John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811-1057* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], p.199 and n.44). This Nicholas was, however, killed in the fighting against the Bulgarians. (ibid.) Still, the passage suggests that the rebel's family may not have been as completely wiped out as later sources suggest.

bloodline, or at least to have diluted his legitimate claim to membership in the *genos* of Doukas.

Though Zonaras' opposition to Alexios I Komnenos, who was married to a member of the

Doukas family, is well-documented,[3] and probably helps explain his apparent issues with

Constantine X, the method chosen to discredit him here appears unusual in a Byzantine context.

Strictly agnatic lines of descent have never been considered to be a part of Byzantine

culture.[4] The classical Roman *familia*, consisting of a male *paterfamilias* who held absolute

authority over all of his living descendants through the male line, had effectively disappeared

long before the tenth century in Byzantium. Byzantine law always favored equitable, partible

inheritance practices, including for one's daughters. Family names could be inherited through the

female line as often as through the male. At first glance, it appears that Zonaras' comments bear

witness to a current within Byzantine thought not generally acknowledged to have existed at all,

and one that could have serious implications for how modern scholars understand the

intergenerational reproduction of families in a Byzantine context. As anomalous as it may

appear, the very fact that Zonaras felt he could attack Constantine X on these grounds assumes

that at least some of his readers would have agreed with his assessment that descent through the

female line was somehow less legitimate than through the male or that it even had a polluting

effect.

Understanding Zonaras' criticism is a difficult problem, but it is not without potentially

fruitful lines of inquiry. In particular, some answers may be sought by approaching the issue

through the lens of specifically Byzantine understandings of the process of human reproduction

---

[3] *ODB*, p.2229.

[4] Laiou, "Family Structure and the Transmission of Property," in *A Social History of Byzantium*, ed. John Haldon (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp.51-75, esp. p.72: "Descent is cognatic, and the family property is transmitted through bilateral inheritance, with a strong preference in law for equal inheritance..."

and conception. At first glance, this approach may seem a strange one, but there is some precedent for such studies in other fields, especially in work on medieval and early modern Europe. In fact, respected anthropologist Marshall Sahlins has called on scholars working in the fields of anthropology or related disciplines to approach the study of kinship by first accounting for "culturally specific notions of procreation." "For where they are relevant," argues Sahlins, "the blood, milk, semen, bone, flesh, spirit, or whatever of procreation are not simply physiological phenomena, nor do they belong to the parents alone. They are...meaningful social endowments that situate the child in a broadly extended and specifically structured field of kin relationships."[5] Such an approach holds some promise for the study of the Byzantine *genos*, since, as previous chapters have shown, it was a resolutely consanguineous kin group that only reproduced itself through the act of procreation. In Sahlins' own words, "it is high time to investigate these culturally variable conceptions of conception."[6]

Medical knowledge of human reproduction played a surprisingly influential role in Byzantine conceptions of the bond of kinship within the *genos* as the expression of both biological descent and consanguineous kinship. The precise nature of the bond of shared blood, one of the strongest social bonds in Byzantium and the basis of the *genos*, was characterized by a culturally specific understanding of the process of reproduction and the influence this had on the characteristics or traits passed on from each parent to their children. This chapter explores the ways in which Byzantine knowledge of the reproductive process influenced the concept of the *genos*, including the role played by women in its intergenerational reproduction. Since the *genos* as kin group could only expand through the act of biological reproduction (perhaps with the sole

---

[5] Marshall Sahlins, *What Kinship Is--And Is Not* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), p.74.
[6] Sahlins, *What Kinship Is--And Is Not*, p.76.

exception coming in the expansion of marriage impediments), the precise nature of the bonds

uniting individuals within the *genos* were intimately linked with this knowledge.

The bond of shared blood guaranteed an individual certain rights and privileges, many of

them protected by the law (e.g. inheritance rights and certain protections against forced

testimony). This bond also carried with it certain expectations of behavior and rights of access

that existed outside the explicit protection of the law, many of them shared to a greater or lesser

extent with those considered kin (or, at times, even friends). Mutual political support, the sharing

of meals, access to the household, certain inheritance rights, and even the expectation of

memorialization after death could all be enjoyed by kinsmen of some form or another. Despite

the variety of forms of kinship in Byzantium, the bond of consanguinity, of shared blood (and

thus, of the *genos*) held pride of place as not only the most basic, but also the most indelible and,

perhaps, the strongest. In practical terms, affinal relatives could play just as important a role in

the social and political advancement of an individual throughout his or her adult life. Yet there

can be no question that a relationship "by blood" had certain connotations that went above and

beyond more pragmatic, political allegiances formed by marriage. The Byzantines, not unlike

their western counterparts, recognized that marriage alliances could be ephemeral. A marriage

could often be used to cement a political alliance between two families, but this alliance could

dissolve in the case of divorce or the death of one of the marriage partners in question. At the

same time, the birth of one or more children to the couple, a child in whom the blood of the two

families was forever intermingled, lent such alliances an air of permanence and seems to have

secured their cooperation, or at least mitigated against further hostility, on a much more secure and permanent basis.[7]

This cultural emphasis on the importance of shared descent and shared blood became all the more vital in an age in which the social standing of one's ancestors (again, limited to the natal family group) was becoming more determinant in the social standing of the living individual. In Niketas Choniates' *History*, Alexios I Komnenos reportedly appealed to the popular belief in the "rights of consanguinity" while defending his choice of his son, John, as successor rather than his son-in-law, Anna Komnene's husband Nikephoros Bryennios. "All the Romans would laugh aloud at me and conclude that I had lost my senses should I, who gained the throne in an unpraiseworthy manner by denying the rights of consanguinity and the principles of Christian laws, when it came time to leave a succession, replace the child of my loins with the Macedonian [Bryennios]."[8] The trend continued to grow throughout the period in question here, even to the point that one scholar could claim that, in the Palaiologan period (ca. 1261-1453), references in the surviving sources to "the nobility of line and the illustrious ancestry of individuals" become so ubiquitous that some scholars have wanted to see a western-style nobility in these last centuries of Byzantium.[9]

Consanguineous kinship formed the basis of the multiple forms of adoptive, spiritual, and fictive kinship in Byzantium, the ubiquity of which has attracted the attention of generations of scholars. The symbolism and language of kinship was utilized in a vast array of relationships in Byzantium, and, in each instance, it was only because of the real and perceived power of what

---

[7] For a similar suggestion, see Laiou, *Mariage, amour et parenté*, p.38.
[8] *Nicetae Choniatae Historia*, ed. van Dieten (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1975), 1.6. The translation is by Harry J. Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), p.5.
[9] Angeliki E. Laiou, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Palaeologan Period: A Story of Arrested Development," *Viator* 4 (1973), pp.131-51; quote taken from p. 137.

Byzantines called "natural" kinship that such symbolic language held any meaning.[10]

Paradoxically, however, the variety of forms in which kinship, broadly defined, appeared

throughout the Byzantine Empire's history, has generally attracted modern scholars to the more

unusual forms it took.

The previous chapter has shown how several authorities argued for the special

importance of kinship by blood over and above that created by marriage or other, legal means in

arguments over the recognition of impediments to marriage.[11] Theodore Balsamon expressed his

opinion in the later twelfth century, "...those who are of the seventh degree [of kinship] by blood

may not marry, but those who share this same degree through marriage are not prevented [from

marrying]; for great is the difference between kinship by blood and kinship simply [through]

association."[12] This importance appears have grown over the course of the eleventh and twelfth

centuries, despite some modern arguments to the contrary.[13]

The proliferation of the term *genos* in surviving sources, denoting as it did a close

connection with one's ancestors and consanguineous kin, and its ever-increasing use as this

period progressed further argues for the added weight given both to lines of descent and to the

bond of shared blood among living contemporaries.[14] Even relatively minor changes in the

---

[10] See, for example: Dirk Krausmüller, "Byzantine Monastic Communities: Alternative Families?," in *Approaches to the Byzantine Family*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Shaun Tougher (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 345-58.

[11] Rhalles and Potles, V, p.345 (Eustathios Romaios). "...τίς ἂν ὀρθῶς εἴποι τὸν ἐξ ἀγχιστείας συγγενῆ, οἰκειότερον εἶναι τοῦ ἐξ αἵματος, καὶ πρὸς τοὺς πορρωτέρω ἀπελαύνεσθαι ὅρους; Οὐδεὶς οἶμαι νοῦν ἔχων." ("...who would rightly say that an affinal kinsman is more personal/belonging to one's one/friendly than a blood relative, and is driven away toward more distant mountains/definitions? No one in their right mind, I think.")

[12] Rhalles and Potles IV, p.557. συγγενικῆς ἁπλῶς οἰκειώσεως

[13] Rosemary Morris, "Succession and Usurpation: Politics and Rhetoric in the late Tenth Century," in *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th through 13th Centuries*. Papers from the Twenty-Sixth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, St. Andrews, March 1992 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994), p.203. "The route here [for Nikephoros II and, attempted at least, by John I Tzimiskes] was thus to become stepfathers to the children. But given the fact that Byzantines did not have the same hard-and-fast divisions into 'blood' and 'non-blood' relationships as we do now, all these three gentlemen may well have been viewed as 'father' to the emperor [Basil II and Constantine VIII]."

[14] For a detailed analysis of this change, see chapter five.

language commonly employed by the sources attests to the increasing emphasis on the bonds of shared blood in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. *Homaimōn* (ὁμαίμων), for example, literally translating to "one of the same blood," appears with increasing frequency in this period as a replacement for *adelphos*/-*ē* (ἀδελφός/-ή) to indicate a sibling.[15]

An emphasis on shared blood was gaining in importance at roughly the same time that claims of noble ancestry and the use of family names was also on the rise, i.e. from the mid-to-late eleventh century into the twelfth. There is a notable increase in the frequency with which authors of various types of sources indicate whether an individual is a relative of another through marriage (affinity) or "by blood." Terms like "*homaimon/-os*" (ὁμαίμων) or "*synaimos*" (σύναιμος), literally "of the same blood," appear with much greater frequency than in earlier periods of Byzantine history, typically indicating the sibling bond in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. There is equally a much greater tendency to indicate whether an individual was descended from a particular family or ancestor through the male or female lines (often expressed as "from the father" or "on his/her mother's side"). The impression that one gets from reading many sources from this period is not only a greater interest in recording family ties and bonds of kinship in general, but a greater degree of specificity within the umbrella of kinship and the special place held by what the Byzantine sources refer to as "shared blood."[16]

The blood, according to Byzantine reckoning, carried not only the symbolic weight of shared kinship and, by extension, shared interests, but also a number of specific characteristics

---

[15] See below (pp.191-94).

[16] Évelyne Patlagean, among others, long ago recognized both the greater emphasis on kinship in surviving sources from the mid-tenth century onward and the increased specificity and specialization of the vocabulary of kinship at the same time. See "Families and Kinships in Byzantium," in *A History of the Family, vol. 1: Distant Worlds, Ancient Worlds*, eds. Burguière, Klapisch-Zuber, Segalen, and Zonabend (The Belknap Press of Harvard U Press: Cambridge, MA, 1996), pp.467-88.

that were not necessarily unique to the individual but were understood as being shared amongst

blood relatives, to a greater or lesser degree, precisely because of their common biological roots.

The blood was the locus of nobility and other attributes deemed biologically heritable. It carried

with it the essence of the individual inasmuch as sharing too much of the same blood prevented

marriage.[17] The perceived importance of one's ancestry in eleventh- and twelfth-century

Byzantine society extended beyond the symbolic or rhetorical praise of the individual to include

a much more literal understanding of the kinds of physical and character traits inherited from

one's parents or more distant forebears.

It may seem a matter of course among westerners to speak of consanguineous kinship in

terms of shared blood (as the term consanguineous itself attests), but this is not a predetermined

trait of all cultures. Even if the Byzantines, like modern westerners, spoke of this relationship in

terms of shared blood, one must still be careful to take into account culturally specific

understandings of the method of the reproduction of blood with each new generation. How,

according to Byzantine thought, was one or both parents' blood passed on to their children? To

what degree did one's offspring share their blood with their mother or father, siblings, or more

distant "blood-relatives?" What social or cultural significance was attached to this shared blood?

In an age when the human genome has been decoded and genetic testing is rapidly becoming

something of a commonplace, it is easy to forget that answers to such questions were not always

so readily apparent.

Though it cannot be said that Byzantine philosophers or physicians had come upon a

concept of genetics per se, this does not mean that they did not have an interest in the mechanics

---

[17] See the previous chapter for more on this.

of biological reproduction or the heritability of certain traits through the reproductive act. Indeed, whether speaking of the transmission of original sin, a sense of nobility inherited through one's ancestors, or even the breeding of cattle, the Byzantines of the tenth through twelfth centuries had at their disposal a vocabulary for such ideas, which was only partially inherited from earlier thinkers. The compilation known as the *Geoponika* is a good example of this. Compiled in the mid-tenth century (the volume is dedicated to Emperor Constantine VII, who technically reigned from 913 to 959), this handbook on farming practices is full of ancient wisdom concerning the breeding of animals and grafting of plants, much of which includes methods of ensuring certain traits in the offspring, especially sex.[18] Such curiosity and lines of inquiry extended beyond plants and animals to include human reproduction, both in antiquity and in medieval Byzantium.

The application and contribution of medieval Byzantine knowledge of human reproduction to their particular understanding of the nature of kinship and the full significance of shared blood has not received much scholarly attention, at least as it concerns Byzantium, but the subject has been an active field of inquiry among many scholars working outside of Byzantine history. Marshall Sahlin's interest in "the hypothesis that relations of procreation are patterned by the kinship order in which they are embedded" has already been mentioned.[19] The work of many scholars, working mostly on Western Europe, has shown that heritability was a central concern of philosophers and theologians alike. In particular, the method by which original sin was passed on in each generation, the "other-ing" of Jews, the ideas underlying nobility by birth, inherited diseases, and even the more mundane processes of animal breeding and plant grafting were all

---

[18] Andrew Dalby, ed. and trans., *Geoponika: Farm Work* (Gutenberg Press, Malta: Prospect Books, 2011), p. 9.
[19] Sahlins, *What Kinship Is--And Is Not*, p.76.

issues that concerned medieval thinkers, and, in many cases, they were approached using a common body of authoritative texts and a similar set of questions and assumptions.

Steven Epstein has published an entire monograph focused on (western) medieval ideas about biologically inherited traits among all living things, including human beings, and the ways in which this knowledge was used, especially in the spheres of animal breeding and plant grafting.[20] In his work, Epstein has, among other things, demonstrated that "inheritability was well understood in surprising ways by many medieval people, from scholars in their lofty perches in the great universities to farmers in the most remote countryside."[21] This knowledge was used for more practical purposes, such as the grafting of plants (e.g. vines) and breeding of farm animals, such as asses or mules, but it also played a role in more theoretical discussions, including those surrounding the process of human reproduction.

Epstein highlights the repeated emphasis found in his (mostly western European) sources that, in nature, "like produces like."[22] Western Europeans regarded truisms like this, which were typically found in discussions of plants or animals, as equally true for human beings. "Nevertheless, [medieval European] people observed that their children were a mixture of parental qualities...'Like produces like' did not mean identical, and so there was always room and a need, to explain slight changes in appearance over time...certainly, farmers and shepherds knew this."[23] According to Epstein, the translation and dissemination of Aristotle's "On the Generation of Animals" radically changed European thought on reproduction and, especially, inheritability of traits after the mid-thirteenth century.[24] In the Byzantine case, neither Galen nor Aristotle

---

[20] Steven Epstein, *The Medieval Discovery of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
[21] Epstein, *The Medieval Discovery of Nature*, p.7.
[22] Epstein, *The Medieval Discovery of Nature*, passim (see especially pages 78-112).
[23] Epstein, *The Medieval Discovery of Nature*, p.83.
[24] Epstein, *The Medieval Discovery of Nature*, pp.96ff.

were ever lost to them, and the ideas that they encouraged regarding the relationship between biological reproduction and human character remained influential throughout all of the Byzantine Empire's history.

Epstein also addresses the understandable concern over whether there is some merit in objections to the application of concepts such as heritability or, especially, genetics, to pre-modern thought. These, as Epstein contends, are "modern inventions imposed on the past and [potentially] distorting it."[25] This does not, however, disqualify any efforts to see in Byzantine (or medieval European) thought ideas that we, in the twenty-first century, firmly associate with these modern scientific categories. As Epstein himself argues, even if the term "(in)heritability" is absent from medieval works, "Nonetheless, they [medieval thinkers] thought a great deal about innate traits in people and bred animals and plants over many generations with definite goals in mind."[26] While the word "inheritability" appears throughout Epstein's book, he points out that it must be understood as a reference to the medieval (and ancient) concept of "like produces like." By his own definition, which will largely be adopted here, "Inheritability concerns those innate characteristics of living things that can be passed down to descendants by natural means. Those behaviors that are taught and endure as the human cultural inheritance are not the subject here. Nor are we yet so concerned about things inherited by people, although, as we will see, the language used to describe both processes often overlaps. Passing down requires offspring and implies reproduction, and this is where matters become complicated."[27]

Other scholars have similarly examined medieval ideas of physiology and inheritability to explore wider meanings of human relationships. Joan Cadden's work has shown that an

---

[25] Epstein, *The Medieval Discovery of Nature*, p.9.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Epstein, *The Medieval Discovery of Nature*, pp.4-5.

analysis of medieval medical knowledge and ideas surrounding human reproduction can be used to offer a fresh analysis of the role of women in medieval society.[28] In the words of one scholar, Cadden demonstrates unquestionably that "medieval medicine is the place to look for one aspect of applied biology -- inheritability."[29] Peter Brown's pioneering work on sexual renunciation in early Christianity also draws heavily on Greco-Roman and Late Antique ideas about sexual reproduction and the relationship between the individual and his/her body.[30] Peter Biller has argued that Christian ideas about human multiplication and population control played a role in determining which foreign enemies were most threatening to Christian Europe, in particular by examining medieval thought on marriage.[31]

There is, of course, a long history of scholarship on the development of ideals of nobility "by blood" in Western Europe, even if much of this has largely ignored the role of medical knowledge in the development of such ideas.[32] In the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Spanish Empire, blood was deemed to carry not only physical, but also cultural traits. This has close parallels in the medieval Byzantine evidence. Late medieval and early modern Spanish ideas of *limpieza de sangre* and, especially, of the negative connotations associated with the term "race" (*raza*) were, in fact, informed by both medical knowledge and, importantly, by practices

---

[28] Joan Cadden, *The Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[29] Epstein, *The Medieval Discovery of Nature*, p.6.

[30] Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

[31] Peter Biller, *The Measure of Multitude: Population in Medieval Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Epstein, *The Medieval Discovery of Nature*, p.5.

[32] The historiography for this issue is extensive and covers more than a century of serious scholarship. For a good overview, see: Constance Bouchard, *Those of My Blood: Creating Noble Families in Medieval Francia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); David Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility: Constructing Aristocracy in England and France, 900-1300* (London: Pearson Longman, 2005); Timothy Reuter, ed., *The Medieval Nobility: Studies on the Ruling Classes of France and Germany from the Sixth to Twelfth Century* (Oxford: North-Holldand, 1978).

associated with the breeding of domesticated animals, especially horses.[33] One might compare

this to Aristotle, who also uses horses alongside human beings to illustrate his ideas about the

genos (repeated in later Byzantine authors like Nikephoros Blemmydes) and to Galenic thought,

in which humans, animals, and even plants are seen as differing (at least physiologically and

reproductively) only in degree (of wetness/dryness, warmth/cold, etc.).[34]

Recent studies have observed that there existed a high level of interdisciplinarity in

medieval thought regarding heritability.[35] Thus, for example, western medieval thought on

hereditary diseases borrowed heavily from existing legal tracts, while the concept of latency in

hereditary diseases depended to a large extent on similar ideas in theology.[36] The same

interdisciplinary nature is exhibited in the medieval Byzantine context, as this chapter will

demonstrate.

Galen and Medical Knowledge of Reproduction in Byzantium

Any discussion of Byzantine knowledge of human reproduction must begin with Galen.

The late Roman physician's enormous body of work formed the foundation of Byzantine medical

---

[33] Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler, eds., *The Origins of Racism in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[34] Humanity was, it must be admitted, treated as something fundamentally different from the rest of creation, inasmuch as human beings were understood to have souls. For numerous reasons, not least among them constraints of time and space, this chapter is not primarily concerned with the medieval Byzantine theology of the soul or even of the inheritance of original sin. Late antique theologians thoroughly mulled over the biblical passage found in Romans 5:12, "Through one man sin entered the world and it passed through to all men," and the problem of the inheritance of original sin, and this enormous body of work has been examined by numerous scholars in the modern world. See Steven Epstein, The Medieval Discovery of Nature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.86-95.

[35] See, for example, Maaike van der Lugt and Charles Miramon, eds., *L'hérédité entre Moyen Âge et Époque moderne: Perspectives historiques* (Florence: SISMEL, Edizioni del Galuzzo, 2008).

[36] Michel Morange, Review of *L'hérédité entre Moyen Âge et Époque moderne: Perspectives historiques*, ed. van der Lugt and Miramon, in *The Cambridge Journal of Medical History* 55 (2011), pp.256-7.

knowledge throughout its entire millennium of existence.[37] Galen thought that both men and women produced semen, though the male's was considered to be more perfect. Following Galen's model, the male and female semen, when combined in the uterus, competed for prevalence in various portions of the new fetus. In certain areas, the male's semen would prevail, while, in others, the female's became dominant. Thus, the offspring resembled his/her father in some aspects, the mother in others.[38] Importantly, the Galenic school of thought always recognized that women contributed their own "seed" in the reproductive process. This contrasts with the Aristotelian version, which overtook the Galenic corpus as the predominant model of reproduction in the medieval West.[39] For Aristotle, the male alone contributed semen, while the female offered only nutriment for the fetus (in the form of menstrual fluid). In short, the male was entirely responsible for the child's form.[40]

That is not to say that Galen envisioned a perfect equality between the sexes. Even if Galen contended that women as contributed their own seed to the fetus, he certainly did not view women themselves as the equals of their male counterparts.[41] So, for example, he states "Now just as mankind is the most perfect of all animals, so within mankind the man is more perfect than the woman, and the reason for his perfection is his excess of heat, for heat is Nature's

---

[37] Owsei Temkin, "Byzantine Medicine: Tradition and Empiricism." *DOP* 16 (1962), pp.95-116.

[38] Jan Blayney, "Theories of Conception in the Ancient Roman World," in *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives*, ed. Beryl Rawson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp.230-36. "Galen suggested that different portions of the male and female semen contained different qualities of semen: thus, the first portion ejected might be of a thicker substance, whilst the second or third portions might be thinner, colder or weaker, and vice versa. When the two seeds combined, the male seed prevailed in some portions, the female seed in others, in accordance with the quality of those portions and, as a result, the child resembled the father in some parts of the body, and the mother in others." The description is taken from Galen, *De Semine*, 2.5.

[39] Modern research has shown that Aristotle's views were, in fact, a good deal more complicated than this. For a more nuanced view, see Leland Giovannelli, "Aristotle's Theory of Sexual Reproduction as it Emerges in On the Generation of Animals." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1999.

[40] Blayney, "Theories of Conception in the Ancient Roman World," p.234.

[41] For a more complete treatment of gender differences in Galen and other Roman medical traditions, see: Cadden, *The Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages*; Rebecca Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women: Gender, Nature and Authority from Celsus to Galen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

primary instrument."[42] This "heat" was incredibly important to Galen's vision of the natural world, as it was, he said, simply a difference in the level of this heat that differentiated motile animals (including humans) from plants. Galen tried to explain why nature, always a rational agent in his mind, would see fit to create such an imperfect specimen. The reason women are imperfect, he argues, is so that the fetus can draw nutrients from her; for, if she were perfect, she would use up all of it herself. "This is the reason why the female was made cold, and the immediate consequence of this is the imperfection of the parts, which cannot emerge on the outside on account of the defect in the heat, another very great advantage for the continuance of the race (γένους)."[43] Such ideas certainly made their way into the medieval Byzantine psyche.

For Byzantine thinkers, the physical characteristics and personality of an individual was not entirely a question of biological inheritance, and things such as the environmental conditions surrounding conception and, of course, the influence of the divine had their own roles to play in explaining the (dis)similarities between parents and offspring. Older, Roman ideas about the role of the attitude of each sexual partner at the time of conception, astrological influences, or even, following the *Geoponika*, wind direction continued to color Byzantine descriptions of the sex or personality of the resulting offspring.[44]

Galen's vision of nature, *physis*, which undoubtedly had a strong influence on the Byzantine concept of "natural kinship," allowed for a certain degree of analysis and understanding by human subjects. As one scholar of the Galenic corpus puts it, Galen "saw the

---

[42] Galen, *De usu partium*, 14.6, Margaret Tallmadge May, trans. and commentary, *Galen: On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body. Περὶ χρείας μορίων/De usu partium* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968), p.630. The translation is May's.

[43] Galen, *De usu partium* 14.6, ed. and trans. Margaret Tallmadge May, pp.630-31. The word used for "race" is, in fact, *genos*. This is not wholly without significance for the *genos* as kin group. For more, see chapter five of this dissertation.

[44] Peter Brown, *The Body and Society,* pp.9-23, passim.

bodies of living things as works of art, put together by an intelligent nature with a purpose in mind."[45] Unlike the Christian God, however, according to the Galenic vision, nature "must operate according to the ordinary laws of cause and effect, and use whatever material is available."[46] This made nature comprehensible to scientific inquiry, a foundational notion of Galen's school of medicine and philosophy. This fact had important implications for the *genos*, understood as it was as "natural kinship," and opened the door to medieval Byzantine authors who wished to interrogate the nature of heritability in human beings, and, as we shall see, many of them did exactly that.

Physiology and Medical Knowledge in Discussions of Kinship

Previous chapters have demonstrated that the *genos* was unambiguously imagined primarily as a natal kin group, with its members linked through shared bonds of common descent and expressed in the sources as "natural kinship." "*Genos*" was also frequently used, from at least the early eleventh century, as a substitute or synonym of "blood" when sources speak of consanguineous kinship. It should thus be clear that the bonds linking individuals of the same *genos* were imagined as that based upon the sharing of blood. Even the etymology of the term *genos* attests to the strength of its association with the reproductive act.[47]

A careful reading of the sources brings to light the surprising influence medical and physiological knowledge, especially as represented by the Galenic corpus, had on the theoretical

---

[45] Peter Brain, *Galen on Bloodletting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 3.
[46] Brain, *Galen on Bloodletting*, p.4.
[47] This etymological link was not lost on Byzantine authors themselves. At least one, twelfth-century lexicon claims that the term *genos* "comes from [the verb] γείνω, meaning 'to give birth to' (τίκτω)."

underpinnings and cultural norms associated with the *genos*.[48] Byzantines regarded Galen as a philosopher as much as a medical professional, and thus a much broader range of individuals were familiar with his works than just physicians. The author of *Timarion*, a fictional narrative produced in the twelfth century, clearly assumes that its readers will have a remarkably thorough knowledge of Greco-Roman medical writers.[49] Theodore Balsamon, the twelfth-century bishop of Antioch, also clearly displays a knowledge of medical treatises in his canonical writing.[50] A letter written by Michael Italikos in the mid-twelfth century has important implications for the relationship between the *genos*, blood, and human reproduction, as we shall see below. Michael Italikos, it should be remembered, was named *didaskalos* of (medical) doctors, and several letters attest to his extensive medical knowledge.[51] Michael Psellos is also known to have addressed issues of human reproduction in his voluminous writings.[52]

Significantly, Patriarch Sisinnios was known for his knowledge not only of the law, but also of medicine. Several eleventh- and twelfth-century jurists and clergy cite medical and philosophical works to support their arguments concerning the nature of kinship and its effect on marriage impediments.[53] Even the Tome of Sisinnios, the most influential of documents

---

[48] The common use of medical language and metaphors of doctor and patient in the theological writing of medieval Byzantium has come to the attention of scholars in the past. See Spyros Troianos, «ιατρική επιστήμη και γιατροί στο ερμηνευτικό έργο των κανονολόγων του 12ου αιώνα» *Byzantium in the 12th Century: Canon Law, State and Society* (Το Βυζάντιο κατά τον 12ο αιώνα, Κανονικό Δίκαιο, κράτος και κοινωνία), ed. N. Oikonomidès (Athens: Society of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies, 1991), pp.465-82.

[49] Barry Baldwin, trans., *Timarion* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984). The relatively short work contains a good deal of humor that relies on the reader's pre-existing knowledge of Greco-Roman medicine and medical writers.

[50] Patrick Viscuso, "Theodore Balsamon's Canonical Images of Women," Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies 45 (2005), pp.317-26.

[51] *ODB*, p.1328.

[52] Michael Psellos' "Concise Answers to Various Questions" includes several, short explications addressing various questions regarding "How Different Types of Conception Occur" (no. 110), "How Male and Female are Born" (no.111), and "How Do Children Become Similar and Dissimilar to their Parents" (no.114). See L.G. Westerink, ed., *Michael Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina* (Utrecht: J.L. Beijers, 1948).

[53] See also chapter three.

concerning marriage impediments, opens with a medical metaphor in which the work of doctors of the body (i.e. physicians) is compared with that of a "doctor of souls."[54]

Eustathios Romaios, as suggested in the previous chapter, makes several allusions to medical knowledge in his discussions and decisions regarding marriage impediments, many of them appearing in the same decisions that played such an important role in the eleventh-century debate over the seventh degree of consanguinity. In one discussion contained in the *Peira*, in which the jurist enters into one of his characteristic asides describing the nature of kinship, Eusthatios makes the connection between medical science and legal kinship explicit. "Thus, their [the husband and wife's] seeds become the origin of legal kinship… I blush that the law has taught me not to measure the degrees of collateral kinsmen before I learn the cause of birth, and from this I will unify the separate saplings back into one as though through a single root."[55] The language Eustathios chooses in the passage is especially informative. The phrase "the origin of legal kinship" (τῆς νομίμης ἀρχὴ γίνονται συγγενείας) closely parallels the language used by Aristotle in his influential work *On the Generation of Animals*. There, Aristotle speaks of male and female as "the origin" or "first principle of generation" (τὸ θῆλυ καὶ τὸ ἄρρεν ἀρχαὶ τῆς γενέσεώς εἰσιν).[56] Also of interest is his employment of the phrase "the cause of birth" (τῷ αἰτίῳ τῆς γεννήσεως). Similar language can be found throughout Galen's works, especially in

---

[54] Rhalles and Potles V, p.11. The term used is "ψυχῶν ἰατρὸς." Sisinnios frames the issue of marriage impediments as one in which it is necessary first to diagnose the problem in the same way a physician goes about diagnosing a medical issue with the physical body. The use of medical language and metaphor had a long history in Byzantine theology, especially as it concerned issues of heresy, going at least as far back as Epiphanios of Salamis' fourth-century *Panarion*.

[55] *Peira* LXII.2. ὧν τοίνυν τὰ σπέρματα τῆς νομίμης ἀρχὴ γίνονται συγγενείας…ἐρυθριῶ γὰρ τὸν νόμον διδάσκοντά με μὴ ἄλλως τῶν ἐκ πλαγίου συγγενῶν τοὺς βαθμοὺς μετρεῖν, πρὶν ἐπιστῶ **τῷ αἰτίῳ τῆς γεννήσεως**, κἀκ τούτου πρὸς ἑαυτὸν τοὺς ἀποδιεστῶτας ἑνώσω κλάδους ὥσπερ διὰ μιᾶς ῥίζης. (Bold added)

[56] Aristotle, *De generatione animalium*, I.2; H.J. Drossaart Lulofs, *Aristotelis de generatione animalium* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965, repr. 1972), 716a.

discussions of reproduction and the formation of the fetus.[57] Eustathios might express

embarrassment at the prospect of providing the reader with details regarding biological

reproduction, a subject about which he claims a certain amount of ignorance, yet, in his own

words, such knowledge was necessary in order fully to understand the reasons behind the

Byzantine legal definition of kinship and the limits imposed on consanguineous marriage.

Michael Skribas, author of a short work in opposition to the Tome of Sisinnios, equally

utilizes the language and knowledge of human reproduction in his criticism. He draws upon

"medical and philosophical knowledge" (κατὰ τοὺς ἰατρικοὺς ἤτοι ἐμφιλοσόφους νόμους) to

defend his positions, in this case regarding the 'natural' hierarchy of social order within the

consanguineous family. In this same passage, Skribas uses the phrase "the cause of birth" (τὸ

αἴτιον τῆς γεννήσεως) to refer to the genitor, who is contrasted with the one "birthed" (i.e.

parents vs. children).[58] Once again, the language is strongly reminiscent of that found in both

Galen's and Aristotle's visions of human reproduction.

Nor was it only in the law that medical knowledge was deemed useful for a fuller

understanding of the nature of kinship. One of the many letters of Michael Psellos to survive,

number 208 in Sathas' *Bibliotheke*, is addressed to the nephews of Patriarch Michael Keroularios,

almost certainly the brothers Constantine and Nikephoros. Psellos had several contacts with both

Constantine and his brother, Nikephoros.[59] They had been sent to Psellos for educational training

---

[57] Galen, *De usu partium*, ed. by G. Helmreich, *Galeni de usu partium libri xvii* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1907-1909), Vol. 3: p.757, line 18 (αἰτία τῆς γενέσεως); Vol. 4: p.183, lines 12-3 (ἀρχὴ γίγνεται ζῴου γενέσεως), p.183, lines 15-6 (ἡ δ᾽αἰτία καὶ τῆς τούτου γενέσεως ἥδε).

[58] Michael Skribas, *Antirrhetikos Logos*, 224.31-7. "καὶ κατὰ τοὺς ἰατρικοὺς ἤτοι ἐμφιλοσόφους νόμους, οἵ φασι μὴ ὅσιον εἶναι τὸ αἴτιον τῆς γεννήσεως ὑποβαίνειν τῷ γεννωμένῳ…"

[59] Konstantinos N. Sathas, *Μεσαιωνικὴ βιβλιοθήκη ἢ Συλλογὴ ἀνεκδότων μνημείων τῆς ἑλληνικῆς ἱστορίας* (Venice: Τύποις του φοινικός, 1876), Vol. V, pp.513-23 (hereafter, cited simply as Sathas).

by Keroularios himself shortly after their father had died sometime around 1044.[60] It is given the title "On Friendship" (Περὶ φιλίας), but, as one might anticipate in a letter addressed to two brothers, Psellos dwells for some time on the unique strength and nature of the sibling bond. The letter is predictably full of the same kinds of rhetorical *topoi* and metaphors for kinship that one finds in a large number of orations, poems, and even legal opinions concerning kinship or the family in one form or another. Where Psellos' letter gets interesting, however, is the nearly page and a half in Sathas' edition in which the famous polymath effectively summarizes Galen's treatise on the formation of fetuses. It forms a part of a longer rhetorical treatment of the nature of the sibling bond as something unique precisely because of the sibling's shared origins, in this case, sharing the same parents and having occupied the same womb. As Psellos says in the letter, he follows the principal that two or more things created from the same source share a similar disposition.[61]

After a typical, rhetorical introduction, Psellos quickly enters into a discussion of the nature of friendship and kinship (especially the bond of brotherhood) and the links between the two (ἀδελφικὴ φιλία, literally "brotherly love").[62] He marvels at the favor and friendship the brothers have shown him, despite the fact that he is not a relative of theirs.[63] As an additional form of praise for the brothers' harmonious attitudes to one another, Psellos cites a few examples (and counter-examples) of brotherly behavior. He dwells for some time on the good example set by Nikephoros and Constantine's father and his relationship with their uncle, the patriarch.

---

[60] Kenneth Snipes, "A Letter of Michael Psellus to Constantine the Nephew of Michael Cerularius," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 22 (1981), pp.89-107; Michael Psellos, "Ἐγκωμιαστικὸς εἰς τὸν μακαριώτατον πατριάρχην κῦρ Μιχαὴλ τὸν Κηρουλλάριον", in K.N. Sathas, *Μιχαὴλ Ψελλοῦ Ἐπιτάφιοι λόγοι εἰς τοὺς πατριάρχας Μιχαὴλ Κηρουλλάριον, Κωνσταντῖνον Λειχούδην καὶ Ἰωάννην Ξιφιλῖνον, Μεσαιωνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη Δ΄*, (Paris, 1874), 352-53.
[61] Sathas V, pp.516-17.
[62] Sathas V, p.514.
[63] Sathas V, pp.513-14.

Romulus makes an appearance as a negative model, though Cain and/or Abel do not receive a mention.[64] While some siblings find themselves at odds, "contravening nature," Nikephoros and Constantine are praiseworthy for living their adult lives as they had begun it, interconnected and harmonious.[65]

Psellos dwells for some time on a typically philosophical exposition of the shared nature of brothers, sharing as they do "the same root"[66] The closeness of siblings, Psellos argues, begins in the womb. As a result, Psellos sees fit to describe the process that leads to the creation of children in his exposition of the sibling bond. He tells his addressees that, if they'd like to know something about the nature of the origin of siblings, he'll oblige them.[67] What follows is brief account of the process of human reproduction that amounts to a rough summary of Galen's vision of the formation of the fetus.[68] After describing the process by which the different elements contributed by man and woman leads to the formation of a fetus, Psellos closes the section by claiming that he had "thus revealed the entire mystery of our birth."[69] In good rhetorical fashion, Psellos gives several additional appelations for this mystery. Interestingly, among the many

---

[64] Sathas V, p.521.

[65] Sathas V, pp.517-18. Ἔνιοι τῶν ἀδελφῶν διηρήκασι, καὶ τῆς φύσεως κατεψεύσαντο· ἀλλ'ὑμεῖς οἱ τῷ λόγῳ μᾶλλον τῶν ἄλλων κοσμούμενοι, τὸ διαπεπτωκὸς ἐπανορθοῦτε τῆς φύσεως, καὶ μετ'ἐπιστήμης ἀλλήλων ἐξαρτᾶσθε. Ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς αὔλακος τὸν πυρὸν οἱ γεωργήσαντες κομιζόμενοι, οὐ θαυμάζουσι τοῦ γένους τὴν ὁμοιότητα· τῆς τε γὰρ καταβολῆς τὸ διάφορον ἴσασι καὶ τὸ τῆς γεννησαμένης ἀπαράλλακτον γῆς·

[66] Sathas V, p.515. καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ τὴν ὑμετέραν ἀγαθὴν συμφυΐαν ὁμόθεν ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς ῥίζης ἀναβλαστήσασαν...

[67] Sathas v, p.517. It is noteworthy that Psellos introduces his description with the verb φυσιολογῶ, quite literally recalling the field of physiology. Εἰ βούλεσθε βραχύ τι τὴν γένεσιν ὑμῖν **φυσιολογήσω** τῆς φύσεως, ἵν'εἰδῆτε ἐκ ποίας ἑνώσεως οἱ πολλοί τῶν ἀδελφῶν διεστήκασι.

[68] Sathas V, p.517. σπέρμα πατρόθεν φερόμενον, καὶ παρὰ τῆς πρώτης ἡμῶν καὶ μετρῴας θηλῆς αἱματηρὸς καταχέων χυμὸς ὥς περ εἴς τι κοῖλον χωρίον τὸ τελευταῖον κύτος τοῦ μητρικοῦ σώματος, καὶ ἀλλήλω συμβεβηκότε, δημιουργεῖτον κοινῇ τὰ γεννώμενα· εἶτα τὸ σύμπαν γονούμενον καὶ θρομβούμενον καὶ οἷον σπαιρούμενον, ἀρτήματί τινι, χορίῳ οὕτω λεγομένῳ, τῇ βάσει προσῆπται τοῦ περιέχοντος, ἑτέρῳ τινὶ ἀγγείῳ ἐκ τῆς ὀμφαλιτιδος διατεινομένῳ μεσότητος, ταῖς κοτυληδοῦσι τῆς μήτρας διαπλάττεται· εἶτα δὴ ῥαγέντος τοῦ ἐπιπάγου, καὶ τῶν ὀργάνων ὑγρῶς τὰ πρῶτα συμμορφουμένων, δυσὶν ὑμέσι λεπτοῖς ὁρᾶται περιεχόμενον τὸ τικτόμενον, ἵνα τὴν ἁρμονίαν ἡ φύσις φυλάξη τοῖς μέλεσι καὶ μὴ διαχυθῇ τὰ ὄργανα ταῖς ὑγρότησιν, ἀλλὰ συμφύηται ταῖς ἑνότησι. cf. Diethard Nickel, ed. *Galen: Über die Ausformung der Keimlinge* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001) (Greek title: Γαλήνου Περὶ κυουμένων διαπλάσεως).

[69] Ibid. Τὸ σύμπαν οὖν μυστήριον τῆς ἡμετέρας γενέσεως, ἑνότης λόγου ἐστί, γενῶν συνάφεια, γενῶν ἀνάκρασις, διάπλασις σώματος, καὶ τὸ παρὰ τοῦ παντὸς γένους ἀπαιτούμενον τῆς κοινωνίας καὶ τῆς ὁμοφροσύνης ὄφλημα.

alternatives offered, the "mystery of birth" is described as the "combination of the *genē*" and the "mingling of the *genē*." Much of the rest of the letter is taken up by various metaphors praising the two brothers for their learning and their cooperation with each other. The former is certainly not surprising considering the two addressees had been tutored by Psellos himself.

Michael Psellos and Eustathios Romaios viewed the knowledge of the process by which conception occurs and the fetus is formed as indispensible in a deeper understanding of the true nature of the bond of kinship. For Eustathios and Michael Skribas, such knowledge was equally necessary to fully grasp the mechanics and theory underlying impediments to marriage based upon consanguinity. These authors sought an understanding of the nature and limits of shared blood not simply as an academic or rhetorical exercise. For them, consanguineous kinship, and even kinship in general, could not be understood without recourse to physiology and the workings not just of God, but also of nature. Patriarch Sisinnios was remembered for his special comprehension of the medical sciences not only as a way to further extol the virtues of a generally learned man, but because such knowledge granted additional weight to his legal pronouncements on impediments to marriage. Galenic medicine was not only widely read and discussed in tenth- through twelfth-century Byzantium, it was central to learned discussions surrounding numerous aspects of kinship and marriage, which played an important role in the social and cultural world in which these people lived.

Extent of Shared Blood and Varying Degrees

Eustathios Romaios' remarks in his *hypomnema* (legal opinion) of 1025,[70] in which he argues that the essence of the individual carried in the blood decreased with each successive degree of kinship separating two individuals (in this case, calculated for the purpose of marriage), suggest that the limits of the family as expressed in marriage impediments was also understood as the limits of shared blood. Even if there is not a one-to-one correspondence, Eustathios' writings strongly suggest that the bonds of shared blood were thought to be stronger among parents and children and siblings than among more distant relatives. Not all kinsmen, even kinsmen "by blood," were thought to share their blood to the same extent. This is supported by the use of "*homaimon*" among many Byzantines of roughly the same era, who tend to use the term solely for siblings, having as they did the same set of parents and earlier progenitors.

Letter 35 in Michael Italikos' surviving collection, recording an encounter between the author and one Alexios Komnenos sometime in the middle of the twelfth century,[71] suggests that the extent to which kinsmen shared the same blood was an active area of inquiry in the mid-twelfth century.[72] The letter first appeared in chapter one, where Italikos' assertion that "*genos* signifies someone's birth" was used as evidence to support the limitation of the *genos* to blood relatives.[73] As mentioned in that chapter, Italikos composed the letter in response to a specific request by one Alexios Komnenos, in which the latter had requested from Italikos some clarification about the origin and use of several Greek terms designating some form of kinship.

---

[70] Discussed in the previous chapter. Eustathios expressed the opinion that marriage between third cousins did not produce a "mingling of the blood" because he understood shared blood to decrease with each degree of kinship. See Ludwig Burgmann, "Turning Sisinnios against the Sisinnians: Eustathios Romaios on a Disputed Marriage," in *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, ed. Paul Magdalino (Leiden: Brill, 2003), p.170.

[71] The precise identity of this Alexios Komnenos is not known. It is certainly not the emperor, Alexios I. It may have been the eldest son of Anna Komnene and Nikephoros Bryennios, but this is not certain.

[72] Michael Italikos, Ep. 35, in *Michel Italikos: Lettres et discours*, ed. and trans. P. Gautier (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1972).

[73] See p.29.

Specifically, according to the title of the letter, Alexios wished to learn more about the term "*homaimon*." Unfortunately, Alexios' letter, if there ever was one, does not survive, and we are thus forced to look solely at Italikos' response to form our conclusions.

Upon reading Italikos' letter, it quickly becomes clear that he took great issue with the tendency for his contemporaries to utilize the term "*homaimon*" (and "*synaimos*") to refer only to siblings, probably reflecting his high level of education and familiarity with classical Greek literature. In fact, the extent of his annoyance is manifest in the opening lines of the letter. "Those who argue that the expression '*homaimon*' is only for siblings, just as others argue for [the term] '*homognios*,' seem to me to be novices in the Hellenic dialect."[74] Several lines later, he repeats himself. "Some unlearned people ascribe the term '*homaimon*' to [their] brother."[75] Italikos could hardly be clearer. He goes on to cite several examples from classical Greek literature to support his own conclusion, which he expresses as the following: "Hence all [ancient] Greeks called '*homaimoi*' not just brothers, but indeed [all] kinsmen, since they share in the same blood...the term '*homaimos*' extends to the entire *genos*....And so that I might express to you more generally, those relatives called ascendants, descendants, and collateral [kin] will all be termed '*homaimoi*.'"[76]

Italikos' breakdown of (consanguineous) kin into the categories of ascendants, descendants, and collateral kin perhaps suggests some level of familiarity with Byzantine marriage law, while his arguments taken as a whole quite obviously support the correlation

---

[74] Michael Italikos, Ep. 35, ed. Gautier, 35.215.1. Οἱ τὴν «ὁμαίμων» φωνὴν εἰς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ μόνον ἐκβιαζόμενοι, καθάπερ καὶ τὴν «ὁμόγνιος» ἕτεροι, δοκοῦσί μοι νεοτελεῖς εἶναι ταῖς Ἑλληνικαῖς διαλέκτοις.

[75] Michael Italikos, Ep. 35, ed. Gautier, 35.216.6-7. τὴν «ὁμαίμονος» λέξιν τε καὶ φωνὴν ἀμαθῶς τινες εἰς τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἐκλαμβάνονται

[76] Michael Italikos, Ep. 35, ed. Gautier, 35.217.1-4. Ἔνθεν τοι καὶ «ὁμαίμους» καλοῦσιν Ἕλληνες ἅπαντες οὐ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς συγγενεῖς, ὡς τοῦ αὐτοῦ κεκοινωνηκότας αἵματος.

between the *genos* and the "natural kinship" of Byzantine legal sources. He clearly makes the argument that "those of the same blood" should extend to the entire *genos*, even if many of his contemporaries disagreed. Hearkening back once again to Byzantine marriage law, as discussed in the previous chapter, his contemporaries' disagreement may perhaps have stemmed from an understanding of "shared blood" that included the concept of diminishing likeness as one moves outward in degrees of kinship (something like the interpretation of the "life of men" statement in eleventh-century debates over the seventh degree of consanguinity in marriage).[77]

Eleventh- and twelfth-century sources are full of uses of both "*homaimon*" and "*synaimos*" that correspond precisely to what Michael Italikos railed against. That is, a great many examples support the conclusion that these terms were being employed solely to indicate siblings (most often brothers).[78] Despite Italikos' protests, evidence overwhelmingly suggests that many of his contemporaries and near-comtemporaries understood blood to be shared amongst relatives (i.e. within the *genos*) according to degrees that decreased as relatives became more distant. In fact, this very idea, which was so influential in the eleventh-century debates over marriage impediments, was expressed as early as Aristotle. Aristotle argued that brothers love each other "by virtue of their having grown from the same sources." Following this model, Aristotle could describe how the bond between all blood relatives derived from this first bond between parents and children and siblings, even if "some of these [relatives] belong more closely while others are more distant, depending on whether the ancestral common sources are near or further off."[79] It is not difficult to see the influence of these ideas on the thought of Michael

---

[77] See chapter three, especially pp.140-57.
[78] *Skylitzes Continuatus*, ed. E.Th. Tsolakis. Ἡ Συνέχεια τῆς Χρονογραφίας τοῦ Ἰωάννου Σκυλίτση (Thessaloniki: Etaireia Makedonikon Spoudon, 1968), p.141 (*synaimos*).
[79] Ibid.

Psellos, as expressed in his letter to the nephews of Patriarch Michael Keroularios, or even on eleventh-century arguments about marriage impediments among consanguineous kin.[80]

One extant version of a *novella* issued by Emperor Romanos I Lekapenos offers a rare glimpse into the kinds of discussions (and misunderstandings) of the "mixing of blood" that seem to have been occurring in the mid-tenth century.[81] Initially issued in either 922 or 928, the *novella* in question was concerned primarily with the right of preemption (προτίμησις), that is, the right of certain individuals to purchase a given property before it is offered to the general public by virtue of his/her relationship to the seller.[82] One of the cornerstones of this piece of legislation was the right of kinsmen (*syggeneis*) who owned property immediately adjacent to or "combined with" the property to be sold. This latter concept is expressed in the legislation, literally, as "those kinsmen [who are] intermingled (ἀναμὶξ συγκειμένους συγγενεῖς).[83] What makes this particular version of the novella so interesting is the short commentary the follows this declaration. Romanos I (or a later copyist) feels the need to explain the concept of "intermingled kinsmen," apparently because of a certain degree of confusion. The reader is told that these "intermingled kinsmen" are simply those (close) relatives who jointly own a plot of land or other property with the seller in question, and not, as "some fools" would have you believe, those kinsmen with whom the seller's blood is somehow "mixed."[84] "For who, having learned his letters and familiar with our dialect [could have] the idea...that those who are called

---

[80] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII.1161a-1162b; Translation by C. Rowe, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[81] This particular version is found in the MS Cod. Paris. Gr. 1355. It has been edited and published as an appendix by Angeliki Laiou, *Mariage, amour et parenté à Byzance aux XIe-XIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1992), pp. 178-81.

[82] Eric McGeer, *The Land Legislation of the Macedonian Emperors* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2000), pp.37-48.

[83] Laiou, *Mariage, amour et parenté*, p.178. ...ὁ πωλῶν ὀφείλει προσκαλεῖσθαι εἰς τὴν τούτου ἀγορὰν πρῶτον τοὺς ἀναμὶξ συγκειμένους συγγενεῖς."

[84] Ibid.

'intertwined' or 'intermingled' are kinsmen through the mixing of the blood? For every person has his own blood, and the kinsman is not said to intermingle his blood (ἀναμιγῇ τὸ αἷμα) with [that of] his kinsman. Would that a Christian would not have received [the idea] to intermingle his blood with the blood of his kinsman. For those who do this are called 'blood-mixers' (αἱμομίκται) [i.e. incestuous] and it is forbidden. For an unrelated man and his unrelated wife intermingle (Ἀναμιγνύουσι) their blood. These, then are [relatives] of the first degree."[85] From here, the novella goes on to describe the list of relatives who might be eligible for preemption using the same schema of degrees of kinship familiar from marriage and inheritance law.

Either Romanos I or the copyist of this particular version of the *novella* is clearly reacting (rather strongly, in fact) to a trend that extended beyond one or two isolated cases. Reading Lekapenos' *novella* and Italikos' letter side-by-side, despite the fact that roughly two hundred years separated them, it appears that there was a consistent current among some Byzantine thinkers that experienced frustration at the ways in which "blood" was being imagined and used by at least some part of contemporary society. There seems to have been genuine interest in, and sometimes frustration with, concepts of the mixing of blood amongst kin and the degree to which blood was shared among relatives. One may see in these, admittedly small, bits of evidence a very real tendency among Byzantines of the period to understand the bond of consanguineous kinship and, thus, the *genos*, in such expressions.

---

[85] Laiou, *Mariage, amour et parenté*, p.179. "...Τίς γὰρ ποτε γράμματα μαθὼν καὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας διαλέκτου γινώσκων τὴν ἔννοιαν...ὅτι συμπεπλεγμένους ἐκάλεσεν ἢ ἀναμεμιγμένους τοὺς συγγενεῖς διὰ τὴν ἀναμιγὴν τοῦ αἵματος; Πᾶς γὰρ ἄνθρωπος ἴδιον αἷμα ἔχει, καὶ ὁ συγγενὴς πρὸς τὸν συγγενῆν οὐ λέγεται ἔχειν ἀναμεμιγμένον αἷμα. Εἴθε δὲ μηδὲ καταδέξηται χριστιανὸς ἵνα ἀναμιγῇ τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ μετὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ συγγενοῦς αὐτοῦ. Τοῦτο γὰρ οἱ ποιοῦντες καὶ αἱμομίκται εἰσὶ καὶ κολάζονται. Ἀναμιγνύουσι δὲ αἵματα αὐτῶν ὁ ξένος ἀνὴρ πρὸς ξένην κόρην. Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν εἰσὶ τὰ τοῦ πρώτου βαθμοῦ."

Traits Passed on through Blood

Having established, then, the particularly Byzantine understanding of human reproduction and its influence on ideas of shared blood and the nature of kinship, the next logical step is to determine the perceived consequences of these processes. That is, if degrees of shared blood and methods of understanding descent were so important to Byzantine writers of the tenth through twelfth centuries, what kinds of traits or characteristics were viewed as in-born or shared amongst those who shared the same or similar blood? This, too, has been suggested by Sahlins, who argues that not only can different societies assign radically different roles to the parental contribution in procreation, these radical differences can include variable understandings and even the conflation of "the child's inner being or outward appearance."[86] This observation is broadly consistent with analyses of the concept of nobility and purity of blood in medieval and early modern Europe, as well as with the medieval Byzantine evidence, which displays a consistent conflation, or at least lack of differentiation, of character or phenotypical traits with cultural, religious, and ethnic ones. While it would be impossible to piece together a comprehensive picture of the traits considered to be inheritable among Byzantine thinkers (even the idea of a monolithic, "Byzantine" understanding of this is probably a step too far), a perusal of surviving Byzantine sources does reveal some common tendencies and is not without merit.

The Byzantines of the tenth through twelfth centuries certainly recognized that children often resembled their parents, and this is reflected both in their written works and in Byzantine art. There was, after all, a long history of using apparent "family resemblances" in Roman

---

[86] Sahlins, *What Kinship Is--And Is Not*, pp.86-7. "...the different cultural discourses of procreation are highly variable as concerns the substantive relations of parents and their offspring...Then again, the parental bestowals may constitute the child's inner being or outward appearance, and they may entail a collective or an individual identity. Not to mention the important conveyances of spiritual third parties...Clearly human birth is a semiotic function of a kinship order, rather than kinship a biological sequitur of birth."

imperial portraiture to visually reinforce claims to legitimacy by associating the new emperor's features with those of his predecessor, even if the two of them had no biological relation.[87] Theories about the resemblance of children to their parents, related to the concept of "like producing like," had a long history in Greek, Roman, and Byzantine literature, especially philosophy. Aristotle thought that "parents love children as being themselves" because, he argues "those sprung from them are as it were other selves of theirs."[88]

In the fourth century, St. Basil of Caesarea, in a treatise covering the story of creation (in the form of a Hexameron), also covers the theme of "like produces like." He explains how "each generation of descent retains its similarity equally, the same, until it arrives at a fixed end. It makes a horse succeed a horse, a lion a lion, and an eagle an eagle...For no space of time is able to change the properties of animals, but, as if made new, nature thus freshly moves forward with time."[89] A remarkably similar sentiment is repeated by Kekaumenos, the author of a late eleventh-century book of advice, who tells his sons that "a man pretending to extol you, but condemning your father, dishonors you. For a lion gives birth to a lion, and a fox births a fox."[90]

Genealogies surviving from Byzantium in any period, including the three centuries covered here, are relatively rare. While the sources, especially from the mid-eleventh century onward, display a keen interest in describing family ties among individuals and frequently include notes about individual ancestry, these descriptions rarely go beyond two or three

---

[87] James D. Breckenridge, *Likeness: A Conceptual History of Ancient Portraiture* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968); Diana E.E. Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992). The classic case is Tiberius' manufactured likeness to Augustus, even though the two were not blood relatives.

[88] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII.1161a-1162b.

[89] Migne, *PG* 30, col. 959; Epstein, *The Medieval Discovery of Nature*, p.82. The translation is Epstein's.

[90] Kekaumenos, 128: ὁ ὑποκρινόμενος ἐκθειάζειν σε, ψέγων δὲ τὸν πατέρα σου, σὲ αὐτὸν ἀτιμάζει· ὁ γὰρ λέων λέοντα γεννᾷ καὶ ἡ ἀλώπηξ ἀλώπεκα. Interestingly, Kekaumenos is later insistent that nobility (εὐγένεια) was a quality displayed in one's actions rather than an inherited trait, and he explicitly states that "low birth" should have no effect on an individual's nobility.

generations.[91] Those so-called genealogies that do survive tend to focus on a single person's (usually a man's) parents, one or both of his grandfathers, and perhaps a smattering of names of famous members of the subject's more distant ancestors. Such works are distinctly "ego-oriented," and the focus is generally on building up their subject's reputation based upon the deeds or personalities of their ancestors, rather than attempts at faithful recordings of family trees.[92]

Even a cursory perusal of Byzantine sources reveals a number of traits, both behavioral and physical, that were deemed heritable from one's parents or ancestors. The same letter written by Psellos to the nephews of Patriarch Michael Keroularios (described above) contains a short list of physical traits that Psellos describes as typically shared by siblings. He lists the eyes, nose, brow, "and such things even unto their hands and feet" as outward indicators of the shared nature (ἑνὸς φύσεως) among siblings.[93] He tells of the similarities of the size and shape of the eyes among children of the same parents, of the way in which the ears are attached to the temple, of the nostrils, and of the shape of the elbow joint.[94] For Psellos, these physical traits act as reminders that those sharing the same parents (or the same "roots") also share similarities in their character and even their souls.

In his encomium for his mother, Psellos offers a description of his sister that might be taken as typical, especially in genres of rhetoric like encomia. He describes how nature "modeled my sister on the image of my mother so that she might have, even if the prototype were lost, a

---

[91] Évelyne Patlagean, *Un Moyen Âge grec: Byzance IXe-XVe siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2007), p.140.
[92] Because of their focus on individual and collective reputation, these genealogies are discussed more fully in chapter five.
[93] Psellos, Ep. 108, ed. Sathas, V, p.516.
[94] Psellos, Ep. 108, ed. Sathas, V, p.516. "τοῖν τε γὰρ ὀφθαλμοῖν ἶσον τὸ μέγεθος, καὶ τὸ χρῶμα ὅμοιον, κατὰ ταὐτὸ δὲ καὶ τὰ ὦτα τοῖς κροτάφοις συμπέπλασται, καὶ τὰ πτερύγια τῶν ῥινῶν ἀνεῴγασι, καὶ οἱ ἀγκῶνες συνήρθρωνται..."

faithful likeness."[95] Such imagery, especially the idea of a child as the "image" or "likeness" of

his/her parent, had long history in the Byzantine and even Greco-Roman tradition. Several

patristic authors of late antiquity utilized just this kind of language in their discussions of the

place of sexuality and even marriage within the emerging Christian worldview(s).[96] In his

Chronographia, Psellos tells his readers that "According to the historians, this man Bardas

[Phokas] reminded people of his uncle, the Emperor Nicephorus, for he was always wrapped in

gloom, and watchful, capable of foreseeing all eventualities, of comprehending everything at a

glance...he was thoroughly versed in every type of siege warfare...In the matter of physical

prowess, moreover, Bardas was more energetic and virile than Sclerus [his rival]."[97] Elsewhere

in the text, one learns that the *doux* John Komnenos "inherited courageous spirit from a long line

of ancestors."[98]

Michael Attaleiates famously asserted that Nikephoros III Botaneiates (r. 1078-81) was,

in fact, a descendant of the well-known *genos* of Phokas. The claim was almost certainly

spurious, and Attaleiates himself appears aware of this fact and anticipates some doubts. He thus

supports his claim by citing a personal experience he had on the island of Crete, which had been

re-conquered for the empire by the future emperor Nikephoros (II) Phokas in 961. "When I

visited the island [Crete], I saw the image myself [of Nikephoros II Phokas in the Church of the

Theotokos called of the Magistros], which in all ways resembles the aforementioned emperor,

the lord Nikephoros Botaneiates, perfect proof that he is in fact the descendant of that man."[99]

---

[95] Anthony Kaldellis, ed. and trans., *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters: The Byzantine Family of Michael Psellos* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2006), p.58 (4c in the encomium).
[96] See, for example, John Chrysostom's comments in J.-P. Migne, ed., *PG* 51, p.213.
[97] Michael Psellos, *Chronographia* 1.7, trans. E.R.A. Sewter, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers: The Chronographia of Michael Psellus* (London: Penguin, 1966), p.31.
[98] Psellos, *Chronographia* 7.22, trans. Sewter, p.288.
[99] Michael Attaleiates, *History*, 28.7, ed. and trans. Anthony Kaldellis and Dimitris Krallis, *The History: Michael Attaleiates* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2012), pp.416-17.

This same anxiety to authenticate his claims appears later in the same book, when Attaleiates includes a reference to "an old book" that he had, so the reader is told, personally viewed in the construction of his genealogy of Botaneiates and the Phokades.[100] Significantly, Attaleiates thought that the physical resemblance of Botaneiates with the apparently life-like statue of Phokas would be enough to support his claim and quiet those who might doubt him.

John Skylitzes (re)tells the story of one Theophobos, who was reportedly the bastard son of a member of the "Persian" royal family conceived while the latter had been sojourning in Constantinople, was recognized by "the Persian council of elders" as of royal descent. "He was made known to and recognised by them not only by his features but also by the characteristics of his body and soul."[101] In an imperial oration dedicated to Manuel I Komnenos, written by Michael Italikos and probably delivered in 1143, Michael Italikos describes how Manuel has "the qualities of [his] father, notably his vigilance and energy."[102]

Anna Komnene displays a constant concern to describe the family and ancestry of many of the characters that appear in her *Alexiad*, a narrative history glorifying the life of her father, Alexios I Komnenos, and the text is thus is replete with references to inherited traits. So, for instance, she describes Bohemond, the Norman prince of Antioch, as "resembl[ing] his father in all respects, in daring, strength, and aristocratic and indomitable spirit. In short, Bohemond was the exact replica and living image of his father."[103] Much later in her narrative, Anna has another Latin noble point out how Bohemond had inherited "perjury and guile from [his] ancestors."[104]

---

[100] For more on this, see chapter five.
[101] Skylitzes, *Synopsis of histories*, 4.15, trans. Wortley, pp.67-8. This portion of the text tells the story of a Persian revolt against the Abbasid Caliphate during the reign of Theophilos (r. 829-42).
[102] Gautier, ed. *Michel Italikos: Lettres et discours*, p.294. The oration is no. 44 in the collection.
[103] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, 1.14, trans. E.R.A. Sewter, *Anna Comnena: The Alexiad* (London: Penguin, 1969), p.66.
[104] *Alexiad* 10.11, trans. Sewter, p.330.

Anna even describes her own ancestry, however briefly, in the text. When speaking of her parents, Alexios and Eirene, Anna describes how "a baby girl was born to them, who resembled her father, so they said, in all respects." Again, "...When a second daughter was born, very like her parents and at the same time showing clear signs of the virtue and wisdom which were to distinguish her in later years, they longed for a son and he became the object of their prayers."[105] At another point, Anna describes Isaac Komnenos, Alexios I's brother, as "in word and deed a true aristocrat, in many ways recalling my own father."[106] Speaking of the gout her father suffered later in life, Anna Komnene tries to understand its underlying causes. "This malady had afflicted none of his ancestors, so that it was certainly not an inherited disease."[107] The members of the imperial dynasty of the Komnenoi themselves were known for their swarthy skin color, something that is perhaps attested in some surviving portraits of Alexios I and his son and grandson.[108]

The heritable trait that has received the most attention from modern scholars is, of course, the concept of "nobility" (εὐγένεια). The idea of nobility by birth (or "by blood") was not an invention of the tenth or eleventh century, even if it does appear in the sources with much greater frequency at this time, especially after the 1040s and 1050s.[109] It would be inappropriate to address this phenomenon completely, a full analysis of which would take up more space than has been allotted here. The Byzantine concept of nobility is a difficult one to define, and even in the

---

[105] *Alexiad* 6.8, trans. Sewter, pp.196-97.
[106] *Alexiad* 2.1, trans. Sewter, p.74.
[107] *Alexiad* 14.4, trans. Sewter, p.449.
[108] See MS Vat. gr. 1176, in which Manuel Komnenos is pictured next to Maria of Antioch. Manuel appears noticeably darker than Maria. The image is reproduced on the front cover of Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[109] See Vasiliki Vlysidou, Αριστοκρατικές οικογένειες καί εξουσία (9ος-10ος αι.): Έρευνες πάνω στα διαδοχικά στάδια αντιμετώπισης της αρμενο-παφλαγονικής και της καππαδοκικής αριστοκρατίας (Thessaloniki: Ekdoseis Vanias, 2001), p.25.

eleventh or twelfth century, nobility could be as much about personal comportment or individual action as it was about illustrious descent, sometimes even in works by the same author.[110] For the purposes of this chapter, it is enough to point out that, following the Byzantine sources, nobility was not only understood to be inherited from one's parents or ancestors, it was literally carried "in the blood," as was, among other things, courage, strength, wisdom, wit, and even martial prowess.

A large number of physical and character traits, some specific, others more general, can be identified in the Byzantine sources as being considered heritable, but there is little indication that these sources thought to differentiate between those that could be inherited from one's mother or (only) from one's father. Women tend to be compared to their mothers or other female relatives, while men are compared to other men (though numerous exceptions to this general rule exist, as in the example of Anna Komnene above). This is not surprising, especially considering Byzantine values that were so gender-specific. It can be difficult, if not impossible, to differentiate between rhetorical devices meant to praise an individual by comparing him or her to famous ancestors and those comments meant to be understood as commentaries on biological inheritance, but the exercise is still worthwhile and deserves a more thorough investigation in the future. What is clear is that inherited qualities were highly valued and moved hand-in-hand with an increased emphasis on individual lineage/ancestry as a marker of personal virtue and social standing. Yet, the problem of the supposed imperfection of female descent expressed in Zonaras'

---

[110] Kekaumenos and Attaleiates are classic examples of this. Attaleiates, for example, praises Nikephoros Botaneiates' supposed ancestors for the noble deeds, which, he claims, were the natural result of their in-born nobility. "Nonetheless, their nobility and love of glory was not simply a function of the family's prominence (τῇ τοῦ γένους...ἐπισημότητι); rather, it stemmed also from the exceeding splendor of their actions for, through their innate virtue, magnanimity, and courage, they delivered Rome from many a dire situation and nearly inescapable dangers." Attaleiates, *History*, 27.8, ed. and trans. Kaldellis and Krallis, pp.396-99.

history remains. For that, let us turn now to concepts of purity and pollution in Byzantine reckonings of descent.

Contested Kinship and the Language of "Mixed" Descent

Byzantine literature is, in fact, full of references both to "pure" and, especially, to "mixed" descent, even if the precise meaning of the adjectives or their particular significance is not always clear. Thus, we find in the pages of Procopius' *The Wars* the following statement regarding the nation of the Rugi, who found themselves in Procopius' lifetime living and fighting alongside the Goths. "But since they [the Rugi] had absolutely no intercourse with women other than their own, each successive generation of children was of unmixed blood, and thus they had preserved the name of their nation among themselves."[111]

A similar idea is expressed in the so-called *Vita Basilii*, an account of Emperor Basil I's life composed by or at least during the reign of his grandson, Constantine VII.[112] The author claims that Emperor Basil I, despite his well-known, humble origins as a peasant farmer in Macedonia, was in fact descended both from the ancient Arsacid dynasty of Armenia and a close relative of Emperor Constantine I. In order to boost the effect that this claim might have on opinions of Basil himself, the author tells his readers that Basil's ancestors, after they had relocated to the Macedonian countryside, "protected their ancestral nobility and maintained

---

[111] Procopius, *History of The Wars* 7.2.2-3.
[112] The book survives as part of the chronicle usually referred to as *Theophanes Continuatus*. It is well-known to Byzantine scholars, in part because of the legendary genealogy of Basil it contains. For more on this account, see the next chapter of this dissertation.

221

[their] *genos* unmixed."[113] John Tzetzes, who wrote an autobiographical poem in the mid-twelfth century, claims that he is "pure Greek" on his father's side.[114] Such claims cannot be said to have been common, even in the twelfth century, but they could nevertheless be made.

Anna Komnene employs both the concept of purity of decent and "half-breed" (μιξοβάρβαρος) several times throughout the *Alexiad*.[115] A century earlier, Psellos, in his letter to the nephews of Patriarch Keroularios, mentions how many were "accustomed to laugh" when one child was born to a couple with "bluish-gray" eyes, while another born to the same parents displayed lighter grey or black eyes or if they differed significantly in the placement of the eyes on the face. According to Psellos, even if this was considered to be some kind of portent, still "we call such [children] half-castes (ἡμιγενεῖς)."[116] From the mid-eleventh century, sources begin to describe those who lived in areas affected by the loss of imperial territory to foreign invaders, especially the Seljuq Turks, as "*mixobarbaroi*."[117] While such words sometimes appear without any judgment, in many cases such appellations carried with them distinct cultural references, many of them negative.

---

[113] *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Immanuel Bekker, *Theophanes continuatus, Ioannes Caminiata, Symeon Magister, Georgius Monachus continuatus*. CSHB 33 (Bonn, 1838), V, p.215, line 20. τὴν πάτριον εὐγένειαν διασώζοντες καὶ ἀσύγχυτον τὸ γένος διαφυλάττοντες.

[114] Tzetzes claims (both in his title and in the last line of his autobiographical poem) that, on his father's side, he was a "pure Greek" (κατὰ δὲ πατέρα καθαρῶς Ἑλλάδος γονῆς in the title, καὶ τὸν αὐτοῦ πατέρα, γονῆς Ἑλλάδος καθαρᾶς, γονῆς ἀκαιφνεστάτης in lines 629-30). See J. Gautier, "La curieuse ascendance de Jean Tzetzès," *REB* 28 (1970), pp.209-11. On his mother's side, Tzetzes claims Abasgian/Iberian ancestry (interestingly, he repeats that the two peoples are one *genos*, but then ranks them within that *genos*; Iberians are first in rank, Abasgians come in second).

[115] *Alexiad* 7.9, trans. Sewter, pp.238-39. "A certain half-caste" who knew the "Scythian language" is mentioned twice. At 15.5 (trans. Sewter, p.485), Anna again uses the term "half-breeds," this time for Turks with at least one Greek/Roman forbear. In all, the term "mixobarbaros" (μιξοβάρβαρος) appears eleven times in the narrative. Elsewhere (10.10), she has a Frank declare himself "pure Frank" (καθαρὸς Φράγγος).

[116] Sathas, V, p.516. καὶ μέντοι καὶ γελᾶν εἴθαμεν, ὅταν τῷ τὸν μὲν τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἴδωμεν χαροπόν, ὑπόγλαυκον δὲ τὸν ἄλλον ἢ μέλανα, κἂν εἴ τῳ ἡ μὲν τῶν ὀφρύων ἄνω που τέταται, ἢ ἐπὶ τὸ βλέφαρον κάθηται, μετὰ τῶν τεράτων τοῦτο τιθέαμεν, καὶ ἡμιγενεῖς τοὺς οὕτως ἔχοντας ὀνομάζομεν.

[117] Jean-Claude Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996), p.380. This appellation was even directed at those still technically living in areas controlled by the Byzantine government.

There is certainly evidence that Byzantine writers increasingly took an interest in specifying the precise relationship of individuals with their relatives and/or ancestors. Narratives of the later eleventh and, especially, the twelfth century often give much fuller descriptions of the family relations of their actors than do their counterparts composed in previous periods. These descriptions not uncommonly include differentiating between relatives on the father's or mother's side (typically πάτροθεν or μήτροθεν, respectively). In the history covering the reigns of John II and Manuel I Komnenos written by John Kinnamos at the end of the twelfth century, for example, indications that individuals were related to others "on the father's side" are especially common.[118] This phenomenon coincides with the increasing use of surnames as they appear in sources of all kinds, as well as what Patlagean has observed to be a broader and more specialized vocabulary for kinship in general.[119] It appears that Byzantine writers in the late eleventh and, especially, twelfth century were becoming increasingly concerned not only to record an individual's *genos* and, with it, their family connections to contemporaries or ancestors, but also the precise way in which such individuals were related to or descended from others. This could indeed have implications for our interpretation of Zonaras' criticism of Constantine X, though exactly how remains an open question.

The language used by Zonaras in the passage quoted at the beginning of the chapter is informative. The verb employed by Zonaras to indicate "adulterated," κεκιβδηλευμένην, also carried with it connotations of falsehood, spuriousness, and even that which is forbidden.[120] It is a rather uncommon verb in the medieval Byzantine lexicon, and when it does appear, it is usually

---

[118] For example, John Kinnamos, *History*, 2.2, 4, and 7, ed. A. Meineke, *Ioannis Cinnami epitome rerum ab Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis gestarum* (Bonn: Weber, 1836), pp.32, 37, 53.
[119] Évelyne Patlagean, "Families and Kinships in Byzantium," p.472. For more on this phenomenon, see especially chapter five of this dissertation.
[120] Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, p.753; Trapp, *LBG*, p.830.

in a religious context and is used to describe the doctrine of heretics.[121] "Mixing," however, is a much more common concept in Byzantine sources concerning kinship. It could have either positive or negative connotations, depending on the circumstances and the specific language used. The use of *epimixia* (ἐπιμιξία), as in Zonaras' case, was distinctly negative in most cases.

In the Tome of Sisinnios, the patriarch uses the concept of "mixing" and "intermingling" in reference to incest. He claims that marriage practices in ancient Israel fostered an environment in which incest (described using the term "*epimixia*," ἐπιμιξίαν) was endemic.[122] Further along, Sisinnios argues that it was imperative that Christians "fear very much the marital mixing and intertwining [i.e. intercourse] with one another. For it is never permitted that [a man] approach his own flesh, because of the perturbation and intermingling of the *genos*."[123] Just prior to this, Sisinnios cites the passage that the two will become one flesh, thus stressing the real strength of the bond created by marriage. He gives it this added weight by equating it with kinship "by *genos*" (οἱ κατὰ γένος προσήκοντες ἑκατέροις). In this instance, *epimixia* is associated with incest. Michael Keroularios himself uses the phrase "the mixing of blood" (ἡ ἐπιμιξία τοῦ αἵματος) in reference to incest several times in his opinions regarding the debates over the extension of marriage impediments in the mid-eleventh century.[124]

---

[121] For example, the verb is used in one of Eustathios of Thessaloniki's letters to describe heretics. They appear as "foreigners to the truth" and "falsifiers/adulterers of the pure message" (τὸ τῆς ἀγγελίας κιβδηλεύουσι καθαρόν) Ep. 45, lines 43 and 45. The text is found in F. Kolovou, *Die Briefe des Eustathios von Thessalonike. Beiträge zur Altertumskunde* 239 (Munich-Leipzig: K.G. Saur, 2006).

[122] Rhalles and Potles V, p.13. Πάλαι μὲν γὰρ τῷ Ἰσραὴλ, σφραγίδα λαχόντι Θεοῦ τὴν περιτομὴν, κατ'οἰκείαν ἑκάστῳ φυλὴν τὰ τοῦ γάμου ἐπρυτανεύετο, ἀποκλείοντος τοῦ νομοθέτου τὴν τῶν ἐθνῶν πρὸς τοῦτον ἐπιμιξίαν, καὶ οἷον ἀνάκρασιν· γένει δὲ τὴν τοῦ γένους οἰκείωσιν δεξιουμένῳ, ἡ πρὸς τοῦτο τοῦ γάμου ὁδὸς ἀναφερομένη καὶ ἀναπλεκομένη.

[123] Rhalles and Potles V, p.16. ὡς ἐπάναγκες εἶναι τούτοις εὐλαβεῖσθαι καὶ δεδιέναι σφαλερὰν τὴν εἰς ἀλλήλους γαμικὴν ἐπιμιξίαν καὶ συμπλοκήν· οὐ γὰρ ἐνὸν εἰσιέναι πρὸς πάντα οἰκεῖον σαρκός, διὰ τὰς συνθολώσεις καὶ συγχύσεις τοῦ γένους. The injunction against a man approaching his own flesh is, of course, biblical.

[124] Rhalles and Potles V, pp.40ff.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, incestl was typically called "blood-mixing" (αἱμομιξία) in secular and canon law. In the *Basilika*, parents in a sexual relationship with their children or siblings in a similar situation are called "blood-mixers" (αἱμομίκται) and face the penalty of death. More distant consanguineous kin who are caught in illicit sexual relationships are neither faced with capital punishment, nor are they described as "blood mixers."[125]

Beyond such references in the legal and theological literature, many other sources record a similar use of the concept of "mixed" descent, often as a form of denigration. Basil "the Nothos" ("bastard"), illegitimate son of Emperor Romanos Lekapenos and eunuch, is described by Leo the Deacon in just such a way. Leo states that "since he was of mixed race (τὸ γένος ἔχων ἐπίμικτον), he was energetic and most resourceful in carrying out every idea that occurred to him."[126] Leo's assertion of Basil's "mixed race" seems to have been motivated by the fact that his mother was a "Scythian," rather than his illegitimacy or status as a eunuch. Yet while Zonaras' language might have several precedents in Byzantine literature, none of the examples given address his apparent issue with descent through the female line. For that, a brief look at descriptions of female descent in other sources may be helpful.

Genealogies of Women and Descent in the Female Line

Byzantine society has long been regarded as largely free of the dominance of patrilineal descent and primogeniture frequently associated with medieval Europe. In the words of Angeliki Laiou, "the aristocracy from the eleventh century onward and until the end of the empire, women

---

[125] *Basilika* 60.37.75. This statute was cited, among others, by Michael Skribas in mid-eleventh century.
[126] Leo the Deacon, *History*, 47.1-2. τὸ παριστάμενον αὐτῷ εἰς ἔργον ἐξενεγκεῖν προμηθέστατος, ἄτε τὸ γένος ἔχων ἐπίμικτον

were transmitters of both lineage and property, and the Byzantine family of at least this segment of society was equal in terms of gender."[127] However, though Byzantine law favored equitable, bilateral inheritance and family names could be inherited through the maternal, female line as easily as through the paternal, there is still considerable disagreement among scholars concerning the role of gender in the Byzantine reckoning of descent. While Laiou's opinion is expressed clearly and concisely in the sentence above, she did recognize that from at least the ninth century until the beginning of the eleventh, the largely military character of provincial aristocracy seems to have given certain preference to male ancestors and descendants.[128] Pâris Gounaridis, on the other hand, more recently argued that patrilinear descent seems to have played an especially important role in the construction of elite genealogies and that relationships by marriage with imperial dynasties seemed to have mattered more if they were on the paternal side.[129] Indeed, modern scholarship on Byzantium is full of instances in which scholars have assumed that male-line heredity was the primary means of reproducing one's *genos*.[130] Such claims are not entirely without support in the Byzantine sources.

Michel Psellos, for example, claims that Constantine IX Monomachos was "the last scion of the ancient family of the Monomachi in the male line."[131] According to Michael Psellos, the

---

[127] Laiou, "Family Structure and the Transmission of Property," in *A Social History of Byzantium*, ed. John Haldon (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p.59.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Pâris Gounaridis, "Constitution d'une généalogie à Byzance," in *Parenté et société dans le monde grec de l'Antiquité à l'âge moderne*. Colloque international, Volos (Grèce), 19-20-21 Juin 2003 (published 2006), p.277. "La descendance patrilinéaire semble être une règle importante pour la constitution d'une généalogie. L'accumulation des liens matrimoniaux avec l'empereur donne de l'autorité à la famille et, d'une certaine façon, constitue un titre de noblesse...Dans ces alliances, ce qui compte surtout est le fait qu'elles sont du côté du lignage paternel. Ainsi, il dit que dans sa généalogie il ne prendra pas en considération son lignage maternel bien qu'il soit clairement impérial (σαφῶς βασιλικόν)." Gounaridis is here speaking of the genealogy of George Palaiologos.

[130] E.g. Paul Magdalino, "Byzantine Snobbery" in *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX-XIII Centuries*, ed. Michael Angold (Oxford: BAR International Series, 1984), p.64. "The role of the Comnenian clan as the nobility survived the failure of the male Comnenian line of emperors."

[131] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 6.14, trans. Sewter, pp.161-62.

Macedonian dynasty (which he calls the "*genos* of the Porphyrogeniti) went extinct at the death of Constantine VIII in 1028.[132] This contrasts with the usual practice among modern historians, who tend to calculate the end of the dynasty at the death of the empress Theodora in 1056. Theodora ruled the empire on her own for nearly two years and had earlier reigned jointly with her sister, Eirene. Psellos is known to have had a low opinion of Theodora, even if he did recognize her "legal claim to power" because of her status as the daughter of Constantine VIII.[133] This might be compared to Michael Attaleiates' description of the demise of Emperor Michael V, which we first encountered in chapter one. As demonstrated there, Attaleiates describes the downfall of Michael's "entire *genos*," yet only males are indicated.[134]

Male and female heirs have been shown to be treated quite differently from each other in a *praktikon* of 1073, which records a gift of land from Emperor Michael VII Doukas to Andronikos Doukas.[135] Litavrin has demonstrated that the author of the document consistently favors males as heads of household and that "order of succession was based primarily on the principle of lineal descent: from grandfather to father to son to grandson." There is not a single case in the *praktikon* in which a collateral relative, even a man, would have inherited control of a household. The document is written following the norms and aims of the imperial financial administration, and the individuals and households recorded in it were not members of the social elite, yet it is nevertheless an important attestation of agnatic, linear inheritance in eleventh-century Byzantium.

---

[132] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 7.53, trans. Sewter, p.308.

[133] Barbara Hill, "Imperial Women and the Ideology of Womanhood in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," in *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*, ed. Liz James (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p.94.

[134] Michael Attaleiates, *History*, 4.3, ed. and trans. Kaldellis and Krallis, pp.16-20. "...τοὺς δὲ λοιποὺς ἀκμῆτας καὶ τὸν ἴουλον ἐπανθοῦντας, οὓς δὲ καὶ προσήβους, ἐκτομίας ἀπεργασάμενος· καὶ τὸ γένος αὐτοῦ τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον καταστρέψας..."

[135] Gennadij Litavrin, "Family Relations and Family Law in the Byzantine Countryside of the Eleventh Century: An Analysis of the Praktikon of 1073," *DOP* 44 (1990), p.189.

Despite such evidence, however, it is also clear that Byzantine authors had little problem praising a man's ancestors on either side of his family. Perhaps the most relevant example is Michael Psellos' praise for Constantine X's ancestors. According to Psellos, "His family, as far back as his great-grandfathers, had been both distinguished and affluent, the kind of persons historians record in their works. Certain it is that to this very day the names of the celebrated Andronicus, of Constantine, of Pantherius, are on everybody's lips - all relatives of his, some on the paternal, others on the mother's, side. His immediate ancestors were no less prominent."[136] Again, at a different point in the narrative, Psellos repeats his praises. "His lineage, therefore, was enough to cover the man with glory..."[137] Even Constantine's wife is praised for her noble lineage. "His wife was herself a member of a famous family (she was the daughter of the great Constantine Dalassenus, a man well known throughout the civilized world for his strength) and she was a lady of much beauty."[138]

Not only does Michael Psellos include the maternal line (even if primarily males are named) in his praise of Constantine X's ancestry, he also has no problem admitting that his own mother's ancestors were much more illustrious than those of his father.[139] The same is true of his own wife. In his funerary oration for his daughter, Styliane, who had died tragically young, Psellos says "she was descended from high nobility on her mother's side; drops of imperial blood flowed in her veins or, rather, of ancestors who were closely related to emperors and registered

---

[136] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 7.6, trans. Sewter, p.333.
[137] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 7.83-4, trans. Sewter, p.326.
[138] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 7.6, trans. Sewter, p.333.
[139] Psellos, "Encomium for his mother," 2a-4b, trans. Anthony Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters*, pp.52-7.

as the fathers of emperors and joined to them by marriage; it was from them that she received the brilliance of her ancestry, deriving it through natural participation."[140]

Like in this example, Byzantine sources throughout the period in question tended to specify on which side of the family relations existed. References to ancestors on the mother's side are not uncommon, though they rarely appear without being accompanied by a reference to those on the father's side. Hence, on a twelfth-century lead seal belonging to one John Kontostephanos Komnenos, the owner is described as "Kontostephanos on [his] father's side, Komnenos on [his] mother's."[141] In cases in which no distinction is made, the male line is typically (but not universally) meant.

Generalizations like these primarily take into account the ancestry given by the sources for male individuals, as the vast majority of cases deal with men. There are, however, a few instances in which one can glimpse women offering their own depictions of themselves and their ancestry.

Anna Komnene describes her parents in the introduction (*prooemium*) to her (now lost) last will and testament. She describes them "My father was Alexios Komnenos, that most illustrious emperor of the Roman people, whose trophies, deeds of prowess, and stratagems against the surrounding barbarians "the entire world itself could not contain" (to speak in the words of the divine voice). Eirene was my mother, the great joy and adornment of kingship; a scion of the Doukai family, she illumined the entire earth under the sun with her virtues. No one

---

[140] Michael Psellos, "Funeral Oration for his daughter Styliane, who died before the age of marriage," §5, trans. Kaldellis, *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters*, p.119.
[141] Seal No.119 (Zacos-Veglery 2724, housed in Basel) in Nicolas Oikonomidès, *A Collection of Dated Lead Seals* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1986), pp.113-14. John Kontostephanos Komnenos (ca.1162, 1166); Inscription on both sides (no image): Κοντοστέφανος Ἰωάννης πατρόθεν ταῦτα σφραγίζι Κομνηνὸς δὲ μητρόθεν.

among men could rival her in any respect."[142] Anna does not give any additional commentary on her ancestry. Her focus is squarely on her parents. In yet another will, this one from the last decade of the eleventh century, Kale Basilakina, wife of Symbatios Pakourianos, stresses her connection to her father and his *genos* above other relations. When she introduces herself, she names her father before her mother and includes her father's title, *kouropalates*.[143] In both of these cases, even women acting on their own behalf seem inclined to emphasize their fathers over and above their mothers, even if both are named.

The *typikon* for the monastery of the Theotokos Kecharitomene, founded sometime between 1110 and 1116 by Eirene Doukaina, offers an interesting counter-example to the male-focused genealogies discussed above.[144] Eirene ensured that the monastery, which housed only female nuns, would remain in the control of female members of her family. She stipulates that, upon her death, control would pass to her eldest daughter, Anna Komnene. After Anna, it was to pass to her other *porphyrogennete* daughter, Maria along with Eirene's granddaughter, also named Eirene Doukaina, daughter of Anna. If these ladies should die, it should pass to the other daughter of Anna or to a granddaughter or great-granddaughter and so on "for my majesty wishes her daughters and granddaughters and great-granddaughters and so on, as long as the female line continues, to oversee the convent of my Mother of God Kecharitomene, the one who is eldest."[145] If this direct line of descendents were to fail, Eirene wanted the foundation to pass

---

[142] Stratis Papaioannou, "Anna Komnene's Will," in *Byzantine Religious Culture: Studies in Honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*, ed. by Denis Sullivan, Elizabeth Fisher, and Stratis Papaioannou (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012), p.105. The translation is Papaioannou's.

[143] *Actes d'Iviron Vol. II: du milieu du XIe siècle à 1204*, ed. Jacques Lefort, Nicolas Oikonomides, Denise Papachryssanthou (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1990), no. 187. Kale and her will are discussed more fully in the following chapter.

[144] Paul Gautier, "Le typikon de le Théotokos Kécharitôménè," *REB* 43 (1985), pp.5-165; John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero, eds. *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*. Volume 2 (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), pp.649-724 (no. 27).

[145] Thomas and Hero, *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*. Vol. 2, pp.709-10 (Translation by Robert Jordan).

into the hands of one of her or her daughter's daughters-in-law, specifically the one married to the oldest male descendant.[146] If all of these should fail, Eirene asks that the nuns in the convent choose as their head "the lady from [among] the most distinguished of our [Eirene's] family (*genos*)."[147]

The convent of Kecharitomene was designed by its founder to act as a kind of inheritance for the female members of her family. Eirene shows a clear preference for linear inheritance (from mother to daughter) and prefers elder children over younger. If the situation were reversed, so that the monastery had been founded by and for men, it would appear as suggestive evidence of patrilineal inheritance and primogeniture. Even if such inheritance models were discouraged by Byzantine law, there were clearly ways around it and certain cultural trends in the twelfth century that favored the model put forth by Eirene Doukaina.

While many modern scholars have more or less explicitly expressed the view that agnatic descent (via the male line) was generally favored, or at least given more weight than ancestry through the female line, Byzantine sources from the tenth through the early twelfth century only do so periodically and, often, implicitly. There is an abundance of evidence that appears to argue for their acceptance of uterine descent as no less legitimate than agnatic. Narrative sources and other forms of literature produced in Byzantium from the tenth through twelfth centuries do mention male ancestors far more often than females, even when describing women. Yet male authors seem to have no problem emphasizing the nobility of their *genos* through female antecedents or maternal grandparents.

---

[146] Ibid.
[147] Thomas and Hero, *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, Vol. 2, p.710.

Conclusion

Zonaras' critique of Constantine X's ancestry may remain something of an anomaly, yet further research may show that he was not alone in his opinion of the imperfect transmission of kinship through the female line. This chapter has demonstrated the strong influence medical knowledge had on Byzantine thought regarding biological kinship and, thus, the *genos*. It is not unreasonable to suggest that Galenic ideas of women as imperfect men may have influenced Zonaras and others like him. Not only were Galen and other medical texts read by a large number of Byzantine authors, there is ample evidence to demonstrate that such knowledge of human reproduction was considered foundational in medieval Byzantine thought on the nature of kinship. Medical and related knowledge concerning biological reproduction and the cultural significance of blood, along with perceptions of specific traits carried in the blood, are a potentially useful place to look for Byzantine thought on the nature of the mechanics of descent, the bonds of consanguinity and the *genos*.

There is no question that Byzantine sources of the eleventh and twelfth centuries display a keen interest in consanguineous kinship as the expression of shared blood and in differentiating this bond from other forms of social bonds, including alternate forms of kinship. This interest only increased over time. The sources betray a clear concern not only with enumerating family ties and individuals' ancestry, but also in the elaboration of the nature of shared blood using a variety of authorities. Changes in the vocabulary of kinship (a topic addressed more fully in chapter two) likewise suggest a greater interest in specificity when it came to kinship designations, especially in sibling relationships and those relationships stemming from them (e.g. uncles and nephews).

The frequency with which the sources, especially those from the twelfth century, describe lines of descent through the female line simply cannot be ignored. Even if some individuals clearly did not give equal weight to the female contribution to the act of reproduction and disproportionately focus on agnatic lines of descent, the mother's contribution was not meaningless.. Angeliki Laiou has argued that "in the twelfth century, the genealogies of members of the high, imperial aristocracy, both female and male, trace both lineages and give equal weight to the male and female ancestors."[148] This argument, however, deserves rephrasing, at least slightly.

One must concede that when women appear in genealogical descriptions at any time throughout the period covered here, they tend to appear as links between two or more male members of the family, effectively limiting any female agency in the construction of family memory. Ancestors through the female line certainly did matter and receive mention in surviving sources, but these ancestors are almost always males (even when the subject of the genealogy is a woman). Women in these cases appear as links in the chain, but they tend not to be celebrated themselves. Instead, they function to link one male family member to another. In a sense, female ancestors or family members did not typically 'illuminate' the *genos* themselves, they simply allowed other, male relatives to do so through the biological links they helped to create. This should come as no surprise, since women generally contributed to the family's honor by staying out of the public eye. Men, on the other hand, were expected to enhance the reputation of the genos through deeds and behavior that would be very much visible, both to other members of the aristocracy and to a broader public. In sum, while there is certainly some evidence to suggest that

---

[148] Angeliki Laiou, "Family Structure and the Transmission of Property," in *A Social History of Byzantium*, ed. John Haldon (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009), p.59.

descent through the male line was given more weight than through the female, there is not enough to argue against Byzantine society recognizing cognatic lines of descent.

Blood was not the only thing an individual inherited through the *genos*. In the following chapter, it will be shown that the proliferation of heritable surnames as outward markers of the *genos* meant that an individual also inherited a specific reputation attached to their surname, a reputation that was carefully built up over several generations and needed to be carefully maintained by all members sharing the same *genos*.

φήμη δ'οὔ τις πάμπαν ἀπόλλυται, ἥντινα πολλοὶ
λαοὶ φημίξουσι · θεός νύ τίς ἐστι καὶ αὐτή.
"No talk ever completely disappears, once many people have spoken of it;
it too is thence some kind of god."
- Hesiod, *Works and Days* 763-4.

αἱρετώτερον ὄνομα καλὸν ἢ πλοῦτος πολύς
"A good name is more desirable than great riches."
- Proverbs 22:1

Sometime in 1056 or 1057, Emperor Michael VI presented his nephew, also named

Michael, with the imperial title *doux* of Antioch, making him one of the most important imperial

officials in the extreme southeast of the empire. In addition to the title, according to the

eleventh-century history of John Skylitzes, the emperor also bestowed upon him "the name of

Ouranos on the occasion of his proclamation because his *genos* supposedly derived from the

ancient Ouranos. The emperor honored him with the title *magister* of Antioch which that other

Ouranos [Nikephoros] had held."[1]

As the passage suggests, the previous *doux* of Antioch, Nikephoros Ouranos, had gained

immense fame and imperial favor under Basil II after a spectacular victory over the Bulgarians at

Spercheios. In 1000, Basil gave Nikephoros extraordinary powers in Antioch, charging him with

preventing potential Arab-Muslim incursions in the region.[2] By laying claim to membership in

---

[1] John Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories*, "Michael VI. 2 (483); Translation taken from John Wortley, trans., John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811-1057 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.451.
[2] For the extraordinary position held by Nikephoros Ouranos in Antioch, see his lead seal in the Dumbarton Oaks collection, Fogg 1576. The seal has been published as no. 99.11 in Nicolas Oikonomidès, series ed., *Catalogue of*

that same *genos* through the use of the surname (ἐπίκλησις), the new governor might hope to take part in Nikephoros' fame and good reputation both in Antioch and in the rest of the empire, to openly align himself with local, aristocratic factions, or, at the very least, to make himself more recognizable to the local populace. The emperor had bestowed the name upon his nephew just like an imperial office, and, like an imperial office, the name carried with it a certain cultural resonance and enhanced its bearer's authority, in this case because of the reputation earned by a previous generation. This Michael may or may not have had legitimate genealogical ties to the family of Nikephoros Ouranos. The reality of biological ties, however, was less important than the *perception* of a link between the man and the *genos* of Ouranos.[3]

This chapter will argue that heritable surnames, as the most visible markers of the *genos* as a distinct social unit served as an important source of political and social capital for members of the Byzantine elite in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Utilizing St. Basil of Caesarea's theory of names as a starting point, it will show that family names served as a kind of shorthand for a range of "distinguishing characteristics" encoded within the name that could be manipulated both by members of the family itself and by outsiders who encountered these individuals or their surname. The specific set of "distinctive features" associated with a given surname was a major concern of members of aristocratic *gene* and was crucial for the intergenerational reproduction of their social and political standing. In a society in which fame and reputation were vital in the acquisition and maintenance of social and political status, Byzantine elites used a variety of

---

Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art, Vol. III: *West, Northwest and Central Asia Minor and the Orient*, ed. John Nesbitt and Nicolas Oikonomidès (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1996), p.177. On the seal, Nikephoros bears the title "master/ruler of the east" (κρατοῦντι τῆς Ἀνατολῆς).
[3] J.-C. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996), p.254.

means to reinforce the broader conception of their family name as synonymous with specific traits that would be socially and politically beneficial.

Reputation, broadly defined, was a central component determining social status and political allegiances in this period of Byzantine history, and it was through the enhancement and maintenance of the specific reputation of a family name that aristocratic *genē* developed a unique identity, both self-assigned and amongst others. The cumulative reputation developed and fostered over multiple generations and associated with a family name was a major driving force behind many of these families' actions. The particular social and political conditions in the Byzantine Empire in the tenth and eleventh centuries meant that, without heritable imperial offices or the kind of quasi-sovereign power exercised over a given region found in parts of the contemporary West,[4] individual families turned to their family name as a means of ensuring the reproduction of their social and political standing in subsequent generations. In this way, it will further be shown that, at least to some extent, heritable surnames may be understood as serving some of the same functions and holding some of the same socio-political currency as imperial titles, conferring upon their holder a degree of authority or prestige by virtue of the specific set of "distinguishing characteristics" associated with that name, bolstered by the purposeful manipulation and dissemination of that reputation by members of the family themselves.

---

[4] Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: Illuminating the Dark Ages, 400-1000* (New York: Viking, 2009), p.317. "The great families of Byzantium thus seem to me for the most part less locally preponderant than they were in the West; and also more reliant on office-holding for real political protagonism than they were in the West...In tenth-century Byzantium, where the state...was far stronger, where office-holding commanded huge salaries, where public position was tied up with army commands and regular presence in the capital, autonomous local power did not stand a chance."

Defining Reputation

For the purposes of this chapter, reputation is defined as the cumulative set of traits and characteristics associated with a particular *genos* as a result of the actions of individual members of that *genos* over the course of multiple generations. It represents the historical memory and contemporary knowledge of a particular *genos*, albeit one that could vary considerably depending on the social, economic, and geographic background of the audience in any given situation. It might include such things as an association with heroic military deeds, geographic origins and provincial ties, ethnic origins, connections to a particular imperial (often military) office, links to past emperors, or simply nobility (εὐγένεια, literally "good birth"). Some of the most common markers of distinction to appear in the medieval Byzantine sources is the pairing of wealth and fame. So, for example, the author of the Life of St. Michael Maleïnos, a mid-tenth-century monk who was a relative of Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas, described the saint's ancestors as "famous for [their] wealth, honor and glory."[5] It should be noted that the same word used for 'honor,' in the text, *timē* (τιμή), was also used to refer to imperial offices or titles, which would generally be the greatest single contributor to the family's wealth as well. Glory (δόξα), on the other hand, was generally best achieved on the battlefield.

One's surname, the marker of *genos* affiliation, might evoke specific alliances or long-standing feuds with other *genē*. Even the reputation developed by a single beneficent (or malevolent) tax collector in a single village could have very real consequences for his relatives, especially those publicly bearing the same surname. Indeed, the concept of reputation is here designed to encapsulate all of the possible combinations of associations and qualities that could

---

[5]L. Petit, «Vie de St Michel Maleinos,» *ROC* 7 (1902), p.550; Pâris Gounaridis, "Constitution d'une généalogie à Byzance," in *Parenté et société dans le monde grec de l'Antiquité à l'âge moderne. Colloque international, Volos (Grèce), 19-20-21 Juin 2003* (2006), p.273.

be attached to a given surname and, thus, a particular *genos*. In general, the most important distinction made by surviving sources is between being "famous" or "well-known," versus obscurity, literally being "unknown" or "unnamed."

Such thinking about the significance of names was not foreign to the Byzantine mind. Already in the fourth century, St. Basil of Caesarea was advocating similar ideas for understanding the relationship between names and the objects or people they describe. His theory of names can be summed up in two primary features. First, "a name signifies a notion" (ἔννοια). Secondly, "the content of this notion is a single property, or set of properties, that enable identification." [6] For Basil, proper names "reveal, not an individual's substance, but an individual's 'distinctive features' (ἰδιώματα) or 'distinguishing marks' (ἰδιώτητες)." [7] Basil extended his theory of names beyond theological debates surrounding the many names of epithets of God to include all names (or even all nouns), mundane and otherwise. His remarks concerning the name of Peter (the apostle) illustrate the point.

> 'So whenever we hear 'Peter', the name does not cause us to think of his substance...but rather the notion of the distinguishing marks that are considered in connection with him is impressed upon our mind. For as soon as we hear the sound of this designation, we immediately think of the son of Jonah (see Matt 16:17), the man from Bethsaida (see John 1:44), the brother of Andrew (see Matt 4:18), the one summoned from the fishermen to the ministry of the apostolate (see

---

[6] Mark DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea's anti-Eunomian Theory of Names: Christian Theology and Late Antique Philosophy in the Fourth Century Trinitarian Controversy* (Boston: Brill, 2010), p.189.
[7] DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea's anti-Eunomian Theory of Names*, p.190.

Matt 4:18– 19), the one who because of the superiority of his faith was charged with the building up of the church (see Matt 16:16– 18)."[8]

It was this more universal aspect of his theories that seems to have contributed to their use by later Byzantine thinkers, in particular those concerned with impediments to marriage based upon consanguinity or affinity. Basil's ideas were still being used by the likes of Theodore Balsamon in the twelfth century in order to defend (and sometimes expand upon) the church's position on prohibited degrees of kinship.[9] Basil may have composed his theories in response to specific theological issues of his time, but their universal applicability makes them a useful lens through which to understand the employment of Byzantine surnames in the tenth and eleventh centuries. It has the added advantage of thinking about surnames in terms that would have been recognizable to Byzantine thinkers themselves.

This definition closely approximates that of western medieval *fama* as it appears in modern scholarship, in particular the work of Thelma Fenster and Daniel Lord Small. They argue that "medieval *fama* can be conceived of as a general impression that is inseparable from its embodiment in talk. Regarding a person, therefore, *fama* is the public talk that continually adjusts honor and assigns rank or standing as the individual grows up, engages in such publicly performed acts as marriage, takes up offices or other public duties, wins or loses legal or physical contests, and begins to decline. *Fama*, in this sense, can be political, for it serves to define and rank competitors for public honors and functions."[10] Indeed, the political function of reputation

---

[8] DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea's anti-Eunomian Theory of Names*, p.192.
[9] See, e.g. Balsamon's short treatise concerning whether the same man could successively marry two second-cousins, in G.A. Rhalles and M. Potles, eds., *Syntagma ton theion kai hieron kanonon* (Athens, 1835), Vol. V, pp.556-64. For some general comments, see Angeliki Laiou, *Mariage, amour et parenté à Byzance aux XIe-XIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1992), esp. pp.12, 57, 71-4.
[10] Thelma Fenster and Daniel Lord Small, "Introduction," in *Fama: The Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe*, ed. Thelma Fenster and Daniel Lord Small (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp.3-4.

and fame as conferring honor and social or political rank as described by Fenster and Small is central to the arguments presented here for tenth- through twelfth-century Byzantium.

Fame and Reputation as Determining Social and Political Status in Byzantium

Reputation formed one of the basic components of status in Byzantine society. As Leonora Neville has argued, "community perception and judgment of honorable conduct" was one of the three most important markers of social status in Byzantium in the middle Byzantine period. "Public perception was a great part of social prominence in eleventh-century Byzantium."[11] Adjectives such as *periphanes* (περιφανὴς, "famous"), *phaneros* (φανερός, lit. "visible" or "well known"), *onomastos* (ὀνομαστός, lit. "named;" "famous"), *epainetos* (ἐπαινετός, "worthy of praise"), and *episēmos* (ἐπίσημος, "notable" or "remarkable") dominate Byzantine literature as descriptors of individuals and families of high social standing. Fame, or *kleos* (κλέος), could itself be instrumental in determining an individual's or family's elevated social status. Those from an undistinguished family are also frequently described in terms relating to fame or reputation, or more accurately, the lack thereof. Thus, such individuals appear with the descriptors *asēmos* or *akleōn,* i.e. "undistinguished" or "without fame." In many cases, it is not simply the individual who is derided as being "unknown" or "obscure," but their families or *genē* as well.[12]

---

[11] Leonora Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950-1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.78-80.

[12] Michael Psellos, Oration 2, lines 338-39: Ἐν τούτῳ δὲ ἀνήρ τις, τό τε εἶδος τῶν φαυλοτάτων καὶ τὸ γένος τῶν ἀκλεῶν...("In this [place] there was a certain man, among the most ordinary in appearance and from among the most unknown of families"). In G.T. Dennis, *Michaelis Pselli orationes panegyricae* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1994).

Even the increasing emphasis on nobility by birth that appears in the sources from the mid-eleventh century onward was only effective in bolstering the claims to power and influence among aristocratic families inasmuch as their nobility by birth was recognized by their peers and the Byzantine population writ large. This is visible in Michael Psellos' *Chronographia*, where the author notes that "... although Isaac [I Komnenos] had been elected emperor and Constantine [X Doukas] had been promised the lesser honour of Caesar, the latter's more noble ancestry and his extremely loveable nature made him a favorite among the people."[13] Psellos does not simply state that Constantine's "more noble ancestry" made him more eligible for the throne. Rather, it is the Constantinopolitan public's recognition of the value of that nobility that gives it its power.

Elsewhere, when describing the early stages of Isaac Komnenos' (eventually successful) bid for the throne, Psellos states that he "won over to his side the most powerful families, persons whom they knew by name."[14] In this instance, Psellos relates to the reader the elite status of these individuals and families by noting that they were known by name. Whether these names refer to personal or family names (or, perhaps most likely, both) is left ambiguous, but, as we will see, this kind of name recognition was a central component of the social and political standing among the medieval Byzantine elite.

For Kekaumenos, the eleventh-century author of the so-called *Strategikon*,[15] the enhancement of one's reputation is an important goal in itself, and to receive praise or notoriety for one's actions is frequently reward enough to motivate these actions. In his advice to his sons,

---

[13] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 7.88; E.R.A. Sewter, trans. *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers: The Chronographia of Michael Psellus* (London, New York: Penguin Books, 1966), p.328.

[14] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 7.5; Sewter, trans., p.278.

[15] The *Strategikon* or *Precepts and Anecdotes*, as it is alternately known, was written sometime around 1078-81 by an individual known only by his surname, Kekaumenos. It is a unique, moralizing book of advice and an "indoctrination in 'proper' behavior" addressed (mostly) to his sons and covering a wide range of topics from the proper conduct on the battlefield to the management of one's household. See: Alexander Kazhdan, "Kekaumenos," in the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), ed. by Kazhdan, p.1119.

he says, "Seek to be worthy of memory and praise." [16] "You should desire to be one of those

worthy of praise and memory, not pleasure seekers."[17] If they keep an estate on or near the

coast and brings ships safely into their harbor "they will be praised by all.[18] "Strive to be noble

(εὐγενὴς), honorable (τίμιος), praiseworthy (ἐπαινετός), and glorified (ἔνδοξος) by the emperor

and by all."[19]

In the same way, the potential damage caused to one's personal or familial reputation is

presented in the *Strategikon* as a primary motivating factor against any action that could result in

"loss of face." "Do not mingle with a fool (ἄφρονος), for he could ruin you and bring you

shame. All may laugh at you."[20] "If a man is able to seduce your wife, he may go about

boasting of this fact."[21] One of the first scenarios depicted in the *Strategikon* deals with the

appropriate course of action if one should find himself facing an individual who has been

"speaking badly" about him.[22] "Do not quarrel with your brother, even if you think you have

been wronged by him, for people will consider you and him *misadelphoi*."[23] Rather than

focusing on the negative economic consequences arising from discord among the brothers,

Kekaumenos portrays social ruin in terms of the public perception of their actions and, by

extension, their character. Kekaumenos is widely known for his near obsession with a fear of

---

[16] Kekaumenos 129.5-6: σὺ δὲ μὴ τῶν ἐνηδόνων, ἀλλὰ τῶν ἐπαινετῶν καὶ μνήμης ἀξίων ἐπιθύμει. The edition used for this chapter is M.D. Spadaro, *Raccomandazioni e consigli di un galantuomo* (Alessandria, Italy: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998), pp.44-242, as it appears in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* online database (http://www.tlg.uci.edu/). Hereafter, this edition will be cited simply as "Kekaumenos."
[17] Kekaumenos 139.5-8.
[18] Kekaumenos 223.
[19] Kekaumenos 218.
[20] Kekaumenos 155.
[21] Kekaumenos 101.
[22] Kekaumenos 4: ἀλλ᾽ ἐάν τις λαλῇ κατὰ σοῦ, κατ᾽ ἰδίαν αὐτὸν προσκαλεσάμενος, εἰπὲ αὐτῷ μετὰ ἤθους χρηστοῦ· «ἀδελφέ, τί σε ἐλύπησα καὶ καταλαλεῖς μου; ἐὰν ἠδικήθης τι παρ᾽ἐμοῦ, εἰπὲ καὶ διορθοῦμαι τοῦτο».
[23] Kekaumenos, 146: μὴ μάχου μετὰ ἀδελφοῦ σου, εἰ καὶ δοκεῖς σὺ βλαβῆναι παρ᾽ αὐτοῦ, ἐπεὶ σύ τε κἀκεῖνος μισάδελφοι τοῖς πολλοῖς λογισθήσεσθε.

ruin, which for him meant above all loss of face, that is, the loss of reputation. [24] Kekaumenos

makes a clear distinction between positive and negative reputations, and it is of obvious import

to articulate what constituted a "good" reputation among Byzantine elites.

Michael Attaleiates offers what might be considered his own definition of fame and good

reputation in chapter 28 of his late eleventh-century *History*, which forms a part of the (probably

fictional) genealogical ties of his patron, Emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates, with the *genos* of

Phokas and, through them, with the classical Roman Fabii. Near the beginning of the chapter he

states, "As for the family of the Phokades (τὰ μὲν τοῦ γένους τῶν Φωκάδων), those from the

generations closest to us are celebrated and known to all (περίφημά τε καὶ περιβόητα). As

witnesses to this we may cite both the old accounts and the emperor lord Nikephoros Phokas

himself..."[25] Immediately following this is a summary of Nikephoros Phokas' accomplishments

for which he and his family became "celebrated and known to all." He took the reins of

government when the empire was hemmed in by Arabs, he "reconquered lands and breathed new

life into the state," he "defeated enemies who had been rampaging in the east," and he retook the

island of Crete. "He was pious in all affairs that pertained to God, most discerning in his

decisions, and most brave as a general." Even Phokas' extreme piety, however, is related back to

his military successes by Attaleiates, who makes explicit that his "encomium to [Nikephoros']

piety" is designed as a contribution "to a discussion of military affairs."[26] The majority of the

rest of the chapter is dedicated to a detailed retelling of Nikephoros Phokas' reconquest of the

---

[24] Paul Magdalino, "Honour among the Romaioi: The Framework of Social Values in the World of Digenes Akrites and Kekaumenos," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 13 (1989), p.207.

[25] Michael Attaleiates, *History* 28.1, in Anthony Kaldellis and Dimitris Krallis, eds. and trans., *The History: Michael Attaleiates* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp.406-7. The translation is that of Kaldellis and Krallis.

[26] Attaleiates, *History*, 28.1; Kaldellis and Krallis, pp.408-9. "...τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας ἐγκώμιον ἐν τοῖς στρατιωτικοῖς παραγγέλμασι."

island of Crete in 961. Clearly what is most important to Attaleiates in his attempts to glorify his patron is the martial pedigree of Botaneiates' ancestors.

Kekaumenos, a near contemporary of Attaleiates, gives a similar picture. He is most concerned with cultivating a reputation on the battlefield, though justice and fairness are also important. Kekaumenos gives his son the same advice he gives his troops: "Work to outdo everyone else [in battle], so that you might become widely known (ὀνομαστός)."[27] "Do what you're ordered and what seems to you worthy of awe (θαυμαστόν) and of praise (ἐπαινετόν) so that you might become known (ὀνομαστός)."[28] In fact, every instance of the term *onomastos* in the *Strategikon* occurs in a military context. This is in line with cultural trends described by Leonora Neville, who states that, by the late eleventh century, "[m]ilitary ability, personal honor, nobility, and ties of loyalty between extended family members became far more highly prized."[29]

The kind of values espoused by both Attaleiates and Kekaumenos as they concern the acquisition and maintenance of reputation is closely related to concepts of glory (δόξα) and honor (τιμή), both in Byzantium and in the (roughly) contemporary west. One need not look far for additional evidence that the acquisition of glory was a primary concern, especially for individuals within the aristocracy, and that this glory not only reflected upon the individual, but also, importantly, on their *genos*. In the Tome of Sisinnios, the late tenth-century patriarchal ruling on marriage impediments, the patriarch describes some of the possible motivations for the circumvention of established marriage law by members of the elite. The first item in the list of reasons for contracting what Sisinnios sees as incestuous marriages is for the "glory of the

---

[27] Kekaumenos 86-7: καὶ ἀγωνίζου ὑπερέχειν πάντας, ὅπως γένη ὀνομαστός.
[28] Kekaumenos 86.6-87.2.
[29] Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society,* p.33.

genos" (δόξα γένους).[30] Indeed, there is ample reason to believe that marriage partners were often sought precisely because of the additional fame and political clout they could bring to the family.[31] Just over a century after Sisinnios, in the pages of the fictional narrative *Digenes Akrites*, the hero is described as desiring to accomplish great deeds in order "to honor and illuminate his *genos*."[32] One must, of course, be careful to distinguish between the honor that could only be bestowed on an individual or his/her family from internalized honor codes. The honor described by eleventh-century Byzantine authors can only be bestowed upon an individual by others, whether God, the emperor, other aristocratic families, or society in general.

Emperor Leo VI, in his military handbook known simply as the *Taktika*, regards fame and a good reputation as one of the most important attributes in the selection of a general to lead a campaign. "We call for a man of good reputation (Ἔνδοξον). An army becomes disgusted and angry when placed under the command of a man who is not respected (τοῖς ἀδόξοις)...Truly great virtue does not permit a man to remain unnoticed for long (ἡ γὰρ τοσαύτη ἀρετὴ ἄσημον ἄνθρωπον διαμένειν ἐπιπολὺ οὐ καταλιμπάνει)."[33] Not only is it important that a general earn the respect of his troops through his fame and reputation, it should also be noted that Leo assumes this fame will have been earned through virtuous actions. For Leo, as for many Byzantines, fame was the natural result of virtuous actions, so much so that the two were virtually synonymous.

Beyond military virtues and extreme piety, an individual's or *genos'* geographic origins were also an important piece of information encoded within the family name. This seems to

---

[30] Rhalles and Potles, V, p.18. Other items of the list include the number of titles or offices held by the future spouse or his/her family, the wealth of the man, or the beauty of the woman.

[31] Laiou, *Mariage, amour et parenté*, pp. 34-6.

[32] *Digenes Akrites*, G 4.94-6. "δοξάσασθαι καὶ τὸ γένος λαμπρῦναι."

[33] George T. Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Revised Edition), (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2014), pp.22-3 ("Qualities Required in a General," §13).

have been particularly important to Byzantines for two main reasons: the importance they placed on loyalty to one's *patris* (πατρίς), or "fatherland," which could refer both to the empire as a whole and to a specific region or city therein, and the role Byzantine thinkers (in line with Greco-Roman tradition) assigned to geography and ethnic origins in determining physical, emotional, and cultural traits.[34] In fact, geographic regions, including villages, cities, themes, and various others, appear almost as often as family names or ancestors as modifiers of *genos* in the sources, even those produced well into the twelfth and even thirteenth centuries. At the same time, geographic markers, i.e. toponyms, are some of the most common origins of family names in Byzantium.[35] Even the general attribution of familial origins "in the east" carried with it a certain degree of prestige beginning in the mid-tenth century, precisely because of the reputation earned by several prominent families of the central and eastern Anatolian plateau. Thus, Leo the Deacon deemed it worthy to record in his early eleventh-century history that Emperor John I Tzimiskes was "descended from a very distinguished family, of noble birth on his father's side, from the east."[36]

---

[34] Michael Psellos, in a letter concerning the nature of friendship, repeats the classical Greek understanding of the relationship between geography, climate, and human characteristics/culture. "The Skyths, being nomads, are different from the political *genos*, and the island dwellers are not closely related to those on the mainland; for those dwelling in different climates are given over to different customs." (Σκύθαι μὲν γὰρ Νομάδες τοῦ πολιτικοῦ γένους ἀπηλλοτρίωνται, καὶ τοῖς ἠπειρώταις οἱ νησιῶται οὐ πάνυ προσήκουσιν, αἵ τε διάφοροι τῶν κλιμάτων οἰκήσεις, ἀλλοτρίας τῶν οἰκητόρων τὰς γνώμας ἀποδιδόασιν). See: K.N. Sathas, Μεσαιωνικὴ βιβλιοθήκη ἢ Συλλογὴ ἀνεκδότων μνημείων τῆς ἑλληνικῆς ἱστορίας (Venice: Τύποις του φοινικός, 1876), Vol. V, p.515. The letter, number 208 in Sathas' collection, is entitled "Περὶ φιλίας, πρὸς τοὺς ἀνεψιοὺς τοῦ πατριάρχου κῦρ Μιχαήλ."
[35] Jean-Claude Cheynet, "L'anthroponymie aristocratique à Byzance," in *L'anthroponymie document d'histoire sociale dans des mondes méditerranéens médiévaux. Actes du colloque international organisé par l'École française de Rome avec le concours du GDR 955 du C.N.R.S (Rome, 6-8 octobre 1994)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1996), pp.267-94.
[36] Leo Diaconus, 99.15-17: λαμπροτάτου γὰρ γένους ὁ Ἰωάννης κατήγετο, πρὸς μὲν πατρὸς εὐγενὴς τῶν ἀφ᾿ ἡλίου ἀνατολῶν; The translation is from Talbot and Sullivan, pp.148-9. The precise language used by Leo the Deacon, like many other Byzantine authors, is taken from Job 1:3: ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος εὐγενὴς τῶν ἀφ᾿ ἡλίου ἀνατολῶν, as it appears in the Septuagint.

In the medieval Byzantine period, individuals or families originating in certain regions were also variously ascribed certain physical or character traits. One tenth-century source claims that those from Paphlagonia, a region in northwestern Anatolia, were "an ancient and reprehensible nation (*genos*), notorious for their shamelessness and bad character."[37] Emperor Constantine VII was known to have quoted Homer (*Iliad* II.851-5) in order to support his claim that mules originated in Paphlagonia, which explains its people's "wickedness and brutishness."[38] In fact, several sources originating in the tenth through twelfth centuries all agree that "Paphlagonians were despicable: swinish as well as doltish, barbaric, unclean, conniving and fraudulent."[39] It is clear, however, that Byzantine attitudes about Paphlagonians were not simply regurgitated *topoi* from antiquity, but continually evolved and were affected by contemporary realities.[40]

Women also played a role in the pursuit of fame and reputation among aristocratic families. Both sexes received honor when fulfilling idealized roles within the household/family. For men, honor was intimately tied to bravery, the expression of martial valor, and other, very public acts. For women, on the other hand, honor came largely from modesty in all its forms. The ideal Byzantine woman, at least in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (though generally true even earlier), was supposed to "identify herself through her devotion to her immediate family." [41] Anna Komnene exemplifies exactly this attitude throughout the "Prologue" to her (lost) will, in

---

[37] Constantine VII, *De Thematibus*, in *De thematibus: Introduzione, testo critico, commento*, ed. A. Pertusi (Modena: Foto Lito Dini, 1952).

[38] Paul Magdalino, "Paphlagonians in Byzantine High Society," in *Byzantine Asia Minor (6th-12th cent.)* (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation Institute for Byzantine Research, 1998), pp.141-50, quotes from p.141.

[39] Ibid.

[40] For example, in the medieval period, the Paphlagonians earned the further reputation for producing a large number of eunuchs and for their propensity to "compose songs about the adventures of illustrious men and go round singing them from house to house." Magdalino, "Paphlagonians in Byzantine High Society," p.142.

[41] Stamatina McGrath, "Women in Byzantine History in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries: Some Theoretical Considerations," in *Byzantine Religious Culture: Studies in Honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*, ed. Sullivan, Fisher, and Papaioannou (Brill, 2012), p.95.

which she consistently portrays herself as a devoted wife and daughter.[42] Despite her predictable

emphasis on her own "innate modesty" (αἰδώς), however, Anna is careful to highlight the

nobility of her *genos* and the high social status of her natal (and affinal) family. Her mother's

typikon for the monastery of Kecharitomene expresses a similar pride in her own family's

(Doukas) prominent social standing.[43]

Imperial women, that is, those women associated with the imperial throne either through

marriage or blood ties with the emperor, were held to their own standards of behavior and

comportment. We can see these virtues made explicit in Michael Italikos' improvised

(αὐτοσχεδίως) oration to Eirene Doukaina, wife of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos, in which

praises her for her "imperial" virtues: temperance, courage (given a distinctly male quality here),

equity, and wisdom in her "words and acts."[44] Her case is most certainly specific to an empress,

as these virtues correspond roughly to the four imperial virtues from Menander.[45] Imperial

women, like other women of their day, also earned praise and notoriety in their role as (good)

mothers. This was especially true in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, during which

time Emperor Alexios I Komnenos' mother, Anna Dalassene, became particularly well-known

for her role not only as the dutiful mother of the emperor, but also as a forceful, political

personality in her own right.[46] Alexios I is known to have frequently presented himself publicly

as "*philomētēr*," that is, "mother-lover."

---

[42] Stratis Papaioannou, "Anna Komnene's Will," in *Byzantine Religious Culture: Studies in Honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*, ed. Sullivan, Fisher, and Papaioannou (Brill, 2012), p.111ff.

[43] Papaioannou, "Anna Komnene's Will," p.110 (n.42).

[44] Paul Gautier, *Michel Italikos. Lettres et Discours*. *Archives de l'Orient Chrétien* 14 (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1972), No. 15, pp.149-50, lines 13-19 and 1-16, respectively.

[45] *Menander Rhetor*, ed. with trans. and commentary by D.A. Russell and N.G. Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp.78-98.

[46] Margaret Mullett, "The 'Disgrace' of the Ex-Basilissa Maria," *Byzantinoslavica* 45 (1984), p.208.

The image of reputation presented here is not intended to be exhaustive, and Byzantine ideals concerning the acquisition of fame and reputation were not limited to martial valor, piety, and (for women) modesty. Still, cultural trends in tenth- and eleventh-century Byzantium placed an ever greater emphasis on military virtues and, secondarily, piety as desirable "distinguishing characteristics." Geographic and ethnic origins, as well as inter-familial alliances or feuds remained relevant throughout the period, as did any number of additional virtues or vices (e.g. generosity or fairness). Such individual characteristics were intimately linked with the *genos* through the use of heritable surnames, which publicly bound together the kin group's members through common association.

Heritable Surnames and the Politics of Reputation

Family names began to appear in Byzantium in the eighth and ninth centuries, though the practice only became firmly established over the course of the tenth.[47] By the eleventh century, nearly every aristocratic family (and many among the lesser social strata) was marked by a heritable surname. Even emperors routinely employed family names after the mid-eleventh century. The process coincided with a time of social and cultural change that seems to have resulted in a far greater degree of cohesion within aristocratic family groups than in previous centuries and a much stronger identification of the individual with their *genos*. Whether heritable surnames were a cause or effect of this complex process, it was through these names that such cohesion and identity was expressed. By one scholar's estimation, by the year 1200, roughly 80% of named individuals appear with family names in surviving narrative sources,

---

[47] Alexander Kazhdan, "The Formation of Byzantine Family Names in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries," *Byzantinoslavica* 58 (1997), p.101.

while this was true of only around 20% at the beginning of the ninth century.[48] In Paul Stephenson's words, "While public office remained prestigious and potentially lucrative throughout the period under consideration [c. 950-1081], to paraphrase Michael Psellos...many preferred to 'belch forth their family's great name.'"[49]

A whole series of information was encoded in any particular surname, some or all of which would be understood by anyone who encountered it. The etymological roots of these names themselves offer some clues as to the kinds of information that they might contain. Many Byzantine surnames were derived from regional or geographic origins (e.g. Komnenos, Taronites), imperial titles (e.g. Doukas), or personal names or sobriquets belonging to an ancestor (e.g. Argyros, Monomachos). The coded messages contained in family names, however, were not limited to this list. Just as Kekaumenos could describe the *genos tōn Vlachōn* as inherently *apiston* (faithless),[50] so too could the *genos tōn Kekaumenōn* ("the family of the Kekaumenoi") be ascribed any number of characteristics viewed as inborn. A carefully maintained reputation attached to one's surname (and thus, one's *genos*) could and did carry with it a great deal of social and political capital, and it was thus an important, even vital concern for members of these elite families that each generation maintain and add to this fame and reputation. Famous ancestors were increasingly glorified in several literary and visual forms precisely because of this fact. [51] Every individual who bore a particular surname had a stake in the collective reputation associated with that name, and, at the same time, had an obligation to

---

[48] Paul Stephenson, "The Rise of the Middle Byzantine Aristocracy," in *The Byzantine World*, ed. Paul Stephenson (New York: Routledge,2010), p.22.
[49] Ibid.; Psellos, *Chronographia*, 4.430-31.
[50] Kekaumenos 187.
[51] J.-C. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance*, p.254. "L'utilisation progressive des patronymes dénote une certaine conscience d'appartenir à un groupe bien délimité; la gloire des ancētres est valorisée....car cette gloire constituait un véritable capital politique..."

251

maintain and enhance that fame and reputation. The solidarity felt by members of the same *genos* could be considerable, and it was around the family name that this solidarity was centered.

Byzantine aristocratic families never developed close ties with a particular territory or legal jurisdiction therein in the same way that some western families did with particular counties, duchies, or castles. Certainly many families were proud of their provincial origins, maintained properties there, and seem to have enjoyed a certain popularity amongst the populations of their home regions, sometimes for several generations. Yet, even in cases in which a family was able to dominate certain provincial offices for multiple generations, they never wrested control of them from the emperors in Constantinople, and they never became heritable in the proper sense of the word. The strength of the emperor and the draw of the imperial bureaucracy combined with the consistent fact that imperial office and title remained among the most important markers of social status and means of acquiring wealth, even in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In addition, nobility never developed the kind of legal backing that would eventually appear in parts of the West. As a result, members of self-styled illustrious *genē* had to take it upon themselves to convince their peers (and probably those of the lower social orders) that they belonged to the elite group of aristocratic families. This unique political situation in Byzantium meant that, at a time when noble birth was increasingly highly valued, an aristocratic *genos'* elite status was effectively tied up entirely in its name and the combination of qualities and traits, that is the reputation, it had acquired. The push for this status became especially pronounced after the 1040s and 1050s, when many senatorial titles and offices were opened up to a broader section of society, notably the merchant class (effectively producing inflation of these senatorial ranks). For Byzantine elites, any inherited social status was tied up in their family name and had to be continually reproduced.

The very fact of a surname's heritability would mean that the achievements, fame, and reputation of one person would be more easily reproduced with each successive generation. They linked each new generation with its ancestors much more clearly and more closely for contemporaries as much as modern prosopographers. The common practice of referring to individuals only by their surname and of naming sons after their paternal grandfather (often including both given and surnames) would have further associated younger generations with the lives and careers of the forebears. Along with the surname, an individual inherited the reputation inherent in that surname as it had been developed over the previous generations. It may seem rather mundane to the modern reader, but it is not insignificant that many of our sources routinely refer to individuals by just their family name. Doing so repeatedly would serve to identify the individual's actions with their *genos* as a whole, either consciously or subconsciously, in the minds of both the author and the listener.

A good example of this phenomenon can be found in an *epithalamios logos* (wedding speech) attributed to the well-known twelfth-century poet Theodore Prodromos. In the text, the orator celebrates the dual marriages of the two eldest sons of Nikephoros Bryennios and Anna Komnene. In the oration, the two sons each become embodiments of the Komnenos and Doukas families respectively (the two sons bore two different surnames, Alexios Komnenos and John Doukas). Theodore praises the two men by celebrating the past emperors who bore their surnames (and who were indeed their ancestors). For a considerable portion of the oration, each individual fades into the background as their respective identities become subsumed by the past and present reputation of the names that they bore. By midway through the speech, Alexios

Komnenos, in a sense, is no longer Alexios, but simply τὸ Κομνηνικόν, the embodiment of the name of Komnenos.[52]

Heritable surnames were usually passed down from a father to his children, though there are numerous examples of exceptions to this rule.[53] If one's mother's family was regarded as more prestigious than that of the father, one might choose to utilize his maternal surname throughout his adult life. It was fairly common for daughters to bear their mother's surname as well. There seems always to have been a certain degree of flexibility in the use of these surnames, and the same individual could even be known by different surnames at different times, depending on the context. By the thirteenth century, it was increasingly common for members of the high aristocracy to be known by multiple surnames simultaneously, drawing on the prestige and reputations of all of them.[54]

At least from the eleventh century, women seldom, if ever, bore the surname of their husband. This is in contrast to imperial offices or titles, the feminine form of which is frequently associated with the office- or title-holder's wife.[55] If they could from time to time be identified by third parties using a feminine form of their husband's family name, this was not the case on lead seals or inscriptions in which the woman's own voice might be heard.[56] There are a few

---

[52] Paul Gautier, ed. and trans., *Nicephori Bryennii Historiarum Libri Quattuor* (Brussels, 1975), pp.344-7. Δύο μὲν οὖν ἤστην σκῆπτρα Ῥωμαίοις ἀλλήλοις καλὸν ἀνταυγάζοντα, τὸ μὲν μικρῷ πρότερον τὸ Κομνηνικόν, τὸ δ'εὐθὺς παρὰ πόδας ἐκείνου τὸ Δουκικόν, ἄμφω εὐτυχῆ καὶ περιφανῆ καὶ κοσμικῆς ἀρετῆς οὐκ ἀνάξια, κᾆτα ὥσπερ ἐκ συμφωνίας συνεληλυθέτην εἰς ἓν πολλῷ φανότερον καὶ λαμπρότερον, τοῦτο δὴ τὸ Κομνηνοδουκικὸν καὶ παππικὸν τοῖν νυμφίοιν.

[53] Exceptions are to be expected in a system that lay outside of the realm of law. For example, the chronicle known as *Theophanes Continuatus*, composed in the mid-tenth century, suggests that the surname of Kontomytai could be transmitted to a son-in-law."[53] *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1837), p.175.8-10.

[54] A particularly well-known case of such "name collecting" can be found on the grave of a fifteenth-century man who died in the Morea (the Peloponnese). He is recorded under the name John Tornikes Doukas Angelos Palaiologos Raoul Laskaris Philanthropenos Asan. See Angeliki E. Laiou, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Palaeologan Period: A Story of Arrested Development," *Viator* 4 (1973), pp.135-6.

[55] H.L. Margarou, Τίτλοι και επαγγελματικά ονόματα γυναικών στο Βυζάντιο: Συμβολή στη μελέτη για τη θέση της γυναίκας στη βυζαντινή κοινωνία (Thessaloniki: Centre for Byzantine Studies, 2000).

[56] Jean-Claude Cheynet, "L'anthroponymie," pp.286-7.

known exceptions to this general rule, especially in the centuries before the eleventh (e.g. the famous widow Danielis, who supported Basil I's rise within the court of Emperor Michael III, may have been named after her late husband). During the Palaiologan period, when the accumulation of several surnames came en vogue, women do seem to have sometimes included the name of their husbands as well.[57] Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of the evidence from the late tenth through the twelfth century strongly suggests that women, even after marriage, continued to utilize their parental surname, indicating their continued identification with their natal *genos*.

Such is the case, for example, of Kale, the wife of Symbatios Pakourianos. Kale and her husband are known to modern scholars primarily because of the survival of both of their wills, as well as a monastic *typikon* and a few other documents recording transactions initiated by one or both of them in the Athonite monastery of Iviron.[58] The survival of these documents, dated to the final decade of the eleventh century, offers the rare opportunity to observe the ways in which a woman identified herself in her own words, even if those words are mediated through the use of a monastic scribe. In many modern studies, Kale (sometimes known by her monastic name, Maria) is assigned the surname "Pakouriane," the feminine form of her husband's name of Pakourianos.[59] This tendency, however, is inconsistent both with the ways in which Kale identifies herself in the surviving documents from Iviron and even with the way that her husband, Symbatios, refers to her.

---

[57] Cheynet, "L'anthroponymie," p.287.

[58] *Actes d'Iviron Vol. II: du milieu du XIe siècle à 1204*, ed. by Jacques Lefort, Nicolas Oikonomides, Denise Papachryssanthou (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1990) no. 47, pp.170-83; *Actes d'Iviron, Vol. II*, no. 44, pp.150-56; *Actes d'Iviron, Vol. II*, no. 46, pp.167-70.

[59] E.g. Timothy Dawson, "Women's Dress in Byzantium," in *Byzantine Women: Varieties of Experience 800-1200*, ed. Lynda Garland (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), pp.49, 51.

In her last will and testament, dated to 1098, Kale/Maria employs only the surname Basilakina, the feminized form of her father's surname, Basilakios. Early in the text, she introduces herself as "I, Maria (the) monk, daughter of the late Basilakios *kouropalates* and Xene the monk Diabatene and still living..." It is only after mentioning her parents that Kale/Maria states that she had been the wife of "the deceased *kouropalates* kyr Symbatios Pakourianos."[60] In another document, a donation to the Iviron monastery, she is again introduced as "Kale, the legitimate daughter of the departed Basilakios kouropalates" and "one-time wife of Symbatios Pakourianos kouropalates."[61] Even in her husband's will, which pre-dates her own by about five years, Symbatios refers to his wife only as "Kale, the legitimate daughter of the late Basilakios *kouropalates* and Zoe *kouropalatissa*."[62] Nowhere is she given a version of her husband's surname. At the same time, in all of these documents, Kale's parents (or, in one case, just her father) are mentioned before her husband. All of this points to the maintenance of Kale's identification with her natal kin group, her *genos*, perhaps even over and above her identity as the wife of Symbatios. The surviving *typikon* of the monastery of the Mother of God *Kecharitomene* ("Full of Grace") displays similar tendencies. Its founder, Eirene Doukaina, was the wife of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos. Yet, in her *typikon*, she employs only the surname Doukaina.[63]

---

[60] *Actes d'Iviron Vol. II: du milieu du XIe siècle à 1204*, ed. Jacques Lefort, Nicolas Oikonomides, Denise Papachryssanthou (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1990), no. 187.14.
[61] *Actes d'Iviron* II, no. 46. The donation was completed in 1093.
[62] *Actes d'Iviron* II, no. 44. Note that Kale's mother's name, Zoe, differs from the name Kale/Maria herself gives in her later will. This is probably because her mother had, in the meantime, entered into the monastic life, at which time she took the name Xene.
[63] Thomas and Hero, Vol. 2, pp.649-724 (no. 27). The monastery was probably founded in the early years of the twelfth century.

In her testament, Kale/Maria bequeaths a larger portion of her wealth to her cousin (probably on her mother's side) Leo Diabatenos than any other relative.[64] Leo, in fact, received a larger inheritance than any of Kale's five siblings (she had died childless). As Cheynet has pointed out, Leo almost surely held the most prominent social and political position within the extended family, as the Basilakioi had lost much of their wealth and standing after a failed attempt at revolt some years earlier. The decision to support Leo would, in fact, make some good sense, as "it would have seemed prudent to bolster his [already elevated] position, which would then reflect upon the whole family."[65] This case is illustrative for several reasons. Not only does it demonstrate the Kale's continued attachment to and participation in the *genos* of her mother, it also shows the kinds of tangible, material benefits that could accrue from such membership. Beyond that, if Cheynet's interpretation is correct, it offers further evidence of the importance of a family's reputation and another of the ways in which individuals, including women, could participate in enhancing that reputation.

The strength of the continued identification of an adult, married woman with her natal *genos* (or *genē*) is a testament to the cultural importance of genealogical ties over other forms of kinship. The strength of the ties of blood even had the potential to complicate or disrupt the harmony of the (conjugal) family. In fact, it may be possible to identify a certain hierarchy of interests or even of loyalties within the family. From a woman's perspective, it seems that cultural currents in the eleventh and twelfth centuries prioritized the role of mother over and above that of wife, at least in certain circumstances. As Barbara Hill has noted, "disloyalty to a

---

[64] Kale, who took the name Maria upon entering a monastery near the end of her life, was the wife of Symbatios Pakourianos, whose own testament (written in 1090) also survives. See *Actes d'Iviron* II, no.44.

[65] Jean-Claude Cheynet, "Aristocracy and Inheritance (11th-13th Centuries)," p.19. English translation of "Aristocratie et heritage (XIe-XIIIe s.)," in La transmission du patrimoine, ed. G. Dagron and J. Beaucamp (Paris: De Boccard, 1998), pp.53-80.

husband can be justified under the rubric of acting in a child's interests, without exposing the mother to criticism. Anna Komnene explained the treachery of Maria of Alania towards [her husband] Nikephoros Botaneiates as loyalty to her son Constantine...authority is vested in the mother acting for her children."[66] Emperor Constantine X Doukas suspected his wife, Eudokia Makrembolitissa, of remaining loyal to her natal family at the expense of his own and his designated heirs. His suspicion was so strong, in fact, that he famously required her to sign an oath in which she swore to uphold the rights of his designated heirs and was precluded from associating her own blood relatives with the throne.[67] In 1143, at the time of Manuel I Komnenos' accession to the throne, his brother-in-law John Roger Dalassenos contemplated revolt, but his wife, Maria Komnene, informed her natal family of the plot and it was quashed before becoming a serious threat.[68]

Anna Komnene, the well-known daughter of Alexios I Komnenos and Eirene Doukaina and author of the *Alexiad*, apparently preferred to be known by her mother's surname, Doukaina, at least in some situations. The court poet Theodore Prodromos addresses at least one poem to Anna as "Doukaina" (the feminine form of Doukas) and calls her in another "the by-word/talk of the Doukai, the wise Anna."[69] Anna's children with Nikephoros Bryennios also display an interesting variety of surnames. While their eldest son was known throughout his life as Alexios Komnenos (reminiscent of his maternal grandfather) their second son is universally known in

---

[66] Barbara Hill, *Imperial Women in Byzantium, 1025-1204: Power, Patronage, and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.85.

[67] The full text of this oath survives and has been edited by Nicolas Oikonomidès. See Oikonomidès, "Le serment de l'imperatrice Eudocie," pp.118-19. According to Oikonomides, "Il semble que Constantin X soupçonnait Eudocie [Makrembolites] de vouloir élever au poste de paradynasteuon des parents à elle, et, plus précisément, ses cousins. Dans notre texte [the oath sworn by Eudokia on Const X's deathbed], des dispositions spéciales sont prises pour éliminer cette éventualité."

[68] Hill, *Imperial Women in Byzantium,* p.140.

[69] E. Kurtz, "Unedierte Texte aus der Zeit des Kaisers Johannes Komnenos," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 16 (1907), pp.88ff. Anna is called "τὸ Δουκικὸν θρύλλημα, τὴν σοφὴν Ἄνναν."

extant sources as John Doukas, meaning he inherited his surname from his maternal grandmother.[70] This was almost certainly designed to evoke the memory of the Caesar John Doukas who had earned quite the reputation over the course of his illustrious career in the late eleventh century. John's (Anna's son's) own sons are known to have used the surname Komnenos, which is not surprising considering the importance that name had acquired by the later twelfth century.[71]

Despite the fact that these family names were inherited, there is some evidence for the occasional fluidity in their use. We know of several cases of individuals who were known by alternate surnames, sometimes apparently switching from one to another in different situations or at different stages of life. Marianos Argyros was apparently known later in life as Marianos Agambas, yet Argyros was the name carried by his descendants later in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Some sources refer to Theodotos Melissenos by the surname Kassiteras, though, like with Marianos Argyros, it was the name Melissenos that Theodotos passed on to later generations.[72] While it is not always clear whether the individuals themselves chose to utilize an alternative surname name (or an individual sobriquet) or if these were simply assigned to them by later sources, there is some evidence that, at least on occasion, an individual could make the choice to employ an alternate surname. In these cases, the choice could often be political. In the thirteenth century, for example, Michael Doukas Tarchaneiotes, chose to use the surname

---

[70] See, for example, the poem addressed to Anna's two sons upon their marriage, usually attributed to Theodore Prodromos. Paul Gautier, ed. and trans., *Nicephori Bryennii Historiarum Libri Quattuor*, pp.340-55. Demetrios Polemis, *The Doukai: A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography* (London: Athlone Press, 1968), p. 113.
[71] Polemis, *The Doukai*, p.113.
[72] Stavrakas, pp.35-6.

Philanthropenos (of his paternal grandmother), a name that was associated with the Laskarids and, thus, distanced himself from the ruling family at the time, the Palaiologoi.[73]

Such fluidity in the use of surnames and their reputation might also lead to disputes over an individual's right to use a particular surname. The twelfth-century historian John Zonaras offers some admittedly rare evidence of just such a dispute, as discussed in the previous chapter. He records that Emperor Constantine X Doukas' relation to the *genos* of the Doukai was "mixed and adulterated" because he was descended from the female member of the tenth-century Doukai.[74] Significantly, Zonaras claims that Constantine was "not considered (λελόγιστο) to be a pure Doukas," implying that it was not just the author himself who questioned Constantine X's legitimate claim to the iluustrious name of Doukas.

It is common for modern scholars to highlight the relative fluidity with which Byzantine aristocrats might employ particular surnames, especially when compared with the contemporary west. The comments by Zonaras should serve as a cautionary note, however, to those who wish to see a near free-for-all amongst Byzantine aristocrats in their employment of surnames. Even if numerous examples show that individuals could and did utilize surnames inherited from their mothers or relatives other than their father, there was at least one current within Byzantine society that assigned varying levels of legitimacy to the inheritance of names through different channels, a cultural trait not normally associated with the Byzantines.

As heritable surnames became the norm, it is not inaccurate to imagine them taking on some of the same characteristics and containing similar social and political currency as that

---

[73] Gounaridis, "Constitution d'une généalogie," p.278.
[74] John Zonaras, *History*, III, pp.675-6. ἐκ θηλείας τινός...οἱ τούτου [Constantine X] κατήγοντο πρόγονοι, ὅθεν οὐδὲ Δούκας λελόγιστο καθαρός, ἀλλ'ἐπίμικτος καὶ κεκιβδηλευμένην ἔχων τὴν πρὸς τοὺς Δούκας συγγένειαν ("The ancestors of [Constantine X] descended from some female, whence he was not considered a pure Doukas, but as having mixed and adulterated kinship with the Doukai").

associated with imperial titles or offices, though the latter never completely lost their significance. A large number of lead seals belonging to members of the Komnenos family in the twelfth century and later include the surname (sometimes alongside other prestigious family names), but lack any reference to an imperial title or office. As Cheynet has argued, "it is more likely that these persons regarded the very name Komnenos as the highest of titles."[75] Much like imperial offices or titles, a surname would instantly conjure a specific set of distinguishing marks and correlations in the mind of a listener or reader (to follow Basil the Great's theory of proper names).[76] The case of Michael "Ouranos" described by Skylitzes is here illustrative. The new appointee as *doux* of Antioch not only received his new surname from the emperor, but he received it as part of the same court ceremony in which he was officially given the imperial title. It is as if Michael was receiving two separate titles from the emperor, each designed to enhance its holder's authority in its own way.

The Manipulation of Reputation

One of the most important duties of anyone claiming membership in an aristocratic *genos* by utilizing the corresponding surname was to protect and enhance the reputation attached to that name, specifically in the eyes of potential allies. This was a vital concern, not just for establishing a family's high social status, but also for the successful functioning of political agreements or for performing one's duties as an imperial official. According to Leonora Neville, authority (especially outside of Constantinople) "came from forging agreements between

---

[75] Jean-Claude Cheynet, "Official power and non-official power," in *Fifty Years of Prosopography: The Later Roman Empire, Byzantium and Beyond* (=Proceedings of the British Academy 118), ed. A. Cameron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp.137-50; p.139.
[76] DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names,* pp.189ff.

relatively independent actors...Maintaining oneself in a position of authority therefore required

constant performance before the audience of potential supporters."[77]

As one well-known example of the purposeful manipulation of the reputation of certain

family names, Catherine Holmes has demonstrated that the eleventh-century historian John

Skylitzes was influenced in his choice to name certain individuals involved at key moments in

his history based upon their relation to prominent contemporaries of the historian himself. Their

inclusion in his history was designed, in part, to enhance the reputation of these individuals, who

stood to gain from their association with people bearing the same family name who had

contributed to Byzantine military victories or other important events.[78] This was probably done

at their explicit request. Leonora Neville has shown that similar concerns influenced Nikephoros

Bryennios' early twelfth-century *Material for History*.[79]

Several scholars have demonstrated that numerous written narratives or pamphlets

designed to enhance the reputation of specific individuals and their families at one time

circulated within aristocratic circles. Traces of one or more pro-Phokas family narratives seem to

have made their way into the histories of Leo the Deacon and John Skylitzes.[80] Neville has

convincingly argued that a history glorifying the *caesar* John Doukas was used by Nikephoros

Bryennios in the twelfth century.[81] The famous eleventh-century general George Maniakes was

---

[77] Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society,* p.149.

[78] Catherine Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire, 976-1025* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp.202-10.

[79] Leonora Neville, "Families, Politics, and Memories of Rome in the Material for History of Nikephoros Bryennios," in *Approaches to the Byzantine Family*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Shaun Tougher (Surry, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), pp.359-70; Leonora Neville, *Heroes and Romans in Twelfth-Century Byzantium (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[80] I. Ljubarskii, "Nikephoros Phokas in Byzantine Historical Writings," *Byzantinoslavica* 54 (1993), pp.245-53; A.-M. Talbot and D.F. Sullivan, eds. and trans., *The History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2005), pp.14-15.

[81] Leonora Neville, "A History of the caesar John Doukas in Nikephoros Bryennios' Material for History?" *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 32 (2008), pp.168-88.

probably the subject of a work designed to glorify his actions and to denounce his political

rivals.[82] Skylitzes himself attests to the existence of a work "in eight books" dedicated to the

tenth-century general John Kourkouas, made famous for his victories against Muslim armies in

the east.[83] Though none of them survive today, extant sources suggest that these pamphlets

probably focused on the praise of an individual (especially for martial prowess) and, sometimes,

the denunciation of this individual's rivals. Attaleiates' comment that he had learned about the

link between the Phokas family and the ancient Roman Fabii "from a certain old book" could

perhaps be taken as evidence of an independent Phokas family history, if taken at face value.[84]

Even praise of the individual, however, would probably have included a mention of the

individual's illustrious ancestry and praise for other members of the subject's family who were

politically active at the same time, even if the families or ancestors of the pamphlet's hero were

not specifically mentioned. [85] The content of these lost works may even have resembled the

histories of Genesios and Theophanes, whose works were designed to praise the reigning

Macedonian dynasty.[86] Because of the use of heritable surnames and the strength of the *genos* as

the core of political factionalism, praise and glory for an individual bearing a given surname

could and probably did directly translate into praise and glory for the entire *genos*. Having a

heroic ancestor or contemporary family member who was made famous for great deeds,

---

[82] Jonathan Shepard, "Byzantium's last Sicilian expedition: Scylitzes' testimony," Rivista di studi bisantini e neoellenici 14-16 (1977-79), p.154. "I suggest that this source was a pamphlet which was a defamation of his [Maniakes'] enemies as much as a celebration of his own achievements."

[83] Skylitzes, *Synopsis of Histories*, Rom. I Lekapenos, 32; Wortley, p.222: "Anybody who wishes to learn of his [John Kourkouas'] excellent record should consult the work composed by one Manuel...He wrote in eight books all about the brave exploits of this man."

[84] Attaleiates, History, 27.8; Kaldellis and Krallis, pp.396-7.

[85] Praising an individual's family/ancestry was an important part of any encomium, or speech of praise, according to Byzantine rhetorical practice. See Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.415-16.

[86] Anthony Kaldellis, *Ethnography after Antiquity: Foreign Lands and Peoples in Byzantine Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp.46-7.

especially one bearing the same surname, was a very real asset that could translate into social prestige or political office.

The account preserved in the *History* of Michael Attaleiates that purports to trace the heroic deeds and illustrious ancestry of Nikephoros III Botaneiates through the Phokades and the ancient Roman Fabii, often misleadingly called a "genealogy," only vaguely presents the genealogical link between them and Botaneiates.[87] Attaleiates' account of Botaneiates' more recent ancestors extends only as far back as the emperor's grandfather.[88] This is in keeping with what seems to have been a general trend among medieval Byzantine genealogies.

Nikephoros Bryennios, husband of Anna Komnene and author of *Material of History*, records Manuel Komnenos (also known by the epithet Erotikos), grandfather of Alexios I Komnenos, as the first bearer of that surname and the founder, of sorts, of the *genos* of the Komnenoi.[89] The same author also records that the first "bearer of the name Doukas" was "related by blood" to Emperor Constantine the Great and had accompanied him in his move from old to new Rome, but there is no attempt to trace the lineage from this mysterious ancestor to the Doukai of his own day.[90] The so-called *Vita Basilii*, the tenth-century work that attempts to link Emperor Basil I with a relative of Constantine I and the Arsacid dynasty of ancient Parthia and Armenia, contains little information about Basil's more recent ancestors, even his parents.[91] The historical memory displayed in these "genealogies" rarely extends beyond two or three

---

[87] Michael Attaleiates, *History*, 27.9ff; Anthony Kaldellis and Dimitris Krallis, eds. and trans., *The History: Michael Attaleiates* (Harvard, 2012), pp.398ff. Attaleiates claims that there were 92 generations between the Fabii and Nikephoros II Phokas, whose relation to Botaneiates is in turn left inexact.

[88] Attaleiates, 27.9, 29; Kaldellis and Kralles, pp.398-401, 419ff.

[89] Bryennios, *Material for History*, 1.75.1.

[90] Bryennios, *Material for History*, Proem. 9.

[91] The *Vita Basilii*, which is a eulogizing account of the reign of Basil I, is typically included as Book Five of the history known as *Theophanes Continuatus*, which was written during the reign of Basil's grandson, Constantine VII (r. 913-59).

264

generations. Glorification of ancestors and the historical memory of these families as it appears in these contexts is more concerned with the attainment of glory and prestige by living individuals by linking them with famous ancestors than it is with maintaining a degree of memory of one's ancestors for its own sake.

Attaleiates dedicated his *History* to Emperor Nikephoros III, so it is not immediately surprising that the author would try to link his hero's genealogy to one of the most distinguished families of the mid-to-late tenth century. This is not, however, the only known link between Botaneiates and the name of Phokas. There exists a letter, summarized by Michael Psellos in his *Chronographia*, which was apparently sent from Emperor Michael VII Doukas to Botaneiates when the latter was attempting to usurp the throne (which, of course, he eventually did).[92] Rather than being "to Nikephoros Botaneiates," the letter is simply addressed to "Phokas," and Botaneiates is referred to as "Phokas" in several places in the short text.[93] When read next to Attaleiates, Psellos' letter suggests that Botaneiates himself was actively promoting and advertizing his links to the *genos* of the Phokades. This may not only have tied him to several famous and powerful members of the tenth-century Phokas family, it may also have associated him with an existing faction that still held favorable memories of or marriage alliances with the Phokades.

In the second half of the tenth century, the name Phokas was nearly synonymous with nobility and socio-political success, so much so, in fact, that others besides Botaneiates claimed kinship with the family even almost a century after the Phokades themselves had largely

---

[92] The letter, in an abridged form, is preserved at the very end of Michael Psellos' famous *Chronographia*.
[93] Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, 7.18.

disappeared from the historical record.[94] The twelfth-century historian Nikephoros Bryennios, for example, records how Maria of Bulgaria, wife of Andronikos Doukas, "Traced her ancestry (γένος) on her father's side to Samuel, king of Bulgaria...and on her mother's side, to the Kontostephanoi, the Aballantes, and the Phokades, who were previously very famous (περιφανεστάτους) and adorned with much wealth."[95]

There is an alternative explanation, however, that may help explain why there is little other evidence that Nikephoros III himself utilized the surname Phokas. Dimitris Krallis has contended that the "genealogy" offered by Michael Attaleiates for Nikephoros III may have served as "but a back-handed compliment that exposed the hollowness of genealogy and noble birth."[96] If one assumes that it was Attaleiates, rather than Botaneiates, who contrived the genealogical link between Nikephoros III and the Phokas family, it may be the case that the choice of the Phokades was meant to further vilify the emperor while superficially singing his praises. In a panegyric composed by Psellos for Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos in the mid-eleventh century, Psellos associated the entire Phokas family with deceit and rebellion.[97] By the time he composed his *Chronographia*, it is possible that he made the choice to address Botaneiates, still a rebel at the time, as "Phokas" in the letter he claims to be summarizing, in order to strengthen public mistrust and distaste toward Botaneiates by further linking him with a name that had become synonymous with rebellion (after all, the *Chronographia* includes a brief

---

[94] Paul Stephenson, "A Development in Nomenclature on the Seals of the Byzantine Provincial Aristocracy in the Late Tenth Century," *Revue des Études Byzantines* 52 (1994), p.196. According to Stephenson, during the reign of John I Tzimiskes (969-76) "...the name Phocas was the most potent expression of authority and influence in the empire."

[95] Nikephoros Bryennios, *Material for History*, III.6, in *Nicéforo Brienio, Materia de Historia*, ed. and trans. M. Salud Baldrich López (Granada: Centro de Estudios Bizantinos, Neogriegos y Chipriotas, 2012), p.178.

[96] Dimitris Krallis, *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline in Eleventh-Century Byzantium* (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2012), p.150.

[97] Michael Psellos, *Oration 2*, lines 101-4; In G.T. Dennis, ed., *Michaelis Pselli orationes panegyricae* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1994).

account of the revolt of Bardas Phokas near its beginning). Such arguments are little more than conjecture, but the evidence makes clear how the name "Phokas" in a late eleventh-century context could conjure different, even conflicting images (i.e. "distinguishing characteristics") depending on the listener and/or author and his sympathies.

There is ample evidence suggesting not only that a family's reputation might ebb and flow at various times among various audiences, but also that even the most prominent family could run the real risk of losing its recognition, and hence its "nobility," altogether. In one of his many works, Eustathios of Thessaloniki names several individuals and families who were opposed to the rule of Andronikos I Komnenos (r.1183-85). Among those listed as "not at all well-born" (οὐ μὴν δὲ ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν εὐγενείας ἐπιτεταγμένων) is "a certain Maleïnos," as well as "a certain Dalasēnos."[98] The Maleïnoi had intermarried with the Phokades in the tenth century, and in the second half of that century they were ranked among the most powerful, and recognizable, families within the Anatolian aristocracy. As for the Dalas(s)enoi, Alexios I Komnenos' own mother, the massively influential Anna Dalassene, had famously carried the name. It seems both families had suffered a precipitous decline in reputation by the 1180s. In these cases, Kekaumenos' fears of ruin and descent into obscurity seem to have been realized. Reputations could be lost as (or even more) easily as they might be built.

Among the *genē* seemingly most capable of developing and maintaining name recognition were the Doukai. The family name of Doukas even made it into at least two works of fiction emanating from the Constantinopolitan court in the twelfth century. In the "epic" tale *Digenes Akrites*, the protagonist's mother (and in one version his wife as well) is said to be a

---

[98] Grünbart, *Inszenierung und Repräsention der byzantinischen Aristokratie vom 10. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert* (Munster: Wilhelm Fink, 2015), p.32, n.27. The text is taken from Eustathios' homily on the sack of Thessaloniki at the hands of the Normans of Sicily.

267

descendant of the Doukai.[99] The hero of *Timarion* is likewise described as a descendant of the famous family on his mother's side.[100] The notion that the Doukai originated in Italy at the time of Emperor Constantine I also made its way into this fictional tale. In one oration dedicated to Eirene Doukaina, Michael Italikos even goes so far as to claim that the Doukai could trace their beginnings with Zeus.[101] Scholars have long disagreed about the potential agency of living members of the Doukas family in their family's name appearance in such works,[102] but, regardless of one's position on this question, it remains significant that the name made its way into these works as synonymous for nobility and elite ancestry.

It has recently been suggested that the appearance of long "genealogies" like these could be as much a product of a cultural shift emphasizing Roman ancestors (and a desire to link their families to classical Rome or Constantine I) as an emphasis on family lineage.[103] Still, the fact that individuals chose to link themselves to this past through lineage (kinship), speaks to the importance placed on biological reproduction and the relative strength of the bonds of kinship. There are many ways in which an individual can link him- or herself with the classical Roman past. It is not insignificant that so many seem to have preferred genealogical links above all others.

---

[99] *Digenes Akrites* G1.262-4, 4.43, 4.304; In general, see Elizabeth Jeffreys,ed. and trans., *Digenis Akritis: The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[100] *Timarion* 221.

[101] Michael Italikos, Ep. 13.19-24, in *Michel Italikos: Lettres et discours*, ed. and trans. P. Gautier (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1972); Grünbart, *Die Inszenierung und Repräsentation der byzantinischen Aristokratie*, p.43.

[102] See, for example, Roderick Beaton, "Cappadocians at Court: Digenes and Timarion," in M. Mullett and D. Smythe, eds. *Alexios I Komnenos: Papers of the second Belfast Byzantine International Colloquium, 14-16 April 1989.* Vol. I: Papers. Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations, 4.1 (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 1996), pp.329-38. Beaton believes that the author of *Timarion* was familiar with a version of *Digenes Akrites*, but he does not think that the Doukas family themselves sponsored their name's inclusion in the work.

[103] Leonora Neville, *Heroes and Romans in Twelfth-Century Byzantium: The Material for History of Nikephoros Bryennios* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.104-11.

The Evidence of Lead Seals

Lead seals, used to seal important correspondence sent by various imperial or patriarchal officials, offered the user an ideal medium through which an individual could advertize their membership in a particular *genos* and, therefore, their participation in the reputation of that *genos*. Paul Stephenson has argued that the earliest appearance of heritable surnames on lead seals, which occurred in the final decades of the tenth century, was directly linked to the desire of individuals (in his case, Bardas Skleros) to advertize their *genos* to those with whom they corresponded, often in their attempts to forge alliances with other aristocratic families or factions in a time of political upheaval. This thesis is supported by surviving lead seals from the later eleventh and twelfth centuries, which begin to display more and more information about the sender's *genos* (see below).

While the exact relationship between the owner of a seal and the composer of the epigrammatic verses found thereon is not always known, there is ample reason to believe that the words depicted can generally be considered to be those of the owner. Even if there was an intermediary between the owner and the actual production of the short poem, it would be the owner who had the final say in the inscription's content. There is also significant evidence that various elites were fully capable of composing poetic verse on their own, and, especially from the eleventh century onwards, sometimes did just that.[104] Whatever interpretive problems lead seals and their inscriptions might present, it is most certainly true that they offer better evidence

---

[104] E.g. Isaac Komnenos, in his twelfth-century *typikon* (foundation document) for the Kosmosoeira monastery, states that he donated to the monks "another book...that I composed with great effort. It [contains] heroic, iambic, and political verse, as well as various letters and *ekphraseis*." §106; John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), vol. 2, p.844. Translation by Nancy Patterson Ševčenko.

for the self-description and self-representation of individuals than most other media, written or otherwise.[105]

From their earliest attestation, lead seals typically bore their holder's office and, when relevant, imperial dignity/title (ἀξίαι διὰ βραβείων). This is not surprising, as it was through their office and title that the individuals derived their authority. In addition, personal names and the use of images (typically a saint, the Theotokos, or Christ Himself) not only gave the seals a personal touch but also designated them as specific to that one individual. The addition of surnames beginning in the late tenth or early eleventh century could serve both of these functions. That is, a heritable surname could serve not only to differentiate the individual bearer of the seal, it could also serve as an enhancement to that individual's claim to some kind of authority, whether public or private, inasmuch as his effective authority could rest, at least in part, on his social status and his reputation among his peers or subordinates. According to Stephenson, "the practice was itself an expression of the ideology of *eugeneia* which was consciously cultivated to promote the image of a particular clan either in competition with rival *genē*, or to promote a sense of common interest between communicating allies."[106]

Beginning sometime in the eleventh century, many owners began inscribing short poetic verses on their seals, sometimes choosing to include such text in place of the more usual image of a saint.[107] A badly damaged seal from one John Doukas demonstrates the same kind of poetic

---

[105] Anthony Bryer, Archibald Dunn, and John W. Nesbitt, "Theodore Gabras, Duke of Chaldia († 1098) and the Gabrades: Portraits, Sites and Seals," in *Byzantium - State and Society: In Memory of Nikos Oikonomides*, ed. A. Avramea, A. Laiou, and E. Chrysos (Athens, 2003), p.52: "Nikolaos Oikonomides taught that seals may be economical of truth but are inescapable evidence of self-description in context."
[106] Stephenson, "A Development in Nomenclature," p.209.
[107] In general, see V. Laurent, *Les bulles métriques dans la sigillographie byzantine* (Athens: Estia,1932). Michael Grünbart includes a useful appendix to one of his chapters that offers a useful sample of inscriptions taken from lead seals that make explicit reference to belonging to a family (most often *genos*). See Grünbart, *Inszenierung und Repräsentation der byzantinischen Aristokratie*, pp.46-51.

language used to refer to the Doukas family in several different sources, particularly court poetry

(e.g. the oration celebrating the marriage of Anna Komnene's two sons, Alexios Komnenos and

John Doukas).[108] Utilizing imagery of plants or trees -- here, roots -- is common in eleventh- and

twelfth-century literature when describing an individual's relationship to his/her *genos*. The

decision to include surnames and sometimes even lengthier descriptions of the holder's kinship

with emperors or other notable individuals is particularly significant considering the small size of

most such seals (typically little more than 20 mm in diameter). With such limited space

available, any information an owner chose to convey is best viewed as noteworthy.

By the late twelfth century, seals bearing poetic inscriptions describing their owners'

family backgrounds become increasingly common and precise in the information they convey.

So, for instance, one seal dated to the twelfth century and belonging to on John Manganes,

sebastos, records that the *genos* of Manganes "has roots in Rome," showing precisely the kind of

geographical memory described above. [109] Another example comes from a late twelfth-century

seal in the Vatican collection whose owner is identified as "Alexios, of the *genos* Branas on his

father's side, scion of the root of the Komnenoi on his mother's."[110] The seal gives two surnames

(and thus capitalizing on the reputation of not one, but two *genē*), and Alexios specifies from

---

[108] V. Laurent, ed. *Documents de sigillographhie byzantine*: *La collection C. Orghidan* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1952), no. 428. Inscription covers both sides (though large portions are missing or destroyed): [Σφραγὶς πέφυκα] [τ]ῶν γρα[φ]ῶν Ἰω(άννου) δουκι[κῆς] ῥίζης [κλά]δου ("I am the seal of the writings of John, scion of the root of Doukas"). cf. Theodore Prodromos' oration on John Doukas' marriage: καὶ σὺ δέ, ὁ τῆς Δουκικῆς ῥίζης ὅρπηξ ("And you [John], the sapling/scion of the root of the Doukai"). Gautier, *Nicephori Bryennii Historiarum Libri Quattuor*, p.345. In fact, it is possible that the seal belonged to the same very John Doukas from the poem, though this is little more than conjecture.

[109] Fogg 413; E. McGeer, J. Nesbitt, and N. Oikonomides, eds. *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and the Fogg Museum of Art*, Vol. 5 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2005), no. 109.1. The inscription, on the reverse, reads: Σφρ[α]γὶς σεβαστ[οῦ] Μαγκά[ν]ους Ἰω(άννου) ῥίζαν γένους ἔχοντο[ς] ἐξόχου Ῥώμης ("Seal of *sebastos* Ioannes Magkanes, [whose] *genos* has roots in extraordinary Rome"). The adjective *exochou*, "extraordinary" or "outstanding," could be modifying either *Romēs* or *genous*.

[110] No. 64 in V. Laurent, ed. *Les sceaux byzantins du médailler Vatican*. Medagliere della Biblioteca Vaticana I. (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1962). The inscription reads (in part): Βρανᾶ μὲν ἐκ πατρὸς γεναρχίας, ῥίζην δὲ μητρὸς Κομνηνοβλάστου κλάδου

which side of the family he has inherited each one. Again, the language of plants (*blastos* and

klados both mean "sapling" or "branch") and the "foundation of the *genos*" (*genarchia*) is

language familiar from many forms of literature of the same period. Similar language is found on

a late twelfth-century seal containing the following inscription: "I authorize the writings of

Alexios, scion of the Doukai, the Komnenoi, [and] the Angeloi."[111] Some seals might even bear a

family marker different from the surname most often associated with an individual. For

example, a seal belonging Gregory Pahlavuni, an Armenian "man of letters," has chosen to

emphasize his genealogical links to the well-known Arsacid dynasty of Armenia without

including his more usual surname. [112]

One late eleventh- or early twelfth-century seal of John Komnenos serves as an early

example of an individual specifying not only his *genos*/surname on his seal, but going a step

further, noting that the holder was also the "son of the *sebastokrator*," a title created by Alexios

Komnenos to honor his brother, Isaac.[113] A seal belonging to Michael Taronites describes him as

the *gambros* (brother-in-law) of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos,[114] while another from the twelfth

---

[111] Polemis, *The Doukai*, p.88; Laurent *Bulles Métriques* 42-3, no.114. Polemis argues that it could be the same person as the Alexios Komnenos, son of the Ioannes Doukas who Niketas Choniates mentions was blinded by Andronikos. Ἐγὼ κρατύνω τὰς γραφὰς Ἀλεχίου Δουκῶν Κομνηνῶν Ἀγγελωνύμων κλάδου.

[112] DO 55.1.2940. McGeer, Nesbitt, and Oikonomides, eds. *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and the Fogg Museum of Art* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001), Vol. 4, p.169. The inscription is spread over both sides: [Κ(ύρι)ε β(οή)θ(ει) [τῷ] σῷ δούλ(ῳ) [Γ]ρηγ(ορίῳ) μαγίστ[ρ(ῳ)], ἐπὶ τοῦ κοιτῶν(ος), δουκ[ὶ] Βαασπρακ(ανίας) (καὶ) τοῦ Ταρὼν τῷ Ἀρσακ(ἰ)δ(η) ("Lord, aid your servant Gregory Arsakides, *magistros*, *epi tou koitonos, doux* of Vaspurakan and Taron").

[113] DO 55.1.2988, 55.1.2989; Fogg 1595. McGeer, Nesbitt, and Oikonomides, eds. *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and the Fogg Museum of Art*, Vol. 1 (1995), no. 12.3, p.41. Κ(ύρι)ε [β(οή)]θ(ει) τῷ σῷ δούλῳ Ἰω(άννη) Κομνηνῷ κὲ δουκὶ Δυρραχίου τῷ υ<ἱ>ῷ τοῦ σεβαστοκράτορ[ο]ς ("Lord, aid your servant, John Komnenos, *doux* of Dyrrachion [and] son of the *sebastokrator*").

[114] DO 58.106.5634.   Nicolas Oikonomides, *A Collection of Dated Byzantine Lead Seals* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1986), no. 101, p.98.Dated by the editor to sometime between 1081-94, the inscription on both sides reads: Γραφὰς σφραγίζω Μιχαὴλ Τα[ρ]ωνίτ[ο]υ γαμβροῦ μεγίστου δεσ[π]ότου Ἀλεξί[ου] ("I seal the writings of Michael Taronites, *gambros* of the great despot Alexios"). Michael is known to have married Maria, sister of Alexios I Komnenos.

century displays an inscription identifying its owner, the Grand Duke Michael, as "husband of the empress' sister Theodora" ([αὐγουσ]ταδέλ[φης] [σ]υζύγου [Θεοδ]ώρας).[115]

A noteable eleventh-century seal belonging to Niketas "Neos" Xylinites, *sebastophoros* and *strategos* of Samos offers evidence of both the strength of surnames in associating individuals with their family group and the potential for the amalgamation of two or more individuals in public thought.[116] In Byzantium, *neos* (lit. "new, young") usually indicates "the Second" (such as Emperor Basil II) or "the Younger." This Niketas, while including his surname, has gone to certain lengths to differentiate himself from a previous holder of the same post, perhaps his own grandfather. Despite the designation as "the younger," the inclusion of the surname and even the use of "the younger" (which would remind readers that there had been an "older" Niketas) closely linked the man with the rest of his family, both contemporary and earlier, and the family with this office.

Beatrice Caseau has argued that the family of Xeros, an aristocratic family known from the written sources from at least the tenth century, had a particular attachment to St. Mark as evidenced by the frequent appearance of the saint on their lead seals from the eleventh century onward.[117] Aside from Mark's association with Alexandria (and Egypt as a whole) and Venice, the saint is rarely included in the iconography of Byzantine seals, especially after the fall of Alexandria and the rest of Egypt to Muslim forces in the seventh century. Several other

---

[115] Laurent, *Vatican* no. 79. This Michael is identified by Laurent as Michael Stryphnos, husband of Theodora, who was the sister of Empress Euphrosyne Doukaina Kamaterina, wife of Alexios III Komnenos (Angelos) (r. 1195-1203).

[116] DO 58.106.5516. McGeer, Nesbitt, and Oikonomides, eds. *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and the Fogg Museum of Art*, Vol. 2 (1994), no.44.8, p.133. The inscription, on the reverse, reads, Σφραγ(ὶς) Νικήτα σεβαστ(ο)φόρ(ου) πέλω Σάμου στρατηγοῦ τοῦ Νέου Ξυλινίτ(ου) ("I am the seal of Niketas the younger Xylinites, *sebastophoros* and *strategos* of Samos").

[117] Beatrice Caseau, "Saint Mark, A Family Saint? The Iconography of the Xeroi Seals," in *Epeironde: Proceedings of the 10th International Symposium of Byzantine Sigillography* (Ioannina, 1.-3. October 2009), ed. Christos Stavrakos and Barbara Papadopoulou (Wiesbaden, 2011), pp. 81-109.

prominent families are known to have favored a particular saint on their own seals over the period of several generations, showing a certain family solidarity in their iconographic choice and, according to Caseau, the creation of something approaching a "family tradition." There are, however, several problems with this theory.

While Mark makes frequent appearances on the seals of the Xeroi, he is far from the only saint to appear on their seals. Personal, individual attachments to particular saints, often based on an individual's baptismal name, obviously continued to influence individual decisions about the decoration of their personal seals. And though St. Mark may be a relatively unique saint to whom to dedicate one's seal, and thus may have helped to identify the seal as belonging to a member of the Xeros family, many of the other known cases in which a given family displays a propensity to include the same saint's image on several of its members' seals, involve much more common saints (e.g. the Doukai frequently employed an image of Mary the Theotokos, while the Monomachoi claimed an attachment to St. George). Thus, while there may have been a family tradition that influenced the decision to include a particular saint on one's seal, it would not have had the same effect as family heraldry in the medieval West. It would be impossible to argue that the Doukas family every achieved a kind of monopoly on images of the Theotokos on their lead seals, or that an image of St. George would have immediately conjured images of the Monomachos family in the late eleventh century.

Caseau also argues that, beyond personal attachment, the Xeros family's estate in a region of Constantinople associated with St. Mark probably had an influence on their choice of saint. It is hard to say whether their attachment to his cult would have survived after the loss of this particular estate. In short, while there is enough evidence to show that certain families did develop something of a family tradition displayed in the iconography of their lead seals, it did

not necessarily function in the same way that family surnames could and did, despite the fact that Caseau argues exactly this: "The Xeroi of the 11th century seem to have chosen their saints based on the choices of previous family members, creating a family tradition. If this is so, we must wonder if the Xeroi method of choosing a family saint (or several) was exemplary of the way all grand families of the Byzantine Empire chose their preferred saints and thus, their identity markers."[118] The repeated use of images of the same saint on seals of several individuals identifying with the same *genos* may thus be indicative of group cohesion over several generations, but it should not be confused with the development of a kind of western-style coat-of-arms.

The growing frequency in the appearance of surnames from the late tenth and eleventh centuries and the increasing amount of detail given regarding an individual's relation to particular *genos* (including the use of the term *genos* itself) on lead seals reflects contemporary practices found in other written sources, perhaps indicative of the development of the aristocratic *genos* as a distinct form of "the family." While, histories and chronicles written in the mid-tenth century only give surnames for a fraction of the characters introduced into the narrative, those of the later eleventh and twelfth appear much more concerned with each of their characters' family background, often giving the reader not only a surname but also a brief commentary on various qualities associated with that family or notable ancestors. The kind of aristocratic kin group represented by the *genos* or its synonyms makes infrequent appearances before the eleventh century and, even then, the vocabulary for this kind of kin group is inconsistent, suggesting that the authors are perhaps unsure of how to describe them or the relative novelty of this specific kind of family organization. By the turn of the twelfth century, not only had the vocabulary of

---

[118] Caseau, "Saint Mark, A Family Saint?," p.109.

the *genos* become solidified (even codified?), but an entire repertoire of stock phrases and tropes used to describe these aristocratic *genē* clearly took shape, drawing especially from older language for ethnicity and royal/imperial dynasties.

When an individual chose to include his/her family name on their lead seals, they were not only drawing upon the prestige of that name in order to enhance their own authority, they were also associating their individual actions with their *genos* as a collective whole. In this way, they were contributing to the family's reputation as much as utilizing any existing one.

The Question of Audience

Social status based largely on individual and family reputation presupposes an audience in whose eyes that reputation is upheld. Kekaumenos' advice does not center upon an internalized system of honor, but on the development and maintenance of a reputation among others.[119] Paul Magdalino has argued for the importance of one's *patris* (local community) in the *Strategikon*.[120] According to Magdalino, Kekaumenos was less concerned about disseminating his family's reputation among peers who supposedly "knew each other too well to need to advertise their ancestry."[121] This argument, however, ignores the competition for

---

[119] In this, Kekaumenos' idea of reputation is very similar to the concept of fama found in the medieval West. See: T. Fenster and D.L. Small, *Introduction*, In *Fama: The Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe,* eds. Thelma Fenster and Daniel Lord Small (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), p.4: "As for honor, *fama* most closely parallels the kind of honor that could be bestowed only by other people, one that had to be plainly visible...This honor therefore required witnesses, who carried reports of fama to others. As a visible cluster of acts, appearances, and possessions, then, this predominant kind of medieval honor constituted and was constituted by both a material and a discursive semiotics."

[120] Magdalino, "Honour among the Romaioi," p. 213. In Kekaumenos, "...the social group in whose eyes honour is sought is not merely the *oikos* or the *genos*, nor even the sum of two rival *oikoi* or *gene*, but a local community - a *patris*...The *patris* thus emerges in its own right and in a way which is conspicuously missing in the world of *Digenes*." The term *patris* simply means "fatherland" or "homeland," and can denote either a local community, a region of the empire, or even the empire as a whole.

[121] Magdalino, "Honour among the Romaioi," p.202.

reputation within the aristocracy of the late eleventh century, as demonstrated by numerous sources from the period.

Histories like those composed by Attaleiates or Skylitzes were primarily designed to be read by members of the aristocracy, not the semi-literate peasantry. The simple fact that much of the evidence for the deliberate attempts of elite families to enhance their reputation come in the form of praise in narrative histories, poetry, or other forms of literature produced in the tenth and eleventh centuries indicates that the information was circulating among a fairly limited, aristocratic milieu. Thus, the glorification of certain families in the pages of such works were primarily directed at other members of the aristocracy.

Lead seals, other epigrammatic poetry, and visual media (e.g. wall paintings) complicate the picture. While one may say with some confidence that court oratory or high-style literary output was aimed at and consumed by a relatively limited milieu of aristocratic elites, a much broader spectrum of social classes would have had at least some access to these alternative forms, all of which were used quite extensively by members of aristocratic *genē* to glorify and enhance their family's reputation. Certainly wall paintings could reach a very broad audience. The group of paintings in the monastery of George Palaiologos are a case in point. The images of the various emperors with whom George was claiming some connection would have been immediately recognizable.[122] Such a viewer would likely have been able to associate these emperors with the monastery's founder and patron, even if the precise nature of this association remained unclear. Unfortunately, a large portion of surviving lead seals exist divorced from their context, that is, without the document(s) to which they were originally attached. Without this

---

[122] Nicolas Oikonomides, "Pictorial Propaganda in XIIth c. Constantinople," in *Glas 390 de l'Académie serbe des sciences et des arts. Classe des sciences historiques* 11 (Belgrade, 2001), pp.93-102.

information, it can be difficult to surmise exactly who would have seen them and, presumably, read the inscriptions thereon. The relatively incomplete state of modern knowledge concerning literacy in Byzantium also creates difficulties when trying to assess the relative proportion of individuals outside of the social elites who would have understood dedicatory inscriptions or other forms of writing inscribed or painted on various structures throughout Constantinople and in the provinces.

In a military context, it is quite clear that a general's reputation and that of his family could matter a great deal in securing the loyalty of his troops. The various military engagements and, especially, civil wars in the tenth and eleventh centuries appear in our sources in such a way that it quickly becomes clear that one's home region, that is *patris*, was instrumental in determining an individual soldier's loyalties and motivations for risking his life. A soldier from Cappadocia seems to have been more inclined to fight for a Cappadocian general than even an emperor, even if this meant fighting against the imperial army. Beyond this, it was also important that a general garner the love and respect of his troops through things like the development of a reputation for martial prowess (victories were naturally vital), generosity in distributing booty/pay, or even what one might call a "soldierly lifestyle." These would typically be traits associated with an individual, of course, but one's family background was not irrelevant, even here.

In the later tenth century, for example, a member of the Phokas family could expect to command the loyalties of his central Anatolian troops because of the martial (and, after 963, imperial) associations with the family name as much as through individual achievements. Emperor Michael V quickly learned the power of the Constantinopolitan populace when he attempted to banish his adoptive mother, the empress Zoe of the Macedonian dynasty. Within

little more than twenty-four hours, the consequent tumult created by residents of the city forced

the emperor to recall Zoe from exile, who then forced Michael to abdicate the throne.[123] The

episode is a testament to the success of the Macedonian dynasty's efforts to legitimize their rule,

in part by linking its founder, Basil I, to Constantine I and the Arsacids. Recent work by Anthony

Kaldellis has further demonstrated the real power, indeed the sovereignty, of the Byzantine

populace (especially in Constantinople).[124] Emperors, more than anyone, had to maintain their

reputation among the people. Their throne, and often their lives, depended on it. Thus, while

others within the aristocracy seem to have been the primary targets of deliberate enhancement of

an elite family's name, those among the lower social orders were far from irrelevant. In fact,

popular support, especially in and around Constantinople, may have been one of, if not the single

most important factor in securing the imperial throne, especially after the mid-eleventh

century.[125]

Conclusion

Byzantine elites of the twelfth century and later exhibited an eagerness to display the

surnames they could boast as part of their ancestry, surnames that had been imbued with

meaning through generations of individuals whose combined reputation among their peers and

---

[123] Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, V.25-51.

[124] Anthony Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), pp.139-40.
"There was no imperial legitimacy without popular consent…Moreover, popular consent could be retracted at any time until concessions were made or a more acceptable rival emerged. All depended on how popular the emperor was with his subjects in relation to potential rivals. Rebelling in Byzantium in large part meant assessing that balance…Imperial authority could always be recalled and reassigned, sometimes quickly, which meant that all subjects [esp. in the capital] were constantly assessing their options, deciding whether they liked the emperor and comparing him to other leading men of the day. Emperors, for their part…had to maintain their popularity at all times."

[125] This is the argument put forth by Anthony Kaldellis in a recent article. See: Anthony Kaldellis, "How to usurp the throne in Byzantium: The role of public opinion in sedition and rebellion," in *Power and Subversion in Byzantium*, ed. Dimiter Angelov and Michael Saxby (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), pp.43-56.

social inferiors allowed their bearers to wear them as a point of pride. The process that led to this phenomenon was a gradual one, and one that was only possible because of such developments as heritable surnames and a stronger individual identification with their family group. At the same time, Byzantine sources display a growing willingness, even an eagerness, to define individuals based upon their ancestry and their family connections. The appearance of heritable surnames coincided with the development of the *genos* as a distinct form of kin group in Byzantium, and the two were always inextricably linked. A *genos'* singular identity was to a large extent based around the name itself.

Heritable surnames certainly appear to have functioned in many ways similarly to imperial offices or titles, but with at least two important differences. Firstly, these family names were inherited by birth. Imperial titles and offices never became the personal property of individual families, no matter how weak the imperial government in Byzantium became. Surnames were intimately linked with the *genos*, which earlier chapters have shown referred exclusively to one's natal kin group. It seems to have been this very notion of heritability that endeared the notion of surnames as markers of status to those members of the aristocracy who, especially in the eleventh century, worked to differentiate themselves from *nouveaux riches* by emphasizing their families' ancient nobility without the support of legally recognized nobility. Though aristocratic families were largely dependent upon the perception of the qualities of their family name by others, surnames were one source of authority over which the families might hope to exert some degree of control relatively independent of imperial interference. Byzantine elites typically owned land spread throughout various regions of the empire, and the emperor could confiscate these lands on a whim. In this way, it is perhaps not too far-fetched to describe

heritable surnames among the Byzantine elite as, in the words of Jean-Claude Cheynet, "patrimoine familial."[126]

Secondly, while the authority of imperial offices and titles was more or less guaranteed by the imperial government, that derived from the prestige of the family name could be much more ephemeral and relied on the ability of individuals bearing a given name to convince their peers and subordinates that their name conferred upon them the very social status they desired. The prestige and authority derived from a surname was only as powerful as it was perceived to be by others, and aristocratic families in tenth- and eleventh-century Byzantium could not rely on the state or any other authority to guarantee their surname's efficacy. This they were solely responsible for. It also meant that such status as had been painstakingly accrued over several generations could be lost in an instant in the event of some catastrophic incident such as an embarrassing military defeat, a failed usurpation of the throne, or the confiscation of their property (often accompanied by imprisonment or exile) by the emperor. Families might equally benefit from or fall victim to the ever-changing characteristics associated with their name as it circulated in various circles independent of the family's own attempts to manipulate their reputation. Such, after all, is the very nature of rumor and reputation.

---

[126] Cheynet, "L'anthroponymie," p. 287.

Chapter Six: Being a Syggenēs: *Case Studies in the* Genos *as an Historical Phenomenon*

„εἰ καὶ βιαίων" εἶπε „πραγμάτων καὶ πολλῆς ἀδικίας γεμόντων ἦρξεν, ὦ βασιλεῦ, ἡ σὴ ἀδελφὴ καὶ ἔργοις αὐτοῖς τὸ συγγενὲς ἀπωμόσατο, ἀλλ’ οὐχὶ καὶ τὴν ἐκ τῆς φύσεως κλῆσιν καθάπερ καὶ τὴν σχέσιν ἀπεβάλετο. ἀγαθοῦ τοίνυν βασιλέως καὶ εἰσέτι κασίγνητος μένουσα ἐκ μετανοίας τὸ φίλτρον αὖθις ἀνακαλέσεται ὅπερ ἐκ παρανοίας ἄρτι ἀπώλεσε, τῇ φύσει χρησαμένη συλλήπτορι."

"Even though your sister has resorted to violent and wholly unjust means, O Emperor, and has renounced by these deeds her family ties, she did not thereby cast off her name and kinship. She remains, after all, the sister of a virtuous emperor and by repentance will recover, thanks to the ties of blood, your affection, which she has now lost through madness."[1]

- Niketas Choniates, *History*, §11

Kinship structures deal with real people whose actions were not motivated solely by normative expectations, no matter how powerful or influential they may appear in some sources. Personal relationships both within and outside the bonds of kinship were governed by forces beyond family hierarchies or social pressures. Brotherhood, for example, may have been the highest model of mutual cooperation and shared interests, as evidenced by the pervasive use of the sibling bond in a variety of spheres, yet even a passing glance at the history of Byzantium (or most any society) shows that brothers could, indeed, make for the bitterest and most intractable of enemies as well. Previous chapters have demonstrated the normative capabilities encapsulated by the term *genos* as a cultural construct in various spheres (legal, cultural, social,

---

[1] The translation is that of Harry J. Magoulias, in H.J. Magoulias, trans., *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), p.8. The quote comes from a section in which Choniates describes the rift between Emperor John II Komnenos (r. 1118-1143) and his sister, the famous Anna Komnene.

and linguistic). Examined in isolation, analyses like this run the risk of painting a picture that appears overly programmatic.

This chapter uses a series of brief case studies to expose and analyze the ways in which the *genos*, as both a social group and as a cultural construct, affected and was affected by the actions and behaviors of individuals. The case studies are divided into three sections, each covering a different family: the Phokades, the Doukai, and Kekaumenos. The sections covering the Phokades and the Doukai focus on a few, key members of two of the most important and influential *genē* in the Byzantine Empire in the tenth through twelfth centuries. The section devoted to Kekaumenos, the late eleventh-century author of the unique book of advice known alternatively known as *Precepts and Anecdotes* or simply *Strategikon*,[2] offers a slightly different perspective, based upon this text. Both the Phokades and Doukai represent families from the very top of the socio-political structure of their time, with each family giving the empire at least one emperor, while Kekaumenos may be viewed as representative of a slightly lower social class (though undoubtedly still among the more privileged minority).

In addition to being two of the most prominent and powerful families of the tenth and eleventh centuries, the *genē* of Phokas and Doukas each represent members of what was once called the military (*stratiotikon*) and the civilian (*politikon*) factions, respectively, within the Middle Byzantine aristocracy. This assertion should not be taken too far, however, as both families had members involved both in the military operations (both families were indeed famous for their military deeds at one time or another) and in the civil bureaucracy. Cheynet and others had already in the mid-1990s demonstrated that such a neat division never existed in

---

[2] *ODB*, p.1119. The text will be referred to as the *Strategikon* for the remainder of this chapter, as in previous chapters.

reality and was certainly never responsible for the outbreak of open hostilities within the

Byzantine Empire.[3] Most importantly, all three case studies offer concrete examples of the ways

in which the *genos* functioned in Byzantine society and politics and how surviving sources attest

to the kin group's ability to shape the actions of individuals over several generations.

The Phokades

The family of Phokas is one of the most well-known representatives of the Anatolian

provincial aristocracy who rose to power in the late ninth and tenth centuries (their estates seem

always to have been centered in Cappadocia). In some ways, the very name of Phokas still

evokes the kind of military values and ascetic religious leanings modern scholars associate so

strongly with this group, values adopted wholeheartedly by the elites of the later eleventh and

twelfth centuries in the Byzantine capital.[4] In fact, the association of the name Phokas with these

values remained unshaken for a century or more following the collapse of the family's political

and social influence.

The first member of the family of Phokas about whom we have some secure information

is Nikephoros Phokas, usually called "the Elder" to differentiate him from later members of the

family bearing the same name. He rose to prominence under Basil I, during whose reign he held

several leadership positions within the military apparatus. It has been suggested that a lead seal

---

[3] Paul Stephenson, "The rise of the middle Byzantine aristocracy and the decline of the imperial state," in *The Byzantine World*, ed. Paul Stephenson (London: Routledge, 2010), pp.22-33; Walter Kaegi, "The Controversy about Bureaucratic and Military Factions," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 19 (1993), pp.25-33; Jean-Claude Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996), p.476. According to Cheynet, "[l]es vraies divisions étaient régionales."

[4] Take, for example, the title of Paul Blaum's history of the last quarter of the tenth century, which is focused largely on the Phokades. Paul A. Blaum, *The Days of the Warlords: A History of the Byzantine Empire, AD969-991* (New York: University Press of America, 1994). In 2004, the Greek navy also named a frigate after Nikephoros II Phokas.

dating to this period and belonging to one Phokas *epi tou manglabiou* may have belonged to him

(he is known to have carried the title of *manglabites* sometime around 872/3), but this is

doubtful.[5] It would be very unusual for a seal to omit its owner's given name, and the Phokades

of the following century seem rarely to have included their family name on their seals, despite

the name's obvious resonance at that time.[6]

Members of the *genos* of Phokas held the position of Domestic of the Schools, the

highest military position in the tenth century, nearly continuously between the end of 944 until

972, and again from 978 into 986 or 987.[7] This seems to be due both to the family's independent

influence in the eastern provinces of the empire and the close relationship the family enjoyed

with several members of the imperial dynasty founded by Basil I (during whose reign

Nikephoros Phokas "the Elder" brought the family to its initial position of power).[8]

Though never becoming *de jure* heritable within the same family, the case of the

Phokades shows that certain, powerful families could and did maintain something of a monopoly

over certain key posts for parts of the tenth century and perhaps in the eleventh, especially within

the military apparatus. This pattern was perpetuated, in part, because of the solidarity of the

genos and the inter-generational reproduction of alliances, loyalties, and feuds.[9] There is some,

limited evidence to suggest that positions of influence might be inherited, especially in the

---

[5] Jean-Claude Cheynet, "Les Phocas," in *La traité sur la guérilla (De Velitatione) de l'empereur Nicéphore Phocas* (Paris : Ed. du CNRS, 1986) (Appendix), p.291.
[6] Ibid.
[7] For a more complete list, see Cheynet, "Les Phocas," pp.312-14.
[8] Jean-Claude Cheynet, "Bureaucracy and Aristocracies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, ed. E. Jeffreys, J. Haldon, and R. Cormack (Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), p.519.
[9] Cheynet, "L'aristocratie byzantine (VIIIe-XIIIe siècle)," *Journal des Savants* 2 (2000), pp.281-322, esp. pp.283-84.

provinces, though if these positions included imperial office or title, they would have to be issued anew by the emperor with each new office- or title-holder.[10]

By the mid-tenth century, the Byzantine aristocracy, based almost entirely in Anatolia, was effectively divided into two camps, one of which was led by the Phokas-Maleïnos families (supported by the Macedonian dynasty).[11] In fact, throughout more or less the entirety of the tenth century, the leading families of the empire could be seen as belonging to one of two opposing blocs, largely as a result of the nature of Byzantine politics at the time. The parties were generally linked through ties of blood and marriage, though the lines dividing the two groups were by no means impassable to such bonds, and the precise nature and components of either group were in a constant state of flux, subject as they were to political circumstance and opportunity. The dichotomous division becomes easily visible in the political jockeying that occurred around the accession of Romanos I Lekapenos, as well as the tumultuous period between 976 and 989, which saw a series of serious attempts to usurp the throne from a young Basil II.[12]

It was around this time that the deeds of the Phokades and their celebration made their way into the written record. It has been argued, convincingly, that there once existed at least one written source that presented a narrative favorable to the Phokas family (either as a whole or

---

[10] The will of Eustathios Boilas, written in 1059, offers strong evidence of multi-general lordship of some nature. See S. Vryonis, Jr., "The Will of a Provincial Magnate, Eustathius Boilas (1059)," *DOP* 11 (1957), pp.263-77; Youval Rotman, *Byzantine Slavery and the Mediterranean World*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp.125-26.

[11] Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp.476-77. The families of Skleros and Kourkouas were among the most notable *genē* in the other camp.

[12] The two most serious revolts were those led by Bardas Skleros and Bardas Phokas, who were sometimes allies and sometimes opposed to one another. On the bipartite division of the Byzantine aristocracy in Anatolia in the ninth and early tenth centuries, see Vasiliki Vlysidou, Αριστοκρατικές οικογένειες καί εξουσία (9ος-10ος αι.): Έρευνες πάνω στα διαδοχικά στάδια αντιμετώπισης της αρμενο-παφλαγονικής και της καππαδοκικής αριστοκρατίας (Thessaloniki: Ekdoseis Vanias, 2001).

focused on one or more members) that would have circulated in the tenth century.[13] Certainly the

military manual known as *On Skirmishing* (*De velitatione*), which was produced under

Nikephoros II Phokas, heavily praises the battlefield prowess and deeds of several members of

the lineage.[14] At least one of the surviving versions of the chronicle of Symeon the Logothetes

has also been described as offering a history of the deeds of the Phokades going back to

Nikephoros "the Elder."[15]

Despite the fact that such sources have now been lost or are available only indirectly

through the works of Symeon or other historians, it is clear that the family of Phokas had

developed quite a reputation by the second half of the tenth century. This reputation, which

emphasized the family's military prowess and piety (in addition to its origins in central and

eastern Anatolia) was solidified during the reign of Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963-69), who was

in many ways the embodiment of the ideals and attributes associated with the Phokades and the

Anatolian aristocracy more broadly, both during his lifetime and in the century or more to come.

Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas and his Nephew, John I Tzimiskes

Undoubtedly the best known member of the Phokas family is Nikephoros, who reigned as

Emperor Nikephoros II from 963 to 969. Much has been written on the reigns of Nikephoros II

---

[13] This narrative was apparently used as a source by Leo the Deacon and/or John Skylitzes in the writing of their histories. One can imagine that this source would have been similar to the one mentioned explicitly by Skylitzes that celebrated the deeds of John Kourkouas, a famous general in the first half of the tenth century or the pamphlet focused on Caesar John Doukas, whose existence Leonora Neville has suggested (on this narrative, see below). See I. Liubarskii, "Nikephoros Phokas in Byzantine Historical Writings," *Byzantinoslavica* 54 (1993), pp.245-53; A.-M. Talbot and D.F. Sullivan, eds. and trans., *The History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2005), pp.14-15.
[14] Gilbert Dagron and Haralambie Mihaescu, eds., *Le Traité sur la guérilla (De velitatione) de l'empereur Nicéphore Phocas (963-69)* (Paris: CNRS, 1986).
[15] Athanasios Markopoulos argues that Attaleiates was also familiar with this version and may even be drawing from it, at least as a model. See Markopoulos, "The Portrayal of the Male Figure in Michael Attaleiates," in H αυτοκρατορία σε κρίση(;) Το βυζάντιο τον 11ο αίωνα (1025-1081), ed. Vassiliki N. Vlyssidou, pp.215-30, esp. pp.218-19.

Phokas and his nephew, John I Tzimiskes (r.969-76).[16] Assessments of Nikephoros' short reign, both among his (near-)contemporaries and modern scholars, are mixed in their judgments, but there is no doubt that the emperor's deeds, as well as his violent death, contributed to the family's reputation long after his death in 969.[17] Nikephoros' relationship with his nephew (and eventual murderer and successor) John Tzimiskes is of particular interest here, especially the relationship's depiction in the sources. For while all surviving sources agree that the two men were of the same *genos*, the ways in which authors chose to represent them at different points in their lives speaks both to the strength of the bonds within the *genos* and the consequences of ignoring those bonds.

True to his reputation as a "soldier-emperor," Nikephoros had an illustrious career in the military before coming to the throne, serving as *Domestic of the Schools of the East* during the reign of Romanos II (r.959-63) and leading Byzantine troops in the reconquest of the island of Crete in 961.[18] The latter accomplishment resulted in a poetic panegyric that survives to this day. While ostensibly in praise of Emperor Romanos II (the oration was delivered at the imperial court after all), Nikephoros emerges from the text as its true hero. In 962 and 963, Nikephoros

---

[16] A few of the most notable monographs include: Gustave Schlumberger, *Un empereur byzantin au dixième siècle, Nicéphore Phocas* (Paris: Firmin Didot,1890); Taxiarchis Kolias, Νικηφόρος ΙΙ Φωκάς: Ο στρατηγός αυτοκράτωρ και το μεταρρυθμιστικό του έργο (Athens: Historikes Ekdoseis St. D. Vasilopoulos, 1993); Charles Personnaz, L'empereur Nicéphore Phocas: Byzance face à l'Islam, 912-969 (Paris: Belin, 2013).

[17] Skylitzes, for example, describes Nikephoros in a very contradictory manner in the same paragraph. John Skylitzes, Synopsis of histories, 14.16, trans. John Wortley, *John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History 811-1057*, with Introduction by Jean-Claude Cheynet and Bernard Flusin and Notes by Jean-Claude Cheynet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.260. "That is the kind of man Nikephoros was; such was the strategy he employed and that is the extent to which he increased Roman domains, for he captured more than a hundred cities and fortresses…Nevertheless, he was hated by all men and everybody longed to see his fall…"

[18] At the time, Nikephoros' brother, Leo, served as *Domestic of the Schools of the West*, meaning the two brothers effectively shared in the highest military rank in the empire. Nikephoros' father, Bardas Phokas, had also held the position. Skylitzes, *Synopsis of histories*, 11.9, trans. Wortley, pp.232-33.

led successful campaigns in southeastern Anatolia, expanding the borders of the empire and earning himself the nickname "the pale death of the Saracens" (i.e. Arabs).[19]

It was in 963 that Nikephoros, in response to antagonism by the imperial courtier and regent Joseph Bringas, made his bid for the throne. Due in large part to his personal and familial reputation, he enjoyed the support of the military, especially those troops coming from central and eastern Anatolia. The supposed words of Nikephoros Phokas after being proclaimed emperor in Caesarea by his troops and supporters, as reported by Leo the Deacon, are informative. "For I am convinced that in this struggle you will have as your helper even the Almighty. For it is not we who have broken the agreements and oaths, but the hostility of Joseph [Bringas], who for no good reason has sent my relatives into exile and, although I have not wronged him, he has cruelly and mercilessly devised death against me."[20] According to Leo's account, Nikephoros is forced to take up arms as a result of the maltreatment of his relatives by the regent of young Basil II in the capital.

In the words of Leo the Deacon, "Joseph [Bringas] accepted this suggestion [from Marianos Argyros], immediately deprived Nikephoros's [Phokas'] blood relatives and other associates of their military rank, and sent them into exile. Then he affixed seals to a letter and sent it to the above-mentioned John [Tzimiskes], who was a *patrikios* and military commander of the Anatolic theme."[21] The letter was apparently meant to bring John Tzimiskes onto Joseph's side in his attempt to thwart the ambitions of Nikephoros [II] Phokas prior to the beginning of his reign. In the next section, however (3.3), Tzimiskes goes straight to Nikephoros to warn him of

---

[19] H. Criscuolo, ed., *Theodosii diaconi de Creta capta* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1979), pp.1-39.
[20] Leo the Deacon, *History*, 3.5, trans. Talbot and Sullivan, p.93.
[21] Leo the Deacon, *History*, 3.2, trans. Talbot and Sullivan, p.89.

the conspiracy against him, "Proceeding to the general's tent, he sat down beside him (for John was Nikephoros's nephew on his mother's side)…"[22]

Leo the Deacon, apparently with the aid of hindsight, initially distances John Tzimiskes from Nikephoros Phokas' "blood relatives and other associates" in the first passage, despite John's well-known status as Nikephoros' nephew. This very status is then emphasized in the second passage cited above, in which Tzimiskes warns the emperor of the impending conspiracy led by Joseph Bringas. The explication of Tzimiskes' ties of kinship to the emperor is placed immediately after Leo the Deacon describes John's free access to the emperor's tent and, importantly, the fact that he immediately took a seat next to the emperor himself. Such familiarity was not a privilege enjoyed by just anyone, which is presumably why Leo repeats his assertion of the ties of kinship between the two men at this particular point in his narrative.

Though not unique in Byzantine history, Nikephoros II incorporated a large number of relatives into his imperial administration. One of his first acts as emperor was to raise his father, Bardas, to the exalted rank of *caesar*.[23] His nephew, the future emperor John I Tzimiskes, was made *Domestic of the Schools of the East*, while his brother, Leo, also held an important, if perhaps ill-defined, position at his court, as attested by the famous visitor to Constantinople Liudprand of Cremona. Liudprand, whose accounts of his two trips to Constantinople on behalf of Berengar II and Otto I in the mid-tenth century have become justifiably famous, presents a less than favorable image of Nikephoros II's court. His personal experience there, however, does attest to the central role played by Nikephoros' family members in his government. Not only does Liudprand note his brother Leo's role as marshal of his court, the ambassador also recounts

---

[22] Leo the Deacon, *History*, 3.3, trans. Talbot and Sullivan, pp.89-90.
[23] Skylitzes, *Synopsis of histories*, 14.1, trans. Wortley, p.250.

how he met with Leo in Nikephoros' palace while the emperor was absent from the capital on a military campaign.[24] There is no doubt that, for Nikephoros, ruling the empire was a family affair.

Nikephoros, like the rest of the Phokades, was widely recognized not only for his exploits on the battlefield, but also for his particularly strong, ascetic piety. In a sense, asceticism ran in Nikephoros' blood. St. Michael Maleïnos, who founded several monasteries in Anatolia throughout his lifetime, was the emperor's uncle (Nikephoros' mother, whose name is not known, was a member of the *genos* of Maleïnos).[25] Michael himself could count St. Eudokimos, another Anatolian ascetic, as his own ancestor. Nikephoros is known to have maintained close, personal relations with his saintly uncle, though he is also known for his warm relationship with another, much more famous holy man, Athanasios of Trebizond. Athanasios, also known as the Athonite, is best known for his role as the founder of the Great Lavra monastic complex on Mt. Athos.

Interestingly, it is possible that Nikephoros, for whom family ties seem to have been so important, may have had something of a falling out with his uncle, Michael Maleïnos. Vasiliki Vlysidou has argued that a rift occurred between the Phokas and Maleïnos families sometime around Nikephoros' accession to the throne in 963.[26] It cannot be denied that Nikephoros himself is conspicuously absent from St. Michael's *vita*, while he appears prominently throughout that of Athanasios (at least in one version). That same version of the life of Athanasios states that it was Michael Maleïnos himself who insisted upon Athanasios' role as spiritual father for both

---

[24] *Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana ad Nicephorum Phocam*, in *Liudprand de Crémone: oeuvres*, ed. and trans. François Bougard (Paris: CNRS, 2015), pp.451, 458.
[25] Angeliki Laiou, "The General and the Saint: Michael Maleinos and Nikephoros Phokas," in *ΕΥΨΥΧΙΑ: Mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler*, ed. M. Balard et al. (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1998), pp.399-412.
[26] Vlysidou, Αριστοκρατικές οικογένειες καί εξουσία, pp.132-42.

Nikephoros and his brother, Leo. As Vlysidou sees it, however, this detail may have been added as an attempt to create the appearance of harmony within the Phokas-Maleïnos family, as well as between the two saints.[27] There is also abundant evidence for Nikephoros' close ties with Athanasios and his Great Lavra, including ties of patronage, throughout his reign as emperor, while there is little to indicate a continued relationship with Michael. Whether this rift was a reality or not, it serves as a reminder that, no matter the strength of the bond of kinship in any period, solidarity could not be automatically assumed in all cases.

So great was his reputation for piety that Nikephoros II Phokas, in fact, nearly achieved sainthood after his death. The fact that he had served as emperor and the circumstances surrounding his untimely death, in addition to his ties to saints Michael Maleïnos and, especially, Athanasios, almost certainly contributed.[28] This semi-saintly status is reflected in numerous surviving sources, but none quite so clearly as a liturgical office dedicated solely to his memory.

Only three Byzantine liturgical offices are known to survive from the tenth century. One, dedicated to the memory of those who lost their lives fighting for the empire, has already been discussed at some length.[29] Another, edited by Pertusi, is similar to the first in both language and purpose.[30] The third, which has been edited and published by L. Petit, is unique in that it is entirely devoted to the memory of Nikephoros Phokas.[31]

Throughout the *akolouthia*, which is sometimes addressed to God, sometimes to the emperor himself, Phokas is alternately praised for his piety and his military exploits (though

---

[27] Vlysidou, Αριστοκρατικές οικογένειες καί εξουσία, pp.139-41.
[28] The office dedicated to his memory was intended to be recited on December 11, the anniversary of his murder in 969.
[29] See chapter two of this dissertation.
[30] A. Pertusi,ed., "Una acolouthia militare inedita del X secolo," *Aevum* 22 (1948), pp.145-68.
[31] L. Petit, ed., "Office inédit en l'honneur de Nicéphore Phocas" *BZ* 13 (1904), pp.398-420.

emphasis seems to be on the former, predictably). The opening lines to the office read: "Armed with the Holy Spirit, you have subdued the barbarians and expanded the borders of the empire." Just a few lines later, however, his piety, mildness, and mercy are praised. His "holy memory" (τὴν ἁγίαν μνήμην σου) is repeatedly mentioned. This combination of traits, seemingly at odds with one another, not only represents components of the ideal ruler (a long Roman tradition), it also describes the particular reputation earned by members of the Anatolian aristocracy of the tenth century that came to dominate the hearts and minds of the empire's elite for a century or more.

Nikephoros Phokas' reign came to a violent end on the night of December 11, 969, when a group of conspirators, including the emperor's nephew John Tzimiskes, snuck into his bedroom and cut him down where he lay. Tzimiskes, like many of Nikephoros II's relatives, initially held an important military command during his uncle's reign. He was, however, removed from his post after being implicated in apparent plots against the emperor.[32] The emperor's wife, Theophano, was also involved in the plot, a fact that was long (and disproportionately) remembered in Byzantium.[33] The fact that Nikephoros was slaughtered as he lay sleeping (or praying) before religious icons, betrayed by both his nephew and his own wife, made for a compelling story. Not only did it contribute to his quasi-saintly status, versions of the

---

[32] Skylitzes, *Synopsis of histories*, 15.7, trans. John Wortley, p.279.

[33] A famous epitaph for the emperor, which seemingly circulated during the reign of Basil II and was ascribed to John of Melitene, closes with the words "O bearer of victory (lit. Nikephoros) against all except a woman" (ὦ πλὴν γυναικὸς τἆλλα δὰῦ Νικηφόρος). See Marc Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres: Texts and Contexts*, Vol. 1 (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2003), pp.305-10 (Appendix III). Several poems produced shortly after Nikephoros' death utilize the theme of a great man of war, so successful on the battlefield, who was brought down by a woman.

story also circulated widely in the Byzantine and Slavic-speaking worlds for decades and even centuries after Nikephoros' death.[34]

The place of John I Tzimiskes within the *genos* of the Phokades, or perhaps lack thereof, in surviving sources is illustrative. Nearly every source that mentions the man notes his relation to Nikephoros II Phokas, sometimes more than once. It was no secret that John was a blood relative, and a close one at that. At the same time, anything written after December 969 had to deal with the reality of John's involvement in Nikephoros' violent death, an act certainly not in keeping with the idealized image of a kinsman's role. Hence, perhaps, the kind of distancing seen in narratives like that of Leo the Deacon. Even the name by which John was known singles him out from his otherwise illustrious kin.

Tzimiskes' sobriquet, which was not nor ever became a family name, is unusual and its precise meaning continues to be debated among scholars.[35] It is a curious case, considering John's lineage would have given him the right to employ one of several prominent family names (his mother was a Phokaina, a sister of Nikephoros II Phokas, while his father came from the renowned Kourkouas family).[36] There is little evidence that Tzimiskes himself actively employed the sobriquet, or any other surname, during his lifetime, though, to be fair, neither did Nikephoros II during his time as emperor. It is possible that John either chose to be known by Tzimiskes or was given the appellation by authors writing after the death of Nikephoros II (or

---

[34] A large number of manuscripts, many of them in Old Slavonic, survive. For more on this, see E. Turdeanu, *Le Dit de Nicéphore II Phocas et son épouse Théophano* (Thessaloniki: Association hellénique des études slaves, 1976).
[35] Talbot and Sullivan, *The History of Leo the Deacon*, p.141. Byzantine authors sought various explanations for it, and they seem generally to have been as bewildered by it as modern observers.
[36] Leo the Deacon, *History*, trans. Talbot and Sullivan, Leo the Deacon, p.224.

both) as a deliberate attempt to dissociate him from those family members whom he had betrayed. Byzantine authors are rarely haphazard in their utilization of names or titles.

Bardas Phokas and the Uprising of 971/2

Bardas Phokas, nephew of Emperor Nikephoros II,[37] is most famous for his rebellion against Basil II between 987 and 989, which, along with the contemporary revolts of Bardas Skleros, proved to be some of the most dangerous (and most long-lived in Byzantine memory) faced by a sitting emperor for some time.[38] This episode, however, was the second time that Bardas found himself at odds with the emperor in Constantinople. In fact, when Basil II appointed the man to lead his armies against the rebel Bardas Skleros in 978, he first had to recall him from forced exile, which Phokas was suffering as a result of his first attempted revolt in 970-71.[39]

Book VII of Leo the Deacon's *History* describes this earlier uprising of Bardas Phokas against Emperor John I Tzimiskes. Just a few months earlier, Tzimiskes had taken part in the brutal murder of then-emperor Nikephoros II Phokas, Bardas' paternal uncle. Members of the Phokas family, previously enjoying the favor of the imperial throne, suddenly found themselves marginalized. It did not take long for Bardas' anger and frustration to boil over, as Leo's narrative preserves in colorful terms:

---

[37] Bardas was the son of Leo Phokas, brother and close advisor of Emperor Nikephoros II.

[38] These uprisings have been thoroughly covered by a number of historians. An excellent analysis is provided by Catherine Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire 976-1025* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp.240-99.

[39] Skylitzes, *Synopsis of histories*, 16.8, trans. Wortley, pp.307-8.

"When Bardas Phokas received this letter [asking him to cease his rebellion], he did not deign to send an answer to the emperor, but reviled him, calling him a blackguard and wretch and stigmatizing him as an abominable murderer of his kin, and bade him step down from his imperial throne; for, he said, the imperial power belonged rather to him, since he could boast that his grandfather was a Caesar [Bardas Phokas, d.969] and his uncle emperor [Nikephoros II], whom [John], unafraid of the vigilant eye of justice, had slaughtered like a sheep on his bedding on the floor; that, on unclear and unproven grounds, he had deprived of sweetest sight his father and dearest brother, who suffered the worst of fates; and that he would by all means wreak avenging justice on their behalf, exacting sevenfold retribution for his kindred blood from the man who plotted the destruction of a noble and heroic family (*phylon*)."[40]

Bardas was first and foremost seeking to avenge the harm and insult that Tzimiskes had inflicted upon his family. It is true that, as with most rebellions, Bardas himself sought to replace Tzimiskes on the throne, but the lust for imperial power was not the sole motivator. Bardas Phokas' revolt was, from the very beginning, a family affair, a fact illustrated by his comrades in arms. He was joined in revolt by his father and, probably, his brother (before being blinded), several cousins, and a "host" of friends and relatives.[41] Bardas' claim to the throne, whether it was his own or ascribed to him by Leo, places his family history at the forefront. The roots of his claim do not rest on his own, personal virtues or on Tzimiskes' shortcomings as a

---

[40] Leo the Deacon, *History*, VII.3, pp.116-17, trans. Talbot Sullivan, p.165. Leo's chronology may be a bit confused here, as Bardas' father and brother probably were not blinded until after they had been implicated in Bardas' revolt. Also note that the unusual language employed in portions of this text is discussed in chapter two (pp.77-8).
[41] Leo the Deacon, *History*, VII.1, pp.113-14.

ruler. Rather, Bardas claims the right to rule based solely on his illustrious family's past accomplishments, citing not only his relation to the slain emperor, but also the office of Caesar which his grandfather had held. The fact that John Tzimiskes was himself the Nikephoros II's nephew (on his mother's side) only served to fan the flames of the rebel's ire.[42]

Father-son succession was never a hard and fast rule on the Byzantine imperial throne, and Bardas was not the first person in Byzantine history to claim the right to rule by citing a more distant relation to an emperor, but the claims of a usurper who would replace one nephew of the fallen monarch with another would have been tenuous at best. The key to understanding Bardas Phokas' actions lies instead in his self-appointed role as a representative of the *genos* of Phokas and his sense of duty to his slain and maimed kinsmen. In his own words, as Leo the Deacon records them, "When I reflect on the fortunes in which my family (*genos*) has been ensnared by the impious and accursed John...I will fight for the departed members of my family (*tou genous mou*)...either I will attain imperial glory and will exact complete vengeance from the murderers, or I will bravely accept my fate and be delivered from an accursed and impious tyrant."[43]

The real significance of Leo the Deacon's treatment of the revolt lies not in the simple fact that a group of relatives joining forces against an emperor or that it showcases the importance of one's family in tenth-century Byzantium. Rather, it is the particular form in which Phokas family appears in the narrative and the way in which Bardas utilizes this extended family group, his *genos*, to motivate and legitimize his actions.[44] He acts as a representative of and is

---

[42] Tzimiskes' mother, whose name is unknown, was a sister of Nikephoros II Phokas.
[43] Leo the Deacon, *History*, VII.4, p.119, trans. Talbot and Sullivan, pp.167-68.
[44] Leo the Deacon's vocabulary is sufficiently altered in the sections of his text ostensibly taken from Bardas Phokas' letter to warrant comment. It could be that he was, in fact, lifting sections of a text in front of him verbatim,

supported by a Phokas family which extended far beyond his immediate household, both among

contemporaries and ancestors. His relation to a past emperor certainly strengthened his position,

but his grandfather's slightly less elevated office was equally relevant. And, of course, there is

his duty to avenge the wrongs done unto his kinsmen. While this episode cannot be described as

one of the earliest recorded examples of the values specifically associated with the *genos* as a

distinct form of kin group in medieval Byzantium, it is one of the clearest to come out of the later

tenth century.

The Phokades after 989

In the aftermath of Bardas Phokas' failed revolt against Basil II, the Phokas family

effectively lost their political and social influence. Probably due to a combination of imperial

confiscation of their lands and wealth and the loss of reputation among their peers, perhaps

alongside a general lack of heirs to the family name, the Phokades largely disappear from the

historical record by the beginning of the eleventh century. The one exception to this general rule

is Nikephoros, son of the famous rebel Bardas Phokas, who reportedly led yet another rebellion

against Basil II in 1022. Recorded by the late eleventh-century Armenian chronicler Aristakes of

Lastivert, Nikephoros is called Phokas "surnommé Cṙaviz" (probably a translation of

βαρυτράχηλος, "stiff/thick necked").[45] Though the rebellion, which was centered in the

Phokades' traditional power based of Cappadocia, involved several prominent members of the

---

or he was simply following the rhetorical convention associated with *prosopopoiia* by using slight changes in vocabulary to signal a change in speaker. See also chapter two for a more thorough discussion of related issues.
[45] Aristakès de Lastivert, *Récit des malheurs de la nation arménienne*, III, trans. with intro. and commentary by Marius Canard and Haïg Berbérian (Brussels: Éditions de Byzantion, 1973), pp.16-18. The same passage also recalls the earlier revolts of "Vard Siklaros [Skleros]" and "son homonyme P'okas." Also see Adontz and Grégoire "Nicéphore au col roide," Byzantion VIII (1933), pp.203-12.

aristocracy, it does not seem to have been nearly as serious as those undertaken by Nikephoros'

father, Bardas, in the 970s and 980s. It was quickly crushed and Nikephoros "the Thick-necked"

was killed.[46] The episode marks the last time a member of the Phokades appears prominently in

surviving sources, at least directly. Yet the name itself, and the reputation its members had

earned over several generations, lived on in Byzantium.

One version of a well-known edict issued by Basil II in 996 protecting the poor and

village communes from the predation of the so-called "powerful" (*dynatoi*) mentions both the

Maleïnoi and the Phokades as examples of this "powerful" class.[47] "This is plain to see from the

family of the Maleïnoi and in turn of the Phokades. For the *patrikios* Constantine Maleïnos and

the *magistros* Eustathios, his son, for one hundred or even one hundred and twenty years,

enjoyed a period of prosperity coextensive with their lifetimes, the Phokades far beyond them.

For their great grandfather, and in turn their grandfather, then their father, and subsequently his

sons, held perpetual dominance, I daresay, until we came on the scene. How will such people

have the support of the statute of limitations?"[48] This particular version of the edict seems to

have been a later re-working of the original legislation, which probably dates to sometime in the

eleventh century. If true, this would lend even more weight to the lasting reputation of these two

families.[49]

There are a number of individuals bearing the name Phokas (sometimes appearing as a

singular appellation of ambiguous valence as either a given or family name) who appear in the

---

[46] Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp.36-7.
[47] For a general discussion of this legislation and the categories of "powerful" and "poor," see Rosemary Morris,
"The Powerful and the Poor in Tenth-Century Byzantium: Law and Reality," *Past and Present* 73 (1976), pp.3-27.
[48] Eric McGeer, *The Land Legislation of the Macedonian Emperors* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval
Studies, 2000), p.117 (3A, Version 2).
[49] McGeer, *The Land Legislation of the Macedonian Emperors*, pp.111-32.

sources in the centuries after the collapse of the family's fortunes at the beginning of the eleventh century, but their relationship to the prominent family of the tenth century is often unclear.[50] The two most notable cases of individuals explicitly claiming descent from the Phokades after the family's loss of fortune are that of Nikephoros III Botaneiates and Maria of Bulgaria.[51]

Maria of Bulgaria (*floruit* mid-eleventh century), wife of Andronikos Doukas (son of Caesar John Doukas) and mother of the future empress Eirene Doukaina, claimed descent, on her mother's side, from several well-known aristocratic *genē*, including that of Phokas.[52] Interestingly, this fact would have allowed the descendants of Alexios I Komnenos and Eirene Doukaina to claim descent from the Phokades as well, but they seem never to have done so. By the mid-twelfth century, the names of Komnenos and Doukas had probably reached such a level of renown that the additional claim would have been superfluous.

The most famous claim of descent from the Phokades in the second half of the eleventh century came from Nikephoros III Botaneiates. Michael Attaleiates devotes a considerable portion of his *History* to an account praising the deeds of the Phokades (and the ancient Roman Fabii), to whom, Attaleiates claims, Botaneiates was related by blood.[53] The link between Botaneiates and the name of Phokas is further supported by a supposed letter sent to him by Emperor Michael VII, which is preserved at the end of Michael Psellos' *Chronographia*.[54]

---

[50] In the thirteenth century, for example, there is a Phokas named as an addressee of one of Michael Choniates' letters (S.P. Lampros, ed., Μιχαὴλ Ἀκομινάτου τοῦ χωνιάτου τὰ σωζόμενα [Athens, 1879-1880], Vol. 2, no. 21). This Phokas, who is given no other name, apparently held the title of *sakellarios* of Athens. The search for such connections is complicated by the fact that Phokas is also attested as a given name throughout the Byzantine millennium.

[51] Cheynet, "Les Phocas," p.309.

[52] Nikephoros Bryennios, *Material for History*, 3.6, in *Nicéforo Brienio, Materia de Historia*, ed. and trans. M. Salud Baldrich López (Granada: Centro de Estudios Bizantinos, Neogriegos y Chipriotas, 2012), p.178.

[53] Michael Attaleiates, *History*, 27.9ff; Anthony Kaldellis and Dimitris Krallis, eds. and trans., *The History: Michael Attaleiates* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2012), pp.398ff.

[54] Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, 7.18-20, trans. E.R.A. Sewter, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers: The Chronographia of Michael Psellus* (London: Penguin, 1966), pp.377-80.

Psellos' employment of the name Phokas to address the then-rebel Botaneiates may have served as a means to vilify the man, but this is only conjecture.[55] It is, perhaps, more likely that Botaneiates had chosen to use the surname for its connotations of military prowess and the good reputation the Phokades seem still to have enjoyed among the populations of central and eastern Anatolia, from which Botaneiates had drawn much of his support in his bid for the throne.[56]

The real power of the name Phokas is demonstrated not only in the case of Nikephoros Botaneiates, but also in a speech delivered by Michael Psellos sometime around 1044. In a lengthy panegyric addressed to Constantine IX Monomachos, Michael Psellos recounts the recent history of the empire leading up to Constantine's reign. This includes a mention of the serious revolts that rocked the empire between 976 and 989. Following convention, Psellos uses very few proper nouns throughout the oration, mentioning only a handful of people and places by name. One of the few names he does evoke, however, is that of Phokas, perhaps precisely because of the name's resonance among his audience. He explains how "those related by *genos* to Nikephoros Phokas, [were] men of Ares and mindful of the courage [with which one] rushes into battle."[57] The name of Phokas in passages like this and others continued to appear well into the twelfth century and beyond. The memory of the family and its exploits clearly left an indelible mark on the collective Byzantine psyche.

Because of the obvious resonance of the name of Phokas in the tenth and eleventh centuries, surviving lead seals from the tenth century and beyond present the modern observer

---

[55] See chapter four, pp.199-200.
[56] Cheyent, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp.84-5, 352-55.
[57] Psellos, Oration 2, lines 99-104. An edition of the oration can be found in G.T. Dennis, *Michaelis Pselli orationes panegyricae* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1994). …καὶ μάλιστα πάντων οἱ τὸ γένος τῷ Φωκᾷ Νικηφόρῳ προσανάπτοντες, ἄνδρες Ἄρεος καὶ θούριδος ἀλκῆς μνήμονες, παράβολοί τε ἦσαν τοῖς λογισμοῖς καὶ δῆλοι πάντως τῇ Ῥωμαίων ἐπιβουλεῦσαι ἀρχῇ…

with something of a paradox. On the one hand, the name of Phokas carried with it a powerful reputation that continued to carry weight well after the family itself had ceased to be among the empire's elite. On the other hand, members of the family themselves seem not to have taken full advantage of this fact. The name rarely appears on surviving lead seals, despite the fact that the earliest known appearance of surnames on lead seals seems to have come from among the Skleroi in direct competition with the Phokades in the final decades of the tenth century. Even Emperor Nikephoros II himself did not employ his family name in official documents (it was not until the second half of the eleventh century that emperors began to regularly employ surnames in their signatures).[58] The reasons for this apparent missed opportunity by members of the *genos* of Phokas are not easy to ascertain.

Despite the anomaly in existing lead seals, the *genos* of the Phokades exhibits many of the traits by which the *genos* in the later eleventh or twelfth century would come to be defined more generally. The strong association of the family (and the family name) with the virtues of piety and martial valor foreshadows those traits repeatedly emphasized and exhibited by the Komnenoi and others in the twelfth century. The same is true for the involvement of family members in government, even if Nikephoros II Phokas did not reorganize the imperial apparatus to nearly the same extent as Alexios I Komnenos and his descendants. The extreme loyalty and penchant for revenge exhibited by Bardas Phokas in his revolt in 971 puts the cohesion of the *genos* on full display, just as the way in which the sources depict John I Tzimiskes' betrayal

---

[58] Constantine IX Monomachos was the first emperor to use his surname in an 'official' capacity, signing his family name in a *chrysobull*. See Jean-Claude Cheynet, "L'anthroponymie aristocratique à Byzance," in *L'anthroponymie document d'histoire sociale dans des mondes méditerranéens médiévaux. Actes du colloque international organisé par l'École française de Rome avec le concours du GDR 955 du C.N.R.S (Rome, 6-8 octobre 1994)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1996), pp.277-78. The *chrysobull* is published in *Actes de Lavra* I, no.31. According to Cheynet (ibid.), it was only in the reign of Nikephoros III Botaneiates, 1078-81, that the practice became systematic. Eirene Doukaina, wife of Alexios I, was the first empress to use her family name in such a way.

offers evidence of Byzantine reactions to the disruption of that cohesion. In these ways, the story of the Phokades provides a useful window into the social and cultural world of the aristocratic *genos* in the later tenth century. For the eleventh century, the *genos* of the Doukai offers a similar opportunity.

The Doukai

If the Phokades may be considered the exemplars par excellence of the military aristocracy of Anatolia in the tenth century, the same might be said of the Doukai in the eleventh, who reached a level of renown and success nearly unmatched from the mid-eleventh century into the twelfth. Thanks to some fortunate marriages (one in particular), the name of Doukas survived among the highest echelon of Byzantine society until its very end. The Doukai, along with the Komnenoi, became one of the two "golden races" so lauded in propagandistic sources from the last decade of the eleventh century onward.[59] Dimitrios Polemis has provided modern scholars with a thorough prosopography for the family, and their relations with the Komnenoi may be found in the massive study of Konstantinos Varzos.[60]

Polemis, echoed and supported by many others, argues that there existed at least two distinct branches of the family, with the early tenth-century (specifically the year 913) marking a more or less complete break in the family's lineage.[61] This is indeed supported by some significant evidence in Byzantine sources. John Zonaras' contention that Constantine X was

---

[59] Jean-Claude Cheynet, "The Byzantine Aristocracy of the 10th-12th Centuries: A Review of the Book by A. Kazhdan and S. Ronchey," p.12; English translation of "L'aristocrazia byzantine nei secoli X-XII: a proposito del libro di A. Kazhdan e S. Ronchey," *Rivista Storica Italiana CXIII*, fasc. 2. (2011), pp.413-440.

[60] Polemis, *The Doukai*; Konstantinos Varzos, Η γενεαλογία των Κομνηνών 2 vols. (Thessaloniki: Centre for Byzantine Studies, 1984).

[61] Polemis, *The Doukai*, pp.1-2.

"not considered a pure Doukas" because of the failure of the male line of descent after 913, which has been thoroughly covered in previous chapters, falls into this category.[62] John Skylitzes also seems to suggest that there were multiple branches of the family when he introduces the brothers Constantine and John "of the eastern branch of the Doukai."[63] Whether Skylitzes' two branches are the same as the two lineages imagined by Zonaras and repeated by Polemis is more difficult to confirm.

Of course, there is no hint of this genealogical split in most of the numerous sources presenting a more idyllic, even heroized image of the Doukai and their ancestry. This is certainly true in the pages of Psellos' *Chronographia*, in which the author heaps praise upon his patron, Emperor Michael VII Doukas, and his family. He twice states that Michael was descended from those "famous" members of the Doukai, Andronikos and Constantine (about whom see below). This might be placed alongside some of the more fantastical origin stories attributed to several prominent families between the tenth and twelfth centuries. The Doukai in particular were ascribed numerous heroic, seemingly fantastical founders or members in surviving sources, especially fiction.[64] In many ways, the most lasting aspect of the Doukai family's prestige, like that of the Phokades, was in the name itself. This fact was recognized by Polemis, whose important prosopography of the family was primarily guided not by genealogy but by the employment of the name.[65]

---

[62] See especially chapter four.
[63] Skylitzes, *Synopsis of histories*, 23.3, trans. Wortley, p.451.
[64] For more on this, see below (pp.303-04).
[65] Polemis, *The Doukai*, p.1. Polemis decided to include any individual who was known to carry the surname of Doukas or its variants in his study. The result is that many of those included almost surely had no biological relation to one another.

Andronikos and Constantine Doukas

The earliest member of the Doukas family about whom we have much information, Andronikos Doukas, was roughly a contemporary of Nikephoros Phokas "the Elder." Skylitzes includes some information about the man in his history, in which Andronikos, who is described as the "son of Doukas," appears alongside "Leo son of Argyros," both of whom were given military commands by Michael III (r.842-867) in the campaigns against the "Manichees" (Paulicians) in eastern Anatolia.[66] Andronikos and his son, Constantine, were effectively treated as the founding members of the prominent family in the later eleventh and twelfth centuries. While the two men would eventually find themselves in the position of potential usurpers of the imperial throne, which cost both of them their lives, they seem to have been remembered quite fondly both by later members of the Doukas family and by a great many others.

Andronikos and Constantine were rebels, and unsuccessful rebels at that. Yet, despite this, they would go on to become two of the most celebrated individuals in Byzantine literature, making appearances in histories, court rhetoric, saints' lives, and even fiction well into the twelfth century. Rather than being remembered as treasonous failures, however, they are almost universally depicted as heroes. Their popularity seems also to have spread beyond the circle of elites who wrote and read (or heard) our sources to include more of the general populace as well.

The version of events recorded by John Skylitzes in the late eleventh century places much of the blame for the rebellion of the Doukai on the shoulders of Samonas, a court eunuch of Arab extraction. He had reportedly attempted to abscond from the capital with a large amount of treasure, but Constantine Doukas succeeded in arresting him near Caesarea.[67] This translated into

---

[66] Skylitzes, *Synopsis of histories*, 5.8, trans. Wortley, p.92.
[67] Skylitzes, *Synopsis of histories*, 7.25, trans. Wortley, pp.178-79.

a feud between Samonas and the entire Doukas family. As Skylitzes has it a bit later in the narrative, "Samonas was the implacable enemy of the house (*genos*) of the Doukai because he had been apprehended by Constantine."[68]

The feud between Samonas and the *genos* of Doukas is mirrored in similar animosity between the family of Emperor Michael IV "the Paphlagonian" and the aristocratic Dalassenoi in the mid-eleventh century, which is also recorded by Skylitzes. Constantine Dalassenos stoked the ire of the emperor's family (in particular his powerful brother, John the Orphanotrophos) when he denounced Michael IV as unworthy of the throne at the beginning of his reign. In return, John is said not only to have exiled Constantine to the island of Platea, but also to have imprisoned his son-in-law alongside several of the family's associates. Later, the Orphanotrophos also banished two of Dalassenos' brothers, at least one nephew, and "all the other close relations, the object being to obliterate the family (*genos*)."[69]

Skylitzes claims that the emperor, Leo VI, had wanted Constantine to lie about Samonas' motives and goals when brought before an audience of imperial officials in order to exonerate him, since the emperor was apparently quite fond of the eunuch and wanted to avoid his loss of face. Yet, when Doukas was brought forth he was made to swear an oath before his testimony. Constantine is described as having the utmost respect for such oaths and, thus, disobeys the emperor by telling the truth about the renegade Samonas. His character is incorruptible in Skylitzes' depiction, even when facing the potential wrath of the emperor. As a result of this episode, Samonas' hatred of the Doukai was hardened.

---

[68] Skylitzes, *Synopsis of histories*, 7.29, trans. Wortley, p.181. ὁ δὲ Σαμωνᾶς τῷ τῶν Δουκῶν γένει ἀκατάλλακτος ὢν ἐχθρὸς διὰ τὴν παρὰ τοῦ Κωνσταντίνου κατάσχεσιν…
[69] Skylitzes, *Synopsis of histories*, 19.5, 18, trans. Wortley, pp.373, 380-81. καὶ τοὺς λοιποὺς τοὺς κατὰ γένος αὐτῷ ἐγγίζοντας. ἔσπευδε γὰρ ἀφανίσαι τὸ γένος αὐτοῦ.

Constantine's father, Andronikos Doukas, was, according to Skylitzes, driven to rebel only because of the enmity and deceit of Samonas, the *parakoimomenos*, who is depicted as wily, deceitful, and generally wicked in the history.[70] Andronikos and Constantine Doukas, on the other hand, are largely exonerated for their transgressions and even appear heroic in the text. Andronikos apparently rebels only when placed in an impossible position, having been deceived by Samonas and tricked into disobeying imperial orders. He would die, tragically, while being held and mistreated by the Arabs in Baghdad in 906, where he had fled with his family. As for Constantine, Skylitzes describes how he and some companions managed to escape captivity and return to Constantinople after his father's death. Back in Constantinople, he was, in fact, pardoned and even honored with new military commands by Emperor Leo VI. Interestingly, Skylitzes has Leo issue a warning to Constantine that would both prove to be prophetic and attests to the power inherent in the name of Doukas. "Do not let your name betray you, Constantine, nor think to rule the Roman Empire because of it…"[71] Apparently ignoring Leo VI's warning, Constantine made his own bid for the imperial throne roughly seven years later, during the interregnum after the death of Alexander in 913. Despite the fact that he enjoyed considerable support among both the elites and the general populace in Constantinople, he eventually failed and was killed in the attempt.

Skylitzes wrote his history during the reign of Alexios I Komnenos, whose wife Eirene Doukaina, was (or claimed to be) a direct descendant of both Andronikos and Constantine. As suggested in a previous chapter, Catherine Holmes and others have demonstrated the ways in which Skylitzes and authors like him were influenced by the family names and histories of their

---

[70] Skylitzes, *Synopsis of histories*, 7.29, trans. Wortley, p.181.
[71] Skylitzes, *Synopsis of histories*, 7.30, trans. Wortley, p.182.

aristocratic audience when writing their narratives.[72] From this perspective, it may not be quite

so difficult to explain the unusually positive, even apologetic, tone struck by Skylitzes in his

version of events concerning Andronikos and Constantine Doukas. But Skylitzes' *Synopsis of*

Histories is far from the only source in which the names of Andronikos and, especially,

Constantine Doukas are remembered and presented with a decidedly laudatory tone.

The two were also memorialized in hagiographies of the later tenth century. The *Life of*

St. Basil the Younger presents a strongly apologetic view of Constantine Doukas in particular.[73]

In this text, it is alleged that Constantine was asked to step in as emperor by those acting as

regents in the wake of Emperor Alexander's death. His exceptional qualities as a general and the

fear he struck in the hearts of "barbarians" are lavishly praised. The *Life of St. Euthymios* offers a

similarly favorable interpretation of events.[74] Both works are examples of the ways that an

aristocratic family's quest for a prestigious reputation and its dissemination could play out in

hagiography in addition to narrative histories.

Andronikos and Constantine are two of the only ancestors named in Psellos' glowing

account of Constantine X Doukas' glorious lineage. Psellos twice recounts Constantine X's

famous ancestry, comparing him to Homer's Achilles (who also had an illustrious lineage and

gained fame in his own right) in both passages. In the earlier passage, Psellos describes how

"Constantine was a man of great renown whose ancestors had been most distinguished: his

decent in fact was traced from the celebrated Ducas (I refer to Andronicus and Constantine) who

---

[72] Catherine Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire*, pp.202-10. Also see chapter four of this dissertation.
[73] *Life of Basil the Younger*, 14-19, in *The Life of Saint Basil the Younger: Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Moscow Version*, ed. Denis F. Sullivan, Alice-Mary Talbot, and Stamatina McGrath (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2014), pp.91-105.
[74] *Life of Euthymios* 227-28, in *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*, ed. and trans. Patricia Karlin-Hayter (Brussels: Éditions de Byzantion, 1970).

are the object of much attention in the writings of historians, both for the keenness of their intellect and for their brave deeds. The duke was no less proud of his more immediate ancestors."[75] In the second instance, Psellos says "His family, as far back as his great-grandfathers, had been both distinguished and affluent, the kind of persons historians record in their works. Certain it is that to this very day the names of the celebrated Andronicus, of Constantine, of Pantherius, are on everybody's lips."[76]

In the Grottaferrata version of the tale of Digenes Akrites, probably written during the reign of Alexios I Komnenos, the Doukai make several appearances. Notably, in one early passage, the hero's mother is named as "a Doukas, of the family of Constantine" on her mother's side.[77] Jeffreys argues that the mention of Constantine in this passage could be a reference to the historical Constantine mentioned in Psellos (tenth-century rebel) or, possibly, Constantine I the Great, with whom the family of Doukas claimed some relation.[78] Either way, the family's exceptional status is celebrated in no uncertain terms. Additionally, no fewer than six separate miniatures in the famous Madrid Skylitzes manuscript depict scenes from the revolts of Andronikos and Constantine.[79] It would seem the legend of the Doukai had even made it to the twelfth-century Sicilian court.

Constantine Doukas had proven so popular amongst the people that his identity was assumed by Basil "the Copper-hand" during his own revolt in the 930s.[80] Basil's revolt is

---

[75] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 7.83, trans. Sewter, p.326.
[76] Psellos, *Chronographia*, 7.6, trans. Sewter, p.333.
[77] G1.265-67. ὁ πατήρ μας κατάγεται ἀπὸ τῶν Κινναμάδων, ἡ δὲ μήτηρ μας Δούκισσα, γένους τῶν Κωνσταντίνου The words are those of the hero's uncles (his mother's brothers). On their father's side, they claim descent from the Kinnamos family, a decidedly less illustrious (though still notable) lineage in twelfth-century Byzantium.
[78] Elizabeth Jeffreys, ed. and trans., *Digenis Akritis: The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.xxxix, 390.
[79] *ODB*, p.657.
[80] *ODB* pp.268-69, 657.

sometimes considered to be a true popular uprising, perhaps ignited by the famine in 928 and the following years, though this is uncertain. The chronicle of Symeon the Logothetes suggests this was the case, and the contention may be supported by the fact of Constantine Doukas' popularity among the masses.[81] In such circumstances, a "people's champion" would indeed have been a useful identity to assume.

Doukai on or near the Imperial Throne

The collapse of Constantine Doukas' revolt in 913 led to mass executions and other punishments for those implicated in the plot. This included the deaths of his son and nephew, the castration of another son, and the banishment of his wife to the family's estates in Paphlagonia.[82] This event was (selectively) remembered as the destruction of the Doukai by Byzantine sources until the family's (or at least the name's) reemergence in the eleventh century. Whatever the precise nature of the relationship between the family of Andronikos and Constantine Doukas and the later *genos* that bore the same name, by the time they reappear in the sources, the Doukai regained their position among the ranks of the "well-born."[83] Interestingly, the first member of the eleventh-century family about whom we have any substantial information is the future emperor Constantine X Doukas himself.

The Doukai saw at least two of their members sit on the imperial throne, though many more if one includes descendants of Alexios I Komnenos and Eirene Doukaina. This marriage was certainly the most celebrated, and most efficacious, link between the Doukai and Komnenoi,

---

[81] *ODB*, p.269.
[82] Skylitzes, *Synopsis of histories*, 7.30, 9.2, trans. Wortley, pp.183, 193-94.
[83] Attaleiates, *History*, 11.7, 12.15, ed. and trans. Kaldellis and Krallis, pp.100-3, 124-25.

but the first Doukas to reach the Byzantine throne actually owed his good fortune to his close

friendship with a different member of the *genos* of the Komnenoi. Constantine X Doukas, who

reigned from 1059 to 1067, was chosen by his predecessor on the throne, Isaac I Komnenos,

upon the latter's resignation from office.[84] In the words of the continuator of Skylitzes' history,

when Isaac I Komnenos was leaving office, "he did not choose his brother John, nor his own

nephew Theodore Dokeianos, nor his daughter's husband or some other [man] related to him by

blood, but the *proedros* Constantine, who had the surname Doukas..."[85] The order of the options

given in the text almost certainly reflects Byzantine thinking on the proper order of succession,

which attests yet again to the importance of ties of blood.

Although hardly unique, the words supposedly spoken by Constantine X upon accepting

the imperial scepters (as recorded by Michael Attaleiates) exemplify the extent to which the

language of kinship pervaded the ideology of imperial rule by the mid-eleventh century. "I will

not prove false in my contract with him [God] but will be kind and compassionate, a father to the

young, a brother to those my age, a cane to the elderly and like a son to them in disposition and

imitation of nature."[86]

The sources for Constantine's reign focus much attention on the emperor's generosity in

granting titles and offices to a large portion of the Byzantine populace, rather than on any special

---

[84] In fact, when Isaac Komnenos came to power, it was through a conspiracy in which Constantine Doukas had nearly been given power in his place. The two men, apparently with the support of the others involved, agreed that Isaac would be named emperor, but Constantine was to be given the title of *caesar*, making him, in effect, second only to the emperor in influence. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp.339-40.

[85] *Skylitzes Continuatus*, ed. E.Th. Tsolakis. Ἡ Συνέχεια τῆς Χρονογραφίας τοῦ Ἰωάννου Σκυλίτση (Thessaloniki: Etaireia Makedonikon Spoudon, 1968), p.108. …βασιλέα προχειρίζεται οὐ τὸν ὁμαίμονα αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννην, οὐ τὸν ἀδελφιδοῦν ἑαυτοῦ Θεόδωρον τὸν Δοκειανόν, οὐκ ἄνδρα προσζεύξας τῇ οὔτ'ἄλλον τινὰ τῶν πρὸς αἷμα ᾠκειωμένων αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ τὸν πρόεδρον Κωνσταντῖνον, ᾧ Δούκας τὸ πατρωνυμικὸν ἀνέκαθεν ἦν…

[86] Attaleiates, *History*, 13.2, trans. Kaldellis and Krallis, p.129. Ἐγὼ δὲ οὐκ ἂν ψεύσαιμι τὰς πρὸς ἐκεῖνον συνθήκας ἀλλ'εὐμενὴς καὶ φιλάνθρωπος ἔσομαι, πατήρ τε τοῖς νέοις καὶ τοῖς ἥλιξιν ἀδελφὸς καὶ βακτηρία τοῖς γέρουσι καὶ παῖς τῇ διαθέσει καὶ μιμήσει τῆς φύσεως.

treatment meted out to his family members. Still, there is no question that his brother, the famous Ceasar John Doukas, was one of, if not the single most important aid to Constantine during his time in office. Constantine also worked to ensure the continuation of his dynasty through his sons, especially Michael (VII).

Michael VII (r.1071-78), the eldest son of Constantine X, did not directly succeed his father on the imperial throne (at least not in practice), but was raised to the position only after the regencies of his mother and uncle (the *caesar* John Doukas) and of Romanos IV Diogenes (r. 1068-71).[87] After the defeat and capture of Romanos IV at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, John Doukas was instrumental in preventing him or his family from taking back control of the empire, ensuring Michael the opportunity to rule. Like Constantine X, historians both Byzantine and modern have generally been unfavorable in their assessments of his reign.[88]

One can detect some aspects of the kind of family rule associated so strongly with the Komnenian dynasty in Michael VII's time on the throne, as indeed in the reign of Nikephoros II Phokas. This, of course, includes the prominent role of his uncle, the *caesar* John, even if his influence was checked by the infamous court eunuch Nikephoritzes.[89] It has also been argued that the origins of the system of *pronoia*, by which the revenues (largely, but not exclusively tax

---

[87] Michael, the eldest son of Constantine X and Eudokia Makrembolitissa, was technically made co-emperor in 1059. Upon the death of his father, Michael remained in the background while the empire was governed by his mother and uncle (John Doukas) as regents. When Romanos Diogenes married Eudokia in 1068, Michael was still co-emperor in name, but it was not until Romanos' defeat and capture at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 that Michael took real political control.

[88] Michael Psellos offers an extremely favorable version of his reign, since the emperor was both a personal friend of the author as well as his patron. Michael Attaleiates, on the other hand, is quite critical of Michael's time on the throne. This is equally unsurprising, as Michael VII's replacement, Nikephoros III Botaneiates, was Attaleiates' own patron.

[89] The unpopular eunuch had also served Constantine X, but was subsequently sent into exile for a time. Michael VII recalled him, which was an unpopular decision among many, if surviving sources are to be believed. Michael Psellos would also have his readers believe that he had the ear of Michael VII more than anyone at court, but one must allow for a certain degree of embellishment in his work. Psellos, *Chronographia*, 7.1-2, 11, trans. Sewter, pp.367-68, 373.

revenues) from a given region that would otherwise go to the state were granted to an individual in exchange for his service, may be found in the reigns of Constantine X and, especially, Michael VII Doukas. Michael is known to have issued a *chrysobull* granting his cousin, Andronikos (serving as *Domestic of the Schools of the East* at the time), full ownership of large tracts of land near Miletos that had previously been imperial properties (*episkepseis*). A *praktikon* (tax register) detailing the properties and *paroikoi* (resident farmers) constituting the grant survives to this day.[90] While the similarities once seen between Byzantine *pronoia* and western European "feudalism" have proven to be more illusion than fact, the institution did play a fundamental role in the Komnenian system of government, cementing the bonds between emperor and the network of kin in his service.[91]

The Doukai's attempt to establish a long-lasting dynasty almost came to an end with the accession of Nikephoros III Botaneiates in 1078, but various members of the family convinced the new emperor to swear to respect the rights of young Constantine (Konstantios) Doukas as designated heir. They had already survived a similar period of uncertainty during the reign of Romanos IV Diogenes, whose rule interrupted the smooth transition from Constantine X to his son, Michael VII Doukas. In both cases, among those who were most instrumental in helping to ensure the continued influence of the family was another famous member of the *genos* of the Doukai, the *caesar* John Doukas.[92] In the end, Constantine would die before he could rule, but,

---

[90] Mark Bartusis, *Land and Privilege in Byzantium: The Institution of Pronoia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.123-4. The text of the *praktikon*, which has become well-known among scholars because of its fairly unique nature for the later eleventh century, can be found in F. Miklosich and J. Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1860), Patmos I, no.1.37ff.

[91] George Ostrogorsky, *Pour l'histoire de la féodalité byzantine*, trans. Henri Grégoire (Brussels: Éditions de l'Institut de Philologie de l'Histoire Orientales et Slaves, 1954); Évelyne Patlagean, *Un Moyen Âge grec: Byzance IXe-XVe siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2007), pp.15-60; Bartusis, *Land and Privilege*, pp.1-7, 610-14.

[92] For an overview of John's role in these key years, see B. Leib, "Jean Doukas, césar et moine: son jeu politique à Byzance de 1067 à 1081," *Analecta Bollandiana* 68 (1950), pp.163-80.

thanks to strategic marriages with other families (the Komnenoi in particular), the family's fortunes were secured into the twelfth century and beyond.

Caesar John Doukas

Brother to Constantine X and uncle to Michael VII, John Doukas served as a close confidante and advisor during both reigns and helped to secure the very existence of that of his nephew.[93] Among his other family members, John's eldest son, Andronikos, was the general who famously betrayed Romanos IV at Manzikert in 1071, ensuring the unfortunate emperor's defeat and capture by Alp Arslan. Andronikos in turn had several children, of whom Eirene, the wife of Alexios I, was one, making the *caesar* John Doukas her grandfather.

As one scholar has put it, "There is hardly an important event in Byzantium between the years 1067-81 in which Ioannes [John] Doukas was not associated directly or indirectly."[94] We are remarkably well-informed about John, perhaps more so than any other individual between the tenth and twelfth centuries who was neither an emperor nor a patriarch or saint.[95] He is mentioned in every major historical narrative written during or shortly after his lifetime (Michael Psellos, Michael Attaleiates, Anna Komnene, Nikephoros Bryennios, and John Zonaras). He plays an especially prominent role, and is given a particularly flattering depiction, in the *Material for History* of Nikephoros Bryennios.[96] This state of affairs is due, in part, to the prominence of

---

[93] John's eldest son, Andronikos, in turn had several children, including Eirene, the future wife of Alexios I Komnenos. John was thus Eirene's grandfather, and great-grandfather to Emperor John II Komnenos (r.1118-1143).
[94] Polemis, *The Doukai*, p.40.
[95] This is also aided by the fact that John was a frequent correspondent with Michael Psellos. Several letters sent between them survive in Psellos' letter collection. See K. Sathas, ed., Μεσαιωνική βιβλιοθήκη, Vol. IV: Michael Psellos: Orationes, epistulae, et c. (Paris: 1874); Anthony Kaldellis, ed. and trans., *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters: The Byzantine Family of Michael Psellos* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).
[96] Leonora Neville, "A history of the caesar John Doukas in Nikephoros Bryennios' Material for History?" *BMGS* 32 (2008), p.171, n.11 and 12.

his family members and the nature of the sources, but it also reflects the Caesar's genuine importance in political events of his lifetime and, perhaps, genuine admiration among his contemporaries.[97]

John held the elevated title of *caesar* (καῖσαρ) beginning sometime in the reign of his brother, Constantine X. The title, which had served as the second highest honor (after that of emperor) in the empire since the time of Diocletian, was typically reserved for the children or close relatives of the ruler.[98] As his fame and reputation grew, he came increasingly to be identified with the title, so much so, in fact, that he is often referred to by the sources as simply "the Caesar."[99] Before his death, Constantine X reportedly placed the fate of his children (and his wife, Eudokia) in John's hands. John was most politically active and influential in the period between 1067 and 1081 (though, of course, his influence was far from negligible while his brother sat on the throne).[100] During Michael VII's reign, John has been described as "the driving force behind a weak ruler."[101] He (and later his son, Andronikos) was famously sent out with a force to put down the rebellion of the Norman mercenary Roussel de Bailleul (known as Rouselios or Ourselios in the Byzantine sources) in 1074, but was defeated and forced or coerced to act as the figurehead of Roussel's ambitions as a kind of puppet emperor.[102] John even served

---

[97] A narrative of the Caesar John's life can be found in several places, including Polemis' *The Doukai*, pp.34-41 and in B. Leib, "Jean Doukas, César et moine: son jeu politique à Byzance de 1067 à 1081." *Analecta Bollandiana* 68 (1950), pp.163-80.

[98] Kazhdan, ed., *ODB*, p.363. Under the reforms of Alexios I, the title was reduced in status to below that of *sebastokrator*.

[99] So, for example, Attaleiates, *History*, 23.3-4, ed. and trans. Kaldellis and Krallis, pp.336-37. Πέμψας πρέσβεις δὲ ὁ καῖσαρ...Ἐπεχείρει μὲν οὖν ὁ καῖσαρ...; Neville, "A history of the caesar John Doukas."

[100] Leib, "Jean Doukas, césar et moine," pp.163-64; Neville, "A history of the caesar John Doukas," pp.171-72.

[101] Polemis, *The Doukai*, p.37.

[102] Bryennios, *Material for history*, 2.14-18; Neville, "A history of the caesar John Doukas," pp.175-79.

as a valuable advisor and supporter at the beginning of Alexios I Komnenos' reign, despite the fact that he had, at that time, already adopted the monastic garb.[103]

As mentioned above, Nikephoros Bryennios paints an especially flattering picture of the man in his twelfth-century *Material for History*. There is evidence that Bryennios may have drawn from some source focused on Caesar John Doukas and his family, one that the Caesar may even have written himself. The difference in vocabulary, tone, and attitude displayed by Bryennios at key points has led Leonora Neville to believe that a significant portion of Bryennios' narrative was drawn from a personal or family history of John Doukas, perhaps similar in nature to the pro-Phokas or Kourkouas narratives discussed elsewhere.[104] Supporting this contention is the overwhelmingly positive portrayal of Doukas in a narrative ostensibly devoted to charting the rise of Alexios I Komnenos. "One of the major heroes of the history," Neville argues, "John's portrait can be seen as the most sympathetic of all."[105]

Thanks to Neville's close analysis of the text, one may plausibly guess some of the contents of this lost history. Doukas consistently appears at key moments in the narrative, sometimes in unexpected or even implausible contexts. In general, the *caesar* is "chiefly characterized by loyalty to his family, wisdom, good counsel, and perseverance in the face of difficulties."[106] "Nikephoros presents his heroes as emotionally concerned with the well-being of their families. Familial regard is an aspect of virtuous conduct."[107] John's portrait is an example of this virtue throughout much of the text. This is despite the fact that he was closely related to

---

[103] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, 2.9, trans. E.R.A. Sewter, *Anna Comnena: The Alexiad* (London: Penguin, 1969), p.95.
[104] Specifically, Neville believes the source "told the history of the 1070s from the perspective of John Doukas." Neville, "A history of the caesar John Doukas," p.170.
[105] Neville, "A history of the caesar John Doukas," p.170.
[106] Neville, "A history of the caesar John Doukas," p.171. Neville has identified specific passages that she believes are likely to have been taken from the lost history dedicated to John.
[107] Neville, *Heroes and Romans in Twelfth-Century Byzantium*, p.108.

two rather unpopular emperors, suffered several humiliating military defeats, and even appeared as a potential usurper of the throne (though possibly against his will.

John's actions, even as they are recorded in other sources, seem to bear out the contention that he generally put the well-being of his family ahead of his own. He may have found himself in position to take the imperial throne at least once, though that never seems to have been his desire.[108] In the aftermath of the defeat at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, during which then-emperor Romanos IV was captured by the Seljuq Turks, John found himself in a position of more or less supreme power. He forced the empress Eudokia out of the capital and took over as sole regent for his young nephew, Michael VII.[109] Yet he never seems to have maneuvered to take real power for himself, and was only too ready to hand it over to Michael when he was ready. This could, in fact, lend some credence to the idea, preserved in Bryennios' history, that he truly was a reluctant figurehead in Roussel de Bailleul's plot to take the throne in 1074. He worked tirelessly to support his brother and nephew on the throne, apparently doing everything in his power to ensure the continuation of the dynasty, at least in his own lifetime. He was also, along with Anna Dalassene, a chief architect of the marriage of Eirene Doukaina with Alexios Komnenos, which would have lasting implications for the survival of the Doukai among the Byzantine elite.[110]

All in all, the caesar John Doukas appears as a fairly unique figure in the late eleventh century. This unique status is even reflected in lead seals. A surviving seal that belonged to him includes not only an image of the Theotokos and Christ (as was common among members of the

---

[108] Polemis, *The Doukai*, p.40. Polemis thinks that John could have taken the reins of government in May 1067, but he may have been outmaneuvered by Eudokia Makrembolitissa.
[109] Leib, "Jean Doukas, césar et moine," pp.165-66; Polemis, *The Doukai*, pp.36-7.
[110] Polemis, *The Doukai*, p.39.

Doukas family), but also an image of Doukas himself on the reverse. While not entirely unique, the depiction of a seal's owner is extremely rare among those who were not themselves emperors or empresses.[111] The image of Caesar John Doukas that survives today is undoubtedly an exaggerated one due to the nature of the sources, but this in itself offers valuable insight into the social world of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, in which the aristocratic *genos* played a pivotal role. John's status as a larger than life figure is almost certainly the result of his own or his family's deliberate attempts to cultivate such an image and to disseminate it among their peers. Caesar John indeed appears as a veritable hero in these sources, in large part due to his apparent conern for his family and his efforts to further their collective interests.

Alexios I Komnenos, Eirene Doukaina, and the Doukai in the Twelfth Century

None of Michael VII's sons or other direct descendants would sit on the imperial throne in anything but name. Nevertheless, through the family's connections with the *genos* of the Komnenoi, individuals sharing in the Doukas lineage, and occasionally bearing the name of Doukas as well, would remain at the pinnacle of Byzantine high society well into the twelfth century and beyond. The Komnenoi and Doukai were united through several marriages which took place during Alexios I's lifetime.[112] Contemporaries, however, such as Nikephoros

---

[111] Dumbarton Oaks seal BZS 1955.I.4366. Obverse: bust of Mother of God, nimbate, holding baby Christ, inscription: θ(εοτό)κε βοή[θ(ει) τ]ῷ σῷ δ[ού(λῳ)]; Reverse: bust of Doukas wearing a jeweled crown, surmounted by a cross, division and chlamys fastened with a fibula, while his right hand holds a cross; inscription: Ἰω(άννῃ) τῷ εὐτυχεστάτ(ῳ) καίσαρ(ι). See also Stratis Papaioannou, *Michael Psellos: Rhetoric and Authorship in Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.9.

[112] Michael VII Doukas' sister Zoe, for example, was married to Adrian Komnenos sometime after 1081. See Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, p.275.

Bryennios, were especially focused on the marriage of Alexios and Eirene as the 'founders' of this familial union, since this union represented an imperial origin.[113]

The marriage of Eirene to Alexios in 1078 was politically sound, but the match was not necessarily a natural one. The second half of the eleventh century witnessed the two families largely at odds with one another, despite Isaac Komnenos' decision to abdicate the throne in favor of Constantine Doukas. Alexios' mother, Anna Dalassene, was and is widely regarded as the primary architect of the union, a political maneuver frequently praised by modern historians for its strategic brilliance.[114] Anna was forced to ignore her personal enmity toward Caesar John Doukas and his family in order to accomplish the long-term success of her family.[115]

Indeed, as it is portrayed by Anna Komnene, the support of the Doukai was instrumental in Alexios Komnenos' accession to the Byzantine throne in 1081. Anna claims that Alexios initially wanted his elder brother, Isaac, to take the throne rather than himself. Isaac and the brothers' other supporters, however, convinced Alexios that he was the better choice, since his marriage to Eirene Doukaina more or less guaranteed the support of the Doukai. The decision proved to be a good one. The Doukai apparently "led the acclamations" when Alexios was formally declared emperor because, Anna tells us, "their kinswoman" was Alexios' wife. "Their [the Doukai's] blood-relatives willingly followed suit."[116] Once again, Anna Komnene's attachment to her mother's *genos* and its memory is evident.

In the words of Patlagean, through the union of Eirene Doukaina and Alexios Komnenos, "Doukai et Komnênoi entourés de leurs parents par alliance réussissent en 1081 là où les

---

[113] Patlagean, *Un Moyen Âge grec*, pp.145-50.
[114] Nikephoros Bryennios depicts Anna as the effective head of the Komnenos family by the time of her husband's, John Komnenos', death. See Neville, *Heroes and Romans*, p.77.
[115] Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp.25-7, 219, 267.
[116] Ann Komnene, *Alexiad* 2.7, trans. Sewter, pp.91-2.

Phokades et leurs parents Maleïnoi et Sklêroi avaient échoué au siècle précédent."[117] The success

of which Patlagean speaks is, in fact, the simultaneous establishment of a long-lasting dynasty

and the secure transformation of the aristocracy around the web of marriage alliances formed

around the Komnenoi-Doukai. Interestingly, the fortunes of the *genos* of the Doukai was

cemented by Eirene's marriage, which at the same time caused the family to lose its unique

identity more or less completely. For the rest of Byzantium's existence (and even beyond), the

name itself continued to carry weight as a marker of illustrious status, but nearly always in

combination with others (especially Komnenos). While descent from the Doukai was useful in

further legitimizing claims to impeccable lineage and, especially, imperial rule, it was the name

of Komnenos, much more than that of Doukas, that carried real weight among the elites of the

later twelfth century and later.[118]

From the time of Alexios I's marriage to Eirene, the Doukas family's fate became

intertwined with that of the Komnenoi (in fact, many descendants and relatives are referred to

using the combined surname Komnenodoukas or something similar).[119] By the mid-twelfth

century, references to individuals bearing only the name of Doukas become extremely rare, at

least among those that can be securely identified as members of the social and political elite.

There are, of course, exceptions to the rule. The case of Anna Komnene's second son, known

---

[117] Patlagean, *Un Moyen Âge grec*, p.145. "…the Komnenoi and Doukai surrounded by their affinal kin succeeded in 1081 where the Phokades and their relatives, the Maleinoi and Skleroi, had failed in the preceding century."

[118] The *Anonymous Preface to the Material for History of Nikephoros Bryennios* records one example of the way descent from the Doukai was seen as reinforcing the imperial legitimacy of the Komnenoi, without being the sole or even primary factor. Paul Gautier, ed. and trans., *Nicéphore Bryennios: Histoire* (CFHB 9) (Byzantion: Bruxelles, 1975), 10.9-13. On Alexios Komnenos' deathbed, his son John given the scepters of Roman Empire for two reasons: he inherited it from the Komnenoi and his mother had her roots in the "imperial Doukas" [family]. (...Ἰωάννην, ὡς ἐξ ἀμποῖν δικαίον πρὸς τὸ κρατεῖν προτιμώμενον, ἀπό τε τῆς Κομνηνικῆς φυλῆς δηλονότι οὕτω πρὸς τὴν βασιλείαν κληρωθείσης ὡς προδιείληπται καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ Δουκικοῦ βασιλείου ῥιζώματος, οὗ καὶ ἡ τούτου μήτηρ ἐξέφυ καρπὸς εὐγενής.)

[119] For a good summary of the methods and consequences of the union of these two families, see Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp.339-44, 359-77.

unequivocally and only as John Doukas in the sources, was already discussed.[120] Such cases, however, become quite rare already by the second half of the twelfth century.

Somewhat paradoxically, it seems only to have been after the merging of the Doukai with the lineage of Komnenos that the name of Doukas secured its place as a kind of shorthand for nobility and that some of the more fantastical genealogical claims associated with the family begin to appear in writing. So, according to one anonymous, twelfth-century author, the first member of the Doukas family was not only a contemporary of Emperor Constantine I, but was also his first cousin "by blood" (καθ'αἷμα).[121] Such claims probably pre-date their arrival in the written record under the Komnenoi. The genealogy produced by Attaleiates supposedly linking Nikephoros III Botaneiates to the Phokades may even have been a direct response to the illustrious (and equally fantastical) genealogical claims of the Doukai.[122] Botaneiates did, after all, forcibly remove Michael VII from the throne and needed to legitimize his replacement of the dynasty, however young, of the Doukai. Nevertheless, it was over the course of the twelfth century that the semi-legendary status of the family name was solidified.

As mentioned previously, the Doukai appear in the twelfth-century fictional tale *Timarion* by lending their name to the "heroic and fortunate" pedigree of a governor of Thessaloniki. The governor's father, thanks to his wealth, learning, and, above all, battlefield achievements, was able to marry a beautiful woman "who is in her own right greatest of the great, being of royal blood and descended from the famous Doukai family, a family whose fame,

---

[120] See chapter five, p.240.
[121] *Anonymous Preface to Material for History by Nikephoros Bryennios,* ed. Gautier, 9.21-29. ὁ πρῶτος Δούκας ἐκεῖνος...καθ'αἷμα τῷ μεγάλῳ Κωνσταντίνῳ καὶ γνησιώτατα προσῳκείωτο· ἐκείνου τε γὰρ ἐξάδελφος ἦν καὶ τὴν τοῦ δουκὸς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως ἀξίαν παρ'αὐτοῦ ἐγκεχείριστο, κἀντεῦθεν καὶ πάντες ἐξ αὐτοῦ κατωνομάσθησαν οἱ Δουκώνυμοι.
[122] Patlagean, *Un Moyen Âge grec*, p.139. Patlagean does not make this argument forcefully, but rather suggests a vague connection. "Bref, la généalogie…de Botaneiatès reflète les exigences contemporaines que les Doukas remplissait si bien."

as you know, has been spread by the lips of many across the sea from Italy and the race of

Aeneas to Constantinople itself."[123] The Doukai also appear in several surviving versions of the

tale of Digenes Akrites. In the Grottaferrata version, the name Doukas is repeated several times,

and the hero's grandmother, the Emir's wife (the hero's mother), and Digenes' own wife are all,

at times, assigned ancestry that includes the Doukai.[124] In the Escorial version, perhaps achieving

its written form slightly later than that of the Grottaferrata manuscript, the connection to the

Doukai receives less attention, but the hero's uncles (his mother's brothers) do relate to his father

that their own father was "of the Doukas faction" (τῶν Δουκάδων τὴν μερέαν).[125]

Common to all of these fictional cases is the connection of the Doukai with women

(grandmothers, mothers, and wives of the protagonists), a fact that may have reflected the actual

role played by the Doukai in the genealogy of the Komnenoi in the twelfth century.[126] They

effectively played a supporting role in the articulation of nobility by birth so coveted and so

central to the propaganda of the Komnenian dynasty and later. Members of the twelfth-century

elite seem to have looked upon the marriage of Alexios I Komnenos and Eirene Doukaina as a

pivotal, founding moment in the formation of the extended Komneno-Doukas *genos* and,

effectively, the aristocracy of the twelfth century. This moment, then, was translated into

fictional literature of the era.[127]

---

[123] *Timarion* 8, in *Timarion*, trans. Barry Baldwin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), p.47. The paragraph finishes by asking, "What man does not know of her father of all men, distinguished as he is by his high offices of state, tested in the most important military commands, conferring in every way an incomparable nobility upon his daughter?" (Translation by Baldwin).

[124] G 1.267, 4.43, 4.59, 4.325, 6.14, and 6.414.

[125] E 136-37.

[126] Jeffreys, ed. and trans., *Digenis Akritis*, pp.viii-lx; Roderick Beaton, "Cappadocians at Court: Digenes and Timarion," in M. Mullett and D. Smythe, eds. *Alexios I Komnenos: Papers of the second Belfast Byzantine International Colloquium, 14-16 April 1989.* Vol. I: Papers. Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations, 4.1 (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 1996), pp.329-38.

[127] Interestingly, the name Komnenos was not used in this way in literature of the period. Perhaps the disappearance of an independent Doukas lineage encouraged authors to use the name in more creative settings.

Despite its absorption into other, more prestigious lineages in the twelfth century, the Doukas name (along with its reputation) survived among the most powerful members of Byzantine society well into the thirteenth century. The founders and rulers of the so-called Despotate of Epiros, one of the three main Byzantine rump states to appear in the wake of the Fourth Crusade, bore the name of Doukas, though their genealogies and family ties linked them with several other prominent *genē*, most notably the Komnenoi and Angeloi.[128] The same is also true for the rulers of the other two major, Byzantine "successor states," based in Nicaea and Trebizond. Even if the name was not considered quite as "noble" or elite as that of Komnenos, it was not far behind.[129]

Kekaumenos

The *Strategikon* or *Precepts and Anecdotes*, as it is alternately known, was written sometime around 1078-81 by an individual known only by his surname, Kekaumenos.[130] It is a unique, moralizing book of advice and an "indoctrination in 'proper' behavior" covering a wide range of topics from the proper conduct on the battlefield to the management of one's household.[131]

---

[128] Angeliki Laiou, "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Palaeologan Period: A Story of Arrested Development," *Viator* 4 (1973): pp.131-51.

[129] Ruth Macrides, "What's in the Name 'Megas Komnenos?,'" *Αρχεῖον Πόντου* 35 (1979), p.243. euiusdem, trans. and comment., *George Akropolites, The History: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.41. George Akropolites uses the name Komnenos, occasionally including Doukas as well, to refer to Theodore Komnenos Doukas during his rise to the throne of Epiros in 1224 and his conquest of Thessaloniki; after his defeat in 1230 at the hands of the Bulgarians, however, Akropolites consistently refers to him only with the surname Angelos, which was decidedly less flattering.

[130] Alexander Kazhdan, *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, "Kekaumenos," p.1119. The opening page of the sole surviving manuscript of the work has been damaged, so if it contained a different title, it has been lost. We know that the work was completed after the death of Patriarch John Xiphilinos (d.1078), but presumably before the accession of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081). See: Kekaumenos 182, for evidence that Patriarch Xiphilinos was already dead.

[131] For general comments concerning the composition, organization, and content of the work, see: Paul Lemerle, *Prolégomène à une édition critique et commentée des "Conseils et Récits" de Kekaumenos* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1960); Leonora Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.174-6.

The *Strategikon* differs from most other surviving sources in a number of ways. Unlike most surviving Byzantine literature produced outside of the church, it was (probably) not written for the emperor or his immediate circle of administrators and courtiers. Its author, who represents a slightly less elevated social circle than either the Phokades or the Doukai, addresses his advice primarily to his sons, who Kekaumenos assumes will spend most of their lives in private estates far outside of Constantinople. In fact, Kekaumenos displays a strong distaste for imperial politics and the intrigues of the capital. Instead, his sights are set squarely on a life in the provinces (primarily central and northern Greece) and, significantly, on his family. For these and many other reasons, the text is of special interest to modern scholars for the decidedly different perspective it brings to the social and cultural world of late eleventh-century Byzantium.

Kekaumenos' Family and Historical Memory

It has been argued that Kekaumenos' consciousness of his own family, living and dead, is decidedly more limited than that of many of his contemporaries, at least among the high aristocracy.[132] Koichi Inoue, in his analysis of Kekaumenos' *oikos*, calls Kekaumenos' interest in genealogy "slight" and makes the claim that Kekaumenos' focus on one's parents argues against any reverence for his more distant ancestors. "When speaking of his family's reputation," Inoue argues, "he places greater emphasis on parents than upon the honor of distant ancestors... Kekaumenos does not share the mentality of contemporary and later Byzantine aristocrats who take great pride in their noble birth and lineage."[133] Inoue uses this as evidence that Kekaumenos' family was a relative parvenu among the more elevated social strata, and he may

---

[132] Inoue, "A Provincial Aristocratic *Oikos* in Eleventh-Century Byzantium," *GRBS* 30 (1989), p.552.
[133] Ibid.

324

indeed be correct.[134] The list of titles and honors held by Kekaumenos and his relatives,

however, should caution against taking this idea too far. So, too, should the general lack of

"distant ancestors" in most other surviving "genealogies," even from the twelfth century, during

which time even members of the highest social orders tended not to include ancestors beyond

three generations in the past in their genealogies.[135]

The list of relatives specifically mentioned in the *Strategikon* includes both his paternal

and maternal grandfather (and possibly a great-grandfather), his own father, one of his father's

cousins, and the author's "co-father-in-law" (*sympentheros*, his son's or daughter's father-in-

law), Nikoulitzas Delphinas.[136] Kekaumenos' paternal grandfather held the title of *strategos*

(provincial governor) of Greece,[137] while his maternal grandfather, Demetrios Polemarchios, was

a "prominent figure" in the region around Servia.[138] The reader learns very little about

Kekaumenos' father, though he appears to have had a career in the military and to have spent

some time in Constantinople.[139] John Maïos, his father's cousin, held a position in the imperial

fiscal administration,[140] and Nikoulitzas Delphinas held the title of *protospatharios* and is

depicted as a prominent figure around the Greek city of Larissa at the outbreak of a tax revolt in

---

[134] Ibid. "His consciousness of his family is restricted both vertically and horizontally and therefore indicates a parvenu family whose *oikos* was still in a formative stage."

[135] Patlagean, *Un Moyen Âge grec*, p.140. See also chapter three of this dissertation.

[136] This is in addition to Kekaumenos' sons, of which the author had at least two.

[137] Kekaumenos 169: τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔχων τῆς Ἑλλάδος. This phrase is exceedingly vague, stating only that Kekaumenos' grandfather held some kind of authority or office in Greece. A later passage, however, suggests that the office in question was that of *strategos*. When Kekaumenos' grandfather left the region for Constantinople, he was apparently replaced by "another *strategos* in Greece." Kekaumenos 170: καὶ μετὰ τρεῖς ἐνιαυτοὺς προεβάλετο ἕτερον στρατηγὸν εἰς Ἑλλάδα.

[138] Servia was a city in Macedonia, just south of Berroia.

[139] A. Savvides, "The Byzantine Family of Kekaumenos (late 10ᵗʰ-early 12ᵗʰ cent.)," *Diptycha* 4 (1986-87), pp.12-27.

[140] Kekaumenos 95.9-10: ἔδοξε δὲ αὐτῷ ποτε λαβεῖν δουλείαν τὴν ἐπίσκεψιν Ἀρραβισοῦ. An *episkeptites* was in charge of an *episkepsis*, or "a fiscal unit composed of a collection of properties held by the emperor or a member of the imperial family." It could also be used, prior to the twelfth century, simply to describe a fiscal division of a theme. See Kazhdan, *ODB,* p.717 ("Episkepsis").

that region.[141] The list of titles and offices held by Kekaumenos and his relatives in the *Strategikon* places them in some of the most important positions within the imperial administration in the region of central Greece. This serves as a reminder that one should not overstate Kekaumenos' status as one of the "lesser" nobility or simply a "middle-ranking provincial figure."[142]

One cannot treat the list of relatives specifically mentioned in the *Strategikon* as an exhaustive list of all kin relations of which Kekaumenos was aware or that mattered to him. The work is neither a family history nor a genealogy. His own father remains largely faceless in the work, and his mother is scarcely mentioned at all, despite the obvious importance he placed on the relationship with one's parents. We hear nothing about Kekaumenos' siblings, if he had any, despite the emphasis he places on the sibling bond as the cornerstone of familial solidarity. The relative absence of female members of the family, while noteworthy, cannot be used to argue that Kekaumenos had no knowledge of any women with whom he was related through blood or marriage. Contrary to the arguments of several modern scholars, even the relatively limited information contained in the *Strategikon* shows that Kekaumenos' detailed knowledge of his family's history is in no way more limited than his aristocratic contemporaries.[143] Lengthier

---

[141] Kekaumenos 174.19-20: πρωτοσπαθάριος γὰρ ἦν τὸ τότε. *ODB*, p.1748 ("Protospatharios"). The imperial dignity indicates "first of the *spatharioi* (sword-bearers)," which originally designated personal bodyguards, especially imperial bodyguards.   The title traditionally granted its holder senatorial status. In the eleventh century, the title was beginning to lose its senatorial status and much of its prestige, though it still held considerable significance for the grantee.
[141] Kekaumenos 172-80.Kekaumenos also records that one of Delphinas' sons held the titles of *spatharokandidatos* and, later, *protospatharios* as well.
[142] Catherine Holmes, "Political Literacy," in *The Byzantine World,* ed. by Paul Stephenson (London: Routledge, 2010), p.144.
[143] Inoue, "A Provincial Aristocratic *Oikos*," p.552.

(extant) genealogies, against which Kekaumenos is at times unfavorably compared, do not generally show an awareness of family histories beyond grandparents or great-grandparents.[144]

Kekaumenos' knowledge of his ancestors, at least as it appears in the *Strategikon*, is thus not as far removed from his more elite contemporaries as it may first appear. Kekaumenos, in fact, displays a fairly strong memory of his family's exploits, which he is passing on to his own children through the very act of writing the *Strategikon*. His grandfather's military victories in Greater Armenia and his successes against the Bulgarian rebel Samuel are enthusiastically described for his sons.[145] John Maïos, Kekaumenos' father's cousin, was hardly a "close relative," especially from the perspective of the *Strategikon's* target audience, Kekaumenos' sons. Kekaumenos' knowledge of his ancestors' exploits and his relation of this information to his sons displays the importance of historical memory to the family group's cohesiveness. He is, in effect, making their stories a part of his own and that of his children.

Kekaumenos also displays a knowledge of Nikoulitzas Delphinas' two brothers, two sons, and an unspecified number of daughters (including, presumably, the son or daughter who married into Kekaumenos' family). Interestingly, both Nikoulitzas' brothers (Theodoros and Demetrios) and his sons (Gregoras and Pagkratis) are named, but his daughters are not.[146] Similarly, throughout his work, Kekaumenos' wife remains nameless and faceless, a fact not without significance.

The relatively full account of Kekaumenos' *sympentheros* Nikoulitzas Delphinas and his involvement in the tax revolt around Larissa suggests that Kekaumenos may have had access to

---

[144] See Patlagean, *Un Moyen Âge grec*, pp.108-31, for a commentary on the appearance of longer, sometimes fictive genealogies.
[145] Kekauamenos 73; 169-70.
[146] Kekaumenos 173; 176.

some sort of archive that included materials written by or to Delphinas himself.[147] This hypothesis is supported by evidence in the *Strategikon*, which records that Delphinas' close relationship with Kekaumenos' father led him to write to the author's father while he was imprisoned at Amaseia in the aftermath of the revolt.[148] This fact is interesting in itself, but also noteworthy is the close relationship between the two men. The description of Delphinas as "my *sympentheros*" indicates that one of Kekaumenos' sons or daughters had married one of Delphinas' children.[149] Since most marriages among the Byzantine elite were arranged by the parents of the would-be couple, it is probable that Kekaumenos had deliberately chosen to unite his family with that of his father's close friend, formalizing the close ties between them over several generations. The *Strategikon* even contains evidence that Kekaumenos' paternal grandfather may have married into the same family a few generations earlier.[150] Such practices were quite common among the late eleventh-century aristocracy.[151]

In the historical memory on display in the *Strategikon*, Kekaumenos shows a much greater awareness of and concern for his natal family than his affinal relations. His inclusion of a story of his maternal grandfather (and the language used) shows the author favoring the paternal

---

[147] Catherine Holmes, "Political Literacy," p.143. Holmes suggests that this archive may even have contained a "defensive apology" for the actions taken by Nikoulitzas Delphinas.

[148] Kekaumenos 172-80.

[149] The modern treatment of Delphinas has been plagued by a certain amount of confusion, much of it arising from a misunderstanding of the term *sympentheros*. He has been alternately described as Kekaumenos' father-in-law, the father-in-law of one of Kekaumenos' children, or simply a "member or associate of Kekaumenos' family." Thus, it seems clear that Delphinas was, in fact, Kekaumenos' "co-father-in-law. Delphinas has occasionally been identified as the grandson of another Nikoulitzas mentioned in Kekaumenos' work, though this identification is dubious. See: Jean-Claude Cheynet, *Pouvoir et contestations*, pp.168, 392; Florin Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages (500-1250)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.280; Catherine Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976-1025)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.143. Florin Curta claims that Nikoulitzas Delphinas is the grandson of the Nikoulitzas described in the *Strategikon* as "my grandfather," who held the title of *archon* of the Vlachs in Greece under Basil II. See: Florin Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages*, p.280.

[150] Kekaumenos 168.31-34: εἰ δὲ καὶ μὴ καθώς σοι ἐνετειλάμην ποιήσεις, παθεῖν μέλλεις ὅπερ ἔπαθον ἐπὶ τῷ Σαμουὴλ οἱ γονεῖς τοῦ Νικουλιτζᾶ εἰς Λάρισσαν.

[151] Angeliki Laiou, *Mariage, amour et parenté à Byzance aux XIe-XIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1992). The Komnenoi would become quite adept at this through the twelfth century. During Alexios I's reign, his own brother (Adrianos) would also marry a member of the Doukas family.

side of his ancestry, but it also shows the importance of natal family vis-à-vis affinal. One learns

very little about Kekaumenos' wife's family, whether living or dead. Within the natal family,

males receive far more attention than female members. This conforms to the norms of the

aristocratic *genos*, which have been discussed in previous chapters.

Prescriptive Behavior

As suggested in the previous chapter, Kekaumenos' world is one dominated by

reputation. He urges his sons to exhibit harmony and cooperation with one another, both for the

well-being of the family, and also, importantly, so that they might not be perceived negatively by

others.[152] He advocates behaviors that strengthen (and, importantly, publicly showcase) the

solidarity of the kin group, while simultaneously urging caution in association with outside

elements, as they might cause internal disruptions and, especially, the loss of face amongst one's

neighbors and peers. This is especially true regarding Kekaumenos' views on women.

This is not to say that Kekaumenos held an entirely cynical view toward the relationship

with one's *syggeneis*. His warnings about the potential pitfalls of inviting a *syggenēs* into one's

home are balanced by passages reminding his sons of the importance of kinship and the

relationships it fosters. Kekaumenos reminds his sons, "remember your relatives in your success

and give benefits to them. Be mindful of them and God will be mindful of you. Perhaps

prosperity is given to you in order that [you] might benefit them."[153] Again, he records a simple

maxim: "If you forget your relatives, God will forget you."[154] For Kekaumenos, memory of and

---

[152] See especially pp.224-25.
[153] Kekaumenos 107.5-8: μνήσθητι συγγενοῦς σου ἐν εὐπραγίᾳ σου, καὶ εὐεργέτησον αὐτούς. μνήσθητι αὐτῶν καὶ μνησθήσεταί σου ὁ Θεός· ἴσως πρὸς τὸ εὐεργετῆσαι αὐτοὺς ἐδόθη σοι ἡ εὐημερία.
[154] Kekaumenos 123(bis).1-2.

aid to one's kin are of paramount importance. Whatever the dangers of allowing outsiders access to one's household, it is one's duty to help one's *syggeneis* and to show them the appropriate level of respect and consideration. "Remember him who led you and fought on your behalf at the moment you needed him, remember your father's old friend, remember your relatives (συγγενοῦς) in your success and give benefits to them."[155]

It is not just the child's responsibility to his/her parents that receives Kekaumenos' attention. Equally important was the parents' role in their children's lives. "And if one is prudent, he will be great in the eyes of God and men. For he who manages in great security and right-mindedness, raises his children well, for then his children will be carried as if in a vehicle (raft), and his house will be in a peaceful state."[156] For Kekaumenos, like many of his peers, the parental role most often recalled is that of a father giving advice to his son.[157] This is a common trope in Byzantine literature, which pairs a loving, yet authoritative father's advice with the ideal of an obedient son. Kekaumenos even displays his own love and affection for his sons in occasional interjections of "my beloved children" and "you, whom God has given me."[158] Later, he tells his sons, "Strive to show that your parents are honorable (αἰδεσίμους) and famous (περιφανεῖς) through your virtuous acts/works."[159]

Paired with Kekaumenos' focus on the parent-child bond is the obvious importance he places on sibling cooperation. "He who sees his own brother in peril and is not himself facing

---

[155] Kekaumenos 107.3-6: μνήσθητι τοῦ χειραγωγήσαντός σε καὶ ἀγωνισαμένου σοι ἐν καιρῷ πειρασμοῦ, μνήσθητι ἀρχαίου φίλου πατρῴου σου, μνήσθητι συγγενοῦς σου ἐν εὐπραγίᾳ σου, καὶ εὐεργέτησον αὐτούς.

[156] Kekaumenos 132: καὶ εἰ μὲν σωφρονήσει, μέγας ἔσται παρά τε Θεῷ καὶ ἀνθρώποις· αὐτὸς μὲν ἐν ἀδείᾳ πολλῇ καὶ εὐφροσύνῃ διάξει, τοὺς παῖδας ἐκτρέφων καλῶς, οἱ δὲ παῖδες αὐτοῦ ὡς ἐπὶ ὀχήματος ἐποχηθήσονται, καὶ ἡ οἰκία αὐτοῦ ἐν εἰρηνικῇ καταστάσει ἔσται·

[157] Kekaumenos 134.

[158] Kekaumenos 186.1-3: διὰ ταῦτα οὖν παραγγέλλω ὑμῖν, τέκνα μου ἠγαπημένα, οὕς μοι δέδωκεν ὁ Θεός.

[159] Kekaumenos, 128: σπούδαζε διὰ τῶν ἔργων τῆς ἀρετῆς σου αἰδεσίμους καὶ περιφανεῖς ἀποδεῖξαι τοὺς γονεῖς σου.

the same danger, but still looks the other way, is accursed. For what is crueler than this?" [160]

Again, repeating a passage found in chapter four, "Do not quarrel [lit. "battle"] with your brother, even if you think he has wronged you, since both of you will [then] be considered brother-haters (μισάδελφοι) by the masses."[161] "Pray that you might not have as an enemy your son or brother-in-law or brother. And if you should punish him, all will censure/find fault with you, even God Himself, and later you will blame yourself for having been conquered by your emotions (σπλάγχνων); if he should wrong you, both you and he will be hurt by God, and again you will be grieved at his destruction."[162] Such passages attest to the strength and importance of the sibling bond as the cornerstone of family cohesiveness in Kekaumenos' work.

The cohesiveness of the family group, according to Kekaumenos, could lead to very real advantages for its members. Kekaumenos records how his *sympentheros* Nikoulitzas Delphinas traveled to Constantinople at the emperor's request shortly after the accession of Romanos IV Diogenes (r.1068-71) to the Byzantine throne, as the two men were apparently old acquaintances. While there, he obtained a promotion for his son, Gregorios, and requested his brother's salary (*roga*) from the emperor himself.[163] Kekaumenos seems to suggest that Delphinas was rather disappointed with the reception he received at his old friend's court,[164] but

---

[160] Kekaumenos 148.11-13: ὁ δὲ τὸν ἴδιον ἀδελφὸν ἐν δεινοῖς βλέπων καὶ μὴ συγκακουχούμενος αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ παραβλέπων αὐτόν, ἐπικατάρατός ἐστι· τί γὰρ ἀπηνέστερον τούτου;

[161] Kekaumenos 146: μὴ μάχου μετὰ ἀδελφοῦ σου, εἰ καὶ δοκεῖς σὺ βλαβῆναι παρ' αὐτοῦ, ἐπεὶ σύ τε κἀκεῖνος μισάδελφοι τοῖς πολλοῖς λογισθήσεσθε.

[162] Kekaumenos 120: εὖξαι μὴ ἔχειν ἐχθρὸν υἱόν σου ἢ γαμβρὸν ἢ ἀδελφόν. καὶ εἰ μὲν τιμωρήσεις αὐτόν, πάντες σου καταμέμψονται καὶ ὁ Θεὸς αὐτός, καὶ σὺ ἑαυτὸν ὕστερον μέμψῃ ὑπὸ τῶν σπλάγχνων νικώμενος· εἰ δὲ κακώσει σε, βλαβήσει μὲν καὶ σὺ κἀκεῖνος δὲ παρὰ Θεοῦ, καὶ πάλιν λυπηθήσῃ ἐπὶ τῇ ἀπωλείᾳ αὐτοῦ.

[163] Kekaumenos 183-4. His brother's promotion was from the rank of *spatharokandidatos* to *protospatharios*, a relatively modest increase.

[164] Kekaumenos 184.6-9: πλὴν οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἀγαθὸν αὐτὸν πεποίηκεν εἰ μὴ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ Γρηγόριον ἐτίμησε πρωτοσπαθάριον σπαθαροκανδιδάτην ὄντα καὶ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ Παγκρατίου ηὔξησε τὴν ῥόγαν.

the story also displays the solidarity that could exist between adult siblings and the kinds of benefits a father might obtain for his son.

At the same time, the strong bonds within the sibling group could be a liability. When Nikoulitzas Delphinas considers his options at the outbreak of the tax revolt in Larissa, he displays a concern for his brothers that they will be held responsible and punished for his actions. The assumption is that his siblings will be implicated in his actions and that, by harming them, the rebels would be dealing Delphinas a significant blow. Both the rebels and Delphinas himself treat the three siblings as a singular social unit.[165]

Kekaumenos not only cautions against seeking one's fortune through government service or, especially, borrowing or lending, he also warns his sons against allowing outsiders too much access to the household. His criteria for defining "outsiders" seem to include most anyone deemed not to be members of the immediate household, even extending to more distant relatives. This unfriendly attitude toward even distant relatives seems to differentiate the author from those whose sense of belonging to an extended kin group (*genos*) was crucial to their social lives and their aristocratic identity, even if the author's family memory on display in the text would argue otherwise. Kekaumenos is especially insistent upon the isolation and protection of the women of the household, who appear not only more vulnerable to corruption themselves, but are also depicted as perhaps the single greatest risk to the reputation of their family, both at the level of the household and more broadly.

---

[165] Kekaumenos 173.31-6: (πάντως γὰρ τήν τε οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ ἐμπρήσουσιν οἱ ἀποστάται, τοὺς δὲ δύο αὐτοῦ παῖδας καὶ τοὺς δύο ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοῦ, τόν τε Θεόδωρον καὶ τὸν Δημήτριον, ἀποσφάξουσιν καὶ τὰς θυγατέρας αὐτοῦ, αὐτὸν δὲ εἰς τὴν Πόλιν εἰσάξαντες κακοπαθεῖν καταλείψουσιν καὶ λιμῷ διαφθαρῆναι)

Modern commentators have often chosen to highlight Kekaumenos' views on women, whether they be daughters, wives, or simply women in general, in part because of his blatant distrust of them in his work and the lack of independent female agency in its pages. In general, women are regarded as potential weaknesses to the fragile cohesion and order within the *oikos*.[166]

While he repeatedly admonishes his sons to achieve great deeds worthy of praise and remembrance, his advice on the treatment of women and his sons' relationship with them scarcely goes beyond recommendations that they be hidden away from the public eye, ostensibly to minimize the risk of embarrassment to the household. "A shameless daughter not only harms herself, but also [her] parents and [all] those related to her by blood (κατὰ γένος). Keep your daughters locked away and hidden from view as though [they were] condemned criminals, so that you might not be stung/bitten, as though by an adder."[167] Kekaumenos effectively equates women with "condemned criminals" and venomous snakes. He uses a vocabulary of shame and claims that it is best for them to be hidden away from the public eye. These measures are meant not to ensure the safety and well-being of the young women themselves, but to protect the reputation of their parents and families.

---

[166] In general, see Catia Galatariotou, "Open Space/Closed Space: The Perceived Worlds of Kekaumenos and Digenes Akrites," in M. Mullett and D. Smythe, eds. *Alexios I Komnenos: Papers of the second Belfast Byzantine International Colloquium, 14-16 April 1989.* Vol. I: Papers. Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations, 4.1 (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 1996), pp.303-28.

[167] Kekaumenos, 121. θυγάτηρ δὲ ἀναίσχυντος οὐκ αὐτὴν μόνον ἠδίκησεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ γονεῖς καὶ τοὺς κατὰ γένος αὐτῇ διαφέροντας. τὰς θυγατέρας σου ὡς καταδίκους ἔχε ἐγκεκλεισμένας καὶ ἀπροόπτους, ἵνα μὴ ὡς ὑπὸ ἀσπίδος δηχθῇς.

Kekaumenos' advice to his sons regarding the women in their lives is clear. "For it is a

good thing that you should always keep a close watch on your daughter and your wife."[168] "It is

perilous to quarrel with women, but it is more perilous to be friendly with them. In both cases,

you will be hurt."[169] In the aforementioned anecdote of the man who gained access to household

in order to steal another man's wife by claiming to be her relative, Kekaumenos does bring a

well-born, beautiful, and virtuous woman into his narrative, but her virtues only serve to attract

unwanted attention and eventually results in the shame and dissolution of her husband's

household.[170]

Kekaumenos also has some interesting guidance for his sons when it comes to choosing a

wife. He counsels them to avoid the use of matchmakers in their hunt for wives, a practice

which the author suggests may have been fairly common.[171] These female matchmakers cannot

be trusted, for they may have been paid by eligible women to exaggerate their good qualities. He

also warns against taking a widow as a wife, for she may still remember her "first husband when

she is laid upon the marriage bed...And if they should both have children, what could be worse?

Strife and battles from morning till night, unceasing enemies and daily tumult. And those

[children] whom the father once dearly loved and at whose very sight he was delighted, now he

regards as enemies, having been laid low by a woman."[172]

---

[168] Kekaumenos 102.5-6. ἀγαθὸν γάρ ἐστιν ἵνα πάντοτε ἔχῃς ἀκρίβειαν εἴς τε τὴν θυγατέραν σου καὶ εἰς τὴν γυναῖκά σου.
[169] Kekaumenos 145.1-6. σφαλερόν ἐστι μάχεσθαι μετὰ γυναικῶν, σφαλερώτερον δὲ συμφιλιάζειν αὐταῖς· καὶ ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων γὰρ βλαβήσῃ. ὄφιν ἔχειν φίλον καὶ πονηρὸν ἄνθρωπον ἓν καὶ ταὐτόν ἐστιν· ἐκ στόματος γὰρ ἀμφοτέρων ἐξέρχεται ἰὸς θανατηφόρος.
[170] Kekaumenos 102.
[171] Kekaumenos 132.9-25. These matchmakers, called "*kourkousouras*," are not well attested in other sources.
[172] Kekaumenos 132.26-34: εἰ δὲ τῶν χρησίμων χηρῶν ἐστιν ἐκείνη, ἐπ' εὐνῆς ἀνακειμένη καὶ τοῦ παρθενικοῦ αὐτῆς ἀνδρὸς ἐπιμνησθεῖσα, μέγα ἐστέναξε, κἀκεῖνος ἴσως τῆς στεφανικῆς αὐτοῦ ἐνθυμηθεὶς ἐδάκρυσε,καὶ γέγονεν ἡ εὐνὴ πένθος. εἰ δὲ καὶ ἀμφότεροι παῖδας ἔχοιεν, τί χεῖρον γένοιτ' ἄν; ἔρις καὶ μάχαι ἀπὸ πρωΐας ἕως ἑσπέρας, ἔχθρα ἄσπονδος καὶ ταραχὴ καθημερινή. καὶ οὕς ποτε ἐπόθει ὁ πατὴρ φιλοστόργως καὶ ὁρῶν ἐτέρπετο, νῦν γυναικὶ ἡττηθεὶς ὡς ἐχθροὺς ἔχει, «οὐ φέρω, λέγων, δι' ὑμᾶς ταράσσεσθαι».

If Kekaumenos distrusts the women in his family, he is even more suspicious of the men who may have the opportunity to come into contact with them. In a passage that says as much about Kekaumenos' suspicion of his friends as his distrust of women, the author warns his sons against granting even a friend too much freedom within the household. For, he says, a friend may forget his bonds to you and begin asking about those closest to you. If he is granted too much license, "he may have the nerve to cast a seductive nod toward your wife and may gaze upon her with an unbridled gaze, and, if he is able, he will defile her."[173] In a further warning, Kekaumenos argues that one cannot trust his friends or his wife to manage the household while he is away performing his official duties.[174]

Kekaumenos' views on women are not all bad. He stresses his son's responsibility to honor and to provide for his mother and to "remember her birth pains," for "even if you ruled over all the world and every treasure was in your hands, you would still be unable to repay her."[175] He uses the relationship between a child and his mother and that between a brother and his sister as models for the kind of reverence one should show toward a female patron or lord (*despoina*).[176] One man who lost control of the city over which he ruled because of the supposed naivety of his niece is criticized by Kekaumenos for having saved himself when the settlement

---

[173] Kekaumenos 101.15-20. εἶτα ἐξουθενήσει τὴν ὑπηρεσίαν σου, τὴν τράπεζαν, τὴν τάξιν, ἐρωτήσει δὲ καὶ περὶ τῶν προσόντων σοι εἰ ἔχεις τοῦτο, εἰ ἐκεῖνο. καὶ τί πολλὰ λέγω; εἰ εὕρη ἄδειαν, νεύσει νεύματι ἐρωτικῷ πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκά σου καὶ ἀκολάστοις ὀφθαλμοῖς ἐμβλέψει πρὸς αὐτήν, καὶ εἰ δύναται, καὶ μιανεῖ αὐτήν· εἰ δ' οὖν, ἐξελθὼν καυχήσεται ἃ μὴ θέμις.

[174] Kekaumenos 96. ἐροῦσί σοι δὲ οἱ φίλοι σου εἴτε ἡ γυνή σου ἐξ ἀπειρίας· «ἐγχειρίσθητι κἂν ἐκπροσωπικὴν ἢ τὴν ἀρχοντίαν ἢ τὸ βασιλικὸν τῆς πολιτείας ἡμῶν καὶ ἔχεις διοικηθῆναι σύ τε καὶ οἶκός σου καὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποί σου» · ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀκούσῃς αὐτῶν. εἰ γὰρ πεισθεὶς τούτοις ὑπεισέλθῃς τινὰ τῶν τοιούτων δουλειῶν, ἄκουσον τί σοι συμβήσεται. εἰ μὲν ἀγωνί- σῃ περιστῆσαι τὸν δημόσιον καὶ τὰς καινοτομίας σου ἀνασῶσαι, καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων σου τὰς ῥόγας θέλεις ἀδικῆσαι καὶ ἔσχατον ἐμέσεις ἃ οὐκ ἀπήτησας·

[175] Kekaumenos 148: μνήσθητι ὠδῖνος μητρός σου, θηλῆς δὲ αὐτῆς μὴ ἐπιλάθῃ καὶ ἀπόδος αὐτῇ ἀγαθά· εἰ γὰρ καὶ πάσης γῆς κυριεύσῃς καὶ ἐν χερσί σου θησαυροὶ πάντες, οὐ δυνήσῃ τὸ ἴσον ἀνταποδοῦναι αὐτῇ.

[176] Kekaumenos 14.

fell, leaving his wife and children "in the hands of his enemies."[177] Kekaumenos states

unequivocally that "the man who buries his wife has lost along with her half or even more of his

[own] life, if she was good."[178] As a general rule, women appear in the *Strategikon* as vital

members of the household and even the very embodiment of the *genos*, but their role in the

narrative is primarily as potential weaknesses in these social institutions.

Kekaumenos' seemingly archaic views on women in the household may not have

matched reality, at least not exactly, in eleventh-century Byzantium, but neither is it an

innovation or aberration in the Romano-Byzantine tradition. In the *Life of St. Philaretos* (written

in the early ninth century), agents of empress Eirene are sent to find a suitable bride for her son.

The agents are hosted by the saint and his family, who is said to proclaim "We may be poor, but

our girls have never left their bedroom." Following Vinson's argument, this episode displays

decidedly Greek culture and norms, rather than Roman. This is true not only for the supposed

seclusion of Philaretos' daughters, but also the fact that the banquet held is apparently restricted

to all male participants. Similarly, when one of the three granddaughters, Maria, is singled out in

the *vita*, she is simply referred to as "the eldest," reflecting a Greek literary tradition of not

singling out women by name.[179]

The ideal separation of men and women has a long history in the Greek-speaking world,

reaching back into classical antiquity and beyond.[180] Numerous studies have shown that the

---

[177] Kekaumenos 78.35-7: Μαλαπέτζης φεύγων εἰσῆλθε μόνος εἰς πλοῖον καὶ σέσωσται σωτηρίαν ἐπίψογον καὶ μεταλύπης πρόξενον, τὴν δὲ γυναῖκα καὶ τὰ τέκνα κατέλιπε εἰς τὰς χεῖρας τῶν ἐχθρῶν.

[178] Kekaumenos 131: ὁ δὲ θάψας τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ τὸ ἥμισυ εἴτε καὶ τὸ πλεῖον τῆς ζωῆς αὐτοῦ συναπώλεσεν, εἴπερ ἀγαθή ἐστιν.

[179] Martha Vinson, "Romance and reality in the Byzantine bride shows," in *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900*, ed. by Leslie Brubaker and M.H. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.102-20, esp. p.114.

[180] Mary Harlow and Tim Parkin, "Looking for the Family: The Greek and Roman Background," in *Approaches to the Byzantine Family*, ed. L. Brubaker and S Tougher (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), pp.1-19; Roger Just, *Women in Athenian Law and Life* (London: Routledge, 1990).

reality of women's lives did not live up to these cultural ideals, but that does not render them irrelevant to the reconstruction of medieval Byzantine social and cultural values. Though he does not seem to have been particularly well-educated, Kekaumenos may have been influenced by Classical Greek models in both the style of his writing and in its content, just as many of his contemporaries.[181]

Kekaumenos' presentation of the role of women within the household (and the *genos*) may be extreme compared to other authors of the late eleventh century, but the differences are only in degree. Other sources generally agree that women contributed to the honor of their *genos* primarily through good marriages (and the production of offrspring in those marriages) and by remaining out of the public eye. Once again, Kekaumenos displays views largely in line with other Byzantine authors regarding the values and ideals of the *genos*, even if his rhetoric is rather more blunt and unforgiving than most.

Conclusion

In some ways, the cases of the Phokades and the Doukai are typical of elite *genē* of the tenth through twelfth centuries, even if they are equally exceptional for their success and prestige. Both families originated in Anatolia and the earliest members to make their way into the sources served largely in the Byzantine military. Like many families that can be said to have occupied the upper tiers of Byzantine society in this period, their time at the pinnacle of power

---

[181] Charlotte Roueché, "The Literary Background of Kekaumenos." In *Literarcy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. Catherine Holmes and Judith Waring (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp.111-38.

(even if we exclude the emperors each *genos* provided) really only lasted for two or three generations. The Doukai, in this case, become slightly more exceptional because of the long-lasting success enjoyed by their descendants into the thirteenth century and beyond. Still, it was not to the Doukai directly that the most elite individuals or families of the late Byzantine period looked. At the same time, in both cases, the reputations surrounding the surname far outlasted the lineages themselves, at least inasmuch as each family ceased to exist as a more or less cohesive kin group with (relatively) clearly defined in- and out-group.

Some of Kekaumenos' views and advice are seemingly at odds with those exhibited by his contemporaries, particular among the most elite *genē*. The kind of isolationism for which he advocates, and the image of a tight-knit household largely closed off from the wider world contrast sharply with the actions and ideals espoused by members of the *genos* of the Doukai or of the Komnenoi. Yet his own awareness of belonging to a family that extends beyond the walls of his household is clearly on display in his writing, and his repeated emphasis on the importance of gaining and maintaining the family's reputation place him squarely within the ideological framework of the aristocratic *genos* of the late eleventh century.

Kekaumenos may deny the female members of the family any agency and present them as little more than a potential weakness in group's cohesion and reputation, but this is precisely because of their central role as representatives of the family. Good marriages with prestigious *genē* were the key to a family's long-term survival in the Byzantine aristocracy. In a society in which reputation was a determining factor in establishing both social and political standing, daughters were effectively a microcosm of the family's collective identity, at least when it came to negotiations for marriage. Because of the nature by which reputation (and wealth) were generally accumulated in a medieval Byzantine context, male offspring had a greater opportunity

338

to enhance the family's standing through imperial office or title, exploits on the battlefield, or other actions. Of course, female members of the family were not entirely passive recipients of the *genos'* reputation. Following both Kekaumenos' logic and the views expressed in many other sources from roughly the same period, daughters and wives who remained largely outside of public view contributed to the *genos'* honor by doing exactly that. In most cases, families would probably have been pleased to know that female kinsmen remained unmentioned in surviving sources.

Common to all cases examined here is a clear sense of belonging to a kin group that extended beyond the individual household, whose cohesiveness and reputation was built around the family name and whose interests were furthered by its members in a variety of ways. This emphasis on cohesion within and loyalty to one's *genos* became strong enough to allow it to form the basis, or at least the partial basis, of the Komnenian model of government.[182]

---

[182] Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, pp.184-203.

Conclusion

This study has used several different approaches in order to bring some clarity to the nature of the Byzantine *genos* as a form of the family and its role in Byzantine society in the tenth through the twelfth centuries. It has shown that it is possible to define the *genos* in such a way that is broadly consistent with Byzantine sources and that this definition, however imperfect, allows for a greater degree of precision in modern studies of Byzantine kinship and society. It has argued that changes in the vocabulary of kinship between the ninth and thirteenth centuries attest the central place of the *genos* in the Byzantine understanding of kinship, and that its importance steadily increased over this time. It has demonstrated that the *genos* was the principal form of the singular family in questions of marriage law, and that debates in marriage law in eleventh- and twelfth-century Byzantium were framed as debates over the nature of the *genos* itself. It has claimed that the increased role of the *genos* corresponded with a renewed interest in the ties of blood, which was itself related to the greater role of genealogical ties as determining factors in social standing from the mid-eleventh century. Finally, it has contended that the heritable surname was perhaps the single most important development for the aristocratic *genos* in the period covered in this study. The surname, as the outward marker of one's *genos*,

encapsulated the family's reputation and was more likely than most other properties to survive intact from one generation to the next than other possessions. The power of the family name could even outlast the social or political relevance of members of the *genos* itself, as in the case of both the Phokades and the Doukai.

The *genos* was not an amorphous, poorly defined "extended family" in medieval Byzantium. Sources of diverse genres across the entire period covered by this study offer a relatively clear definition of the *genos*, which is broadly consistent across time and space. This does not mean that the *genos* did not alter in form or function over the period covered by this study. Rather, the concept remained stable in its most fundamental aspects, while change occurred in the precise role it played in the political and social lives of the Byzantine elite and its relative importance in society more broadly.

The Byzantine *genos* was the expression of the consanguineous family, effectively immune to changes or additions through means other than biological reproduction. This includes the act of marriage, in which each spouse maintained their identity as members of their natal *genos* even as their union marked the beginning of a new *genos* (after the birth of their children). For members of the social and political elite in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the *genos* was marked by a heritable surname, but a family name was not a prerequisite for the existence of or membership in a *genos*, especially for those who did not rank among the aristocracy.

At its most basic level, the *genos* was a universal feature of Byzantine society. Everyone, regardless of social standing, was part of a *genos*. While the *oikos*/household might indeed have been the most widespread social unit on the ground at any time in Byzantium's history, the *genos* formed the fundamental bonds underlying the household and represented the most basic form of kinship, upon which all these other forms of the family were built. Of course, the many features

341

that distinguished the twelfth-century aristocratic *genos* from earlier aristocratic kin groups also separated it from the *genos* to which non-elite members of twelfth-century society could lay claim.

Though the sources are sometimes imprecise in their language, the *genos* was distinct from the *oikos* in numerous aspects. Unlike the *oikos*, the *genos* was not defined in whole or in part by shared living space. The ties that bound members of a single *genos* were biological, or at least imagined as such, rendering slaves or other "men" attached to the household ineligible for membership in the *genos*. The *genos* indeed encompassed a larger number of relatives than the average *oikos*, but the two groups do not exactly correspond to the nuclear versus "extended" family. In fact, to claim any sort of dichotomous opposition between the *oikos* and the *genos* would be a mistake.

It may be useful to regard Byzantium, at least in the period covered here, as a society of two families. Every individual belonged to both an *oikos* and a *genos* simultaneously. These two forms of "the family" in Byzantium had fundamentally different definitions, foci, and values, but there is little to indicate any sort of competition between the two, or that the *genos* gained in importance at the expense of the household. The choice of which form of family was most important would have depended on circumstance. The *genos* was most relevant in issues of politics, social standing, and questions of marriage, while the *oikos* moved to the fore in such spheres as affective family relationships and daily life, as well as economic production. Certainly by the eleventh century, if not earlier, the *genos* cannot be said to have been any less vital or fundamental to Byzantine society than the *oikos*.

There is little indication that the *genos*, in contrast to the *oikos*, had anything approaching a rigid, hierarchical structure. The sources do occasionally allude to individuals acting as a kind

of head of the family, but such instances seem to be highly circumstantial, and it is not clear to what extent all members of the *genos* would have recognized this leadership either in a single moment or, especially, over the long term. One of the primary responsibilities of this head of the family would have been the arrangement of marriages, especially for female members of the *genos*. This, in fact, would partly explain the marriage policies of Manuel I Komnenos, who is known to have involved himself in the marriages of nearly the entire aristocracy in his day. This aristocracy was built around the *genos* of the Komnenoi, so Manuel's actions might be understood as in keeping with an older tradition of *genos* leadership rather than an innovation in imperial marriage policy. Unsurprisingly, it is most often older men who seem to play these leadership roles within the *genos*, but qualifications of age and gender seem to have been driven more by broader cultural values rather than any sort of power dynamic specific to the *genos*. Women could and did act in this role, as Anna Dalassene famously did prior to and during the reign of her son, Alexios I, though such instances remain rare.[1]

The shared vocabulary of ethnic or national identity with that of the *genos* as family was more than just a linguistic coincidence. The *genos*, on any scale, appears as the clearest and perhaps strongest indicator of collective identity at any time covered by this study. The marked increase in the concept's employment as the preferred term for the singular family thus indicates the greater importance of the *genos* (and thus one's kinsmen) as the locus of personal loyalty and identity, especially among the elite, from the mid-eleventh century onward. Ideals of loyalty and expectations of mutual support that had been associated with the *genos* of the Romans or of the Christians for centuries also characterized the *genos* as kin group by the eleventh or twelfth

---

[1] Anna Komnene goes to great pains in the pages of her Alexiad to make her grandmother's exercise of authority seem legitimate. Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, 3.5-8.

centuries. The combined evidence suggests a gradual shift in the values of the Byzantine elite, in which the loyalty and values related to the *genos* of the Romans was, partially at least, coopted by the *genos* as kin group.

Byzantine authors had at their disposal a number of different terms to express the singular family, many of which appear as (rough) synonyms for the *genos* (especially *genea* and *phylon*). The fact that both the authors of written sources and members of the aristocracy themselves (judging by surviving lead seals) settled on *genos* by the mid-eleventh century, then, is not insignificant. Surely they were well aware of the pre-existing connotations of the term. The continuing identification of certain *genē* with specific places of origin (*patrides*), combined with the linguistic and conceptual correspondence of the *genos* as family group with the *genos* as ethnic group, suggests that future studies may even show that the devolution of loyalties and political fracturing that became so visible during the separatist uprisings of the 1180s and after 1204 may be detectable already in the eleventh century.

Legal sources concerning marriage impediments unequivocally attest that the *genos*, not the *oikos*, was the form of the family concerned in this context. Debates over the extension of marriage impediments following the issuance of the Tome of Sisinnios in 997. The participants in these debates, which stretched over much of the eleventh century, constructed their arguments on the premise that their task was to find the natural limits of shared blood, marking the outer limits of the singular family. Byzantine thinkers present impediments to consanguineous marriages as determining the outer limits of the *genos*, but it is difficult to say with any certainty the extent to which such limits mattered in the *genos'* social and political role outside of marriage arrangements.

Twelfth-century legal debates over marriage impediments confirm the impression given by other sources that spouses maintained their identity as members of their natal *genos* even after the marital union. This fact was relevant beyond such theoretical discussions, as various sources display numerous examples of adults, both men and women, identifying themselves with their parental *genos* throughout their lives and acting on its behalf. In those rare instances in which one can see a woman's perspective preserved directly in the sources, they seem to have generally placed their relationship with their parents and their natal *genos* slightly above that with their husband, at least in the ways in which they chose to self-identify.

Descent within the Byzantine *genos*, like inheritance, was reckoned bilaterally. Nevertheless, some individuals may not have recognized a woman's ability to pass on lineage as completely as did men, as attested by John Zonaras' critique of Constantine X Doukas' ancestry. While such sentiments are admittedly rare in contemporary Byzantine sources, the fact that Zonaras chose to employ this method to discredit the emperor presupposes an audience ready to believe him. Male ancestors are certainly more visible in the sources and apparently more influential in the construction of a *genos'* identity, but it cannot be said that the Byzantine *genos* was either patrilineal or that it favored primogeniture in any sense.

Some authors may have been influenced by Galenic or Aristotelian (or other) ideas concerning human reproduction in their favoring of male-line (agnatic) descent, as the growth in importance of the *genos* among the Byzantine elite brought with it a renewed interest in the nature of ties of blood. According to Byzantine thought, the significance of shared blood and heritable traits may have extended beyond that of modern genetics, yet it was nevertheless understood to be governed by nature and, thus, comprehensible through the natural sciences. This may go some way toward explaining the surprisingly prominent role played by medical

texts and authorities in discussions of kinship in sources as diverse as legal commentaries and letters. It could equally open new lines of inquiry for future studies of kinship in Byzantium and the Mediterranean world.

Heritable surnames were not only the most visible (and perhaps the most important) markers of *genos* affiliation among the Byzantine elite, they were also among their most valuable assets. The development of family names gave a public identity to aristocratic *genē*, which in turn became the locus of the family's reputation. Reputation, both individual and collective, was vital to social standing and political efficacy in Byzantium in most periods, but this was especially true from the mid-eleventh century onward. Unlike imperial titles, land, or other properties, heritable surnames were immune to confiscation by the emperor or his agents. Nor were they subject to diminution over several generations due to partible inheritance practices. Byzantine authors frequently refer to individuals only by their surname, which would have served to reinforce the perception that an individual's actions and identity was firmly intertwined with that of his or her *genos*.

The maintenance and dissemination of their family's reputation among both members of the aristocracy and the general populace was thus a foremost concern for members of an elite *genos*. Lead seals, histories (including traces of now lost family histories), court rhetoric, and even saints' lives preserve written records of the Byzantine aristocracy's efforts to this end. As in the examples of the Phokades and the Doukai, such efforts could be so successful that the image evoked by the surname could far outlast the independent power and identity of the family itself.

The aristocratic *genos* of the mid-twelfth century was in many ways distinct from the aristocratic family in the ninth, but there is little evidence to support any kind of revolutionary

change in fundamental kinship structures.[2] In keeping with the findings of several scholars, and repeating a pattern found also in studies of medieval Europe, the development of the aristocratic *genos* in medieval Byzantium was a gradual one, whose origins, in some sense, lie much earlier than the tenth century. In the period covered here, there was a shift, however gradual, toward a greater sense of belonging to a *genos* and a clear growth in that fact's importance in social and political contexts. By the twelfth century at least, there is ample evidence that the line between the in-group and others had grown sharper, and there were more or less generally accepted rules governing who was a member of the *genos*, how they earned that distinction, and what was expected of them as a result.

The gradual nature of the development of the *genos* is also visible in the language of the sources. Sources written prior to the mid-eleventh century display a larger degree of linguistic variation when describing such family groups than those that come later (which overwhelmingly prefer *genos*), suggesting that the genos went from simply one of many terms denoting a kin group to the preferred method of denoting the consanguineous family, and the word is more than twice as likely to appear in sources written after 1050 as those written just half a century earlier. Yet, already in the second half of the ninth century some of the language that would become closely associated with the *genos*, notably nobility "by blood," is visible in the sources, if on a much more limited scale than in the later eleventh or, especially, the twelfth century. Indeed, with only a few exceptions, the language of kinship in general displays a large degree of

---

[2] This argument is indeed similar to that made by Constance Bouchard regarding noble families in medieval France. "Hence I would like to propose, rather than a changeable sort of noble family consciousness that underwent marked transformations from the tenth to the eleventh centuries, a relatively conservative form of family structure that was continuously open to new individuals and new lineages but incorporated these into its preexisting structures." Constance Bouchard, *Those of My Blood: Creating Noble Families in Medieval Francia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p.178.

continuity and stability over the entire period studied here. The most important variation seems to have been with the use of the term *genos* itself, which would become the core of a specialized vocabulary that developed into a codified system of values.

The eleventh century does indeed appear to be a moment of accelerated change, but that change seems largely have been cultural. Some of the main characteristics of the *genos* (e.g. emphasis on shared blood and famous lineage or the use of a surname) are much more pronounced in the 1090s than they had been in the first decade of the century. The relatively weak leadership offered by many emperors in Constantinople in the eleventh century almost certainly contributed to the growth of the power and independence of aristocratic families, just as the quickening economy and the availability of imperial titles or offices to the burgeoning merchant class quickened the aristocracy's efforts to present itself as a nobility of blood and ancient privilege. The ideals and values of the *genos* were elevated and elaborated alongside the rise of this aristocracy's influence at the highest levels of Byzantine politics and society. This process may have accelerated after 1056, when individuals vying for (and achieving) the imperial throne began to rely on the prestige of their *genos* and the political connections achieved through marriage alliances, rather than a connection to the Macedonian dynasty, for legitimacy and effectiveness as ruler. This not only brought the politics of blood and reputation to highest office in the empire, it also would have encouraged those not already associated with the throne to display their own *genos'* worth and to further its collective interests, as it became increasingly clear that this had become the path to both political and social elevation.

Despite its importance in the politics of the eleventh century and later, the *genos* never received legal recognition (beyond marriage legislation) or official status in the Byzantine administration. Under the Komnenian emperors, especially Manuel I, the *genos* came closest to

achieving some sort of semi-institutionalized status. This was a result of the fact that membership in the *genos* of the Komnenoi had become a *sine qua non* for members of the social and political elite, as well as the fact that the order of precedence at the imperial court came to be determined by closeness (in kinship terms) to the emperor. Paul Magdalino has already shown the ways in which kinship designations effectively took the place of imperial titles at the court of Manuel I Komnenos.[3]

The Komnenian reforms and family-based politics are alternately praised for contributing to the Byzantine resurgence in the twelfth century or blamed for the system's ultimate failure in the 1180s and 1190s. In the short term, there is little doubt that the Komnenoi succeeded because they pulled in potential rivals into their *genos*, which then formed basis of the imperial (and aristocratic) power structure.[4] At the same time, the very strength of the bond of consanguinity and the success of Komnenian efforts to absorb the aristocracy within their extended family resulted in the dynasty's eventual downfall, as the late twelfth century saw the appearance of numerous rival claimants with equally acceptable claims to the throne.[5] Still, if the Komnenoi succeeded to any degree in revitalizing an empire on the brink of total collapse, it was in no small part due to their ability to harness the unifying power of the *genos*.

By the middle of the twelfth century, the Byzantine *genos* was a politically effective social group based upon ties of consanguineous kinship, but, importantly, it was also a cultural construct, an idea that held very real power, yet defies easy categorization. If a member of a prominent *genos* would have had trouble listing all the other members of that *genos*, it does not

---

[3] Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). See especially Appendix 2, pp.501-09.
[4] Magdalino, *Empire of Manuel I Komnenos*, p.187.
[5] Barbara Hill, *Imperial Women in Byzantium, 1025-1204: Power, Patronage, and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.140.

diminish the significance of the concept. As in other identity sets, its functionality could be circumstantial. The *genos* was a point of reference for individual and group identity, a microcosm (however imperfect) of the *genos* of the Romans to which one might refer in order to demonstrate social standing or to establish a common goal amongst others. Like the *genos* of the Romans, the *genos* as kin group called its members to act for the common good of the group and to participate in its reputation. This impulse had become particularly strong and widespread by the end of the period covered by this dissertation, and it is in this sense that the aristocratic *genos* of the twelfth century looks remarkably different from anything that existed in earlier periods. Simply put, the most important changes associated with the *genos*, and perhaps with Byzantine kinship more broadly, between the early tenth and late twelfth centuries were cultural, rather than social in nature.

Bibliography

Electronic Resources

Dumbarton Oaks Hagiography Database

> http://www.doaks.org/research/byzantine/projects/hagiography_database/

Dumbarton Oaks Online Catalogue of Byzantine Lead Seals

> http://www.doaks.org/resources/seals

Prosopographie der mittelbyzantinischen Zeit

> http://telota.bbaw.de/pmbz/index_engl.html

Prosopography of the Byzantine World (King's College, London; covering 1025-1150)

> http://www.pbw.kcl.ac.uk/

Thesaurus Linguae Graecae

> http://www.tlg.uci.edu

Primary Sources

Actes d'Iviron. Edited by Jacques Lefort, Nicolas Oikonomidès, Denise Papachryssanthou, and Hélène Métrévéli. 4 vols. Paris : P. Lethielleux, 1985-95.

Akropolites, George. *History*. Edited by A. Heisenberg. *Georgii Acropolitae opera*. Leipzig: Teubner, 1901.

_____. *History*. Translated by Ruth Macrides. *George Akropolites, The History: Introduction, Translation and Commentary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Archives de l'Athos. 22 vols. Series editor Gabriel Millet. Paris : P. Lethielleux, 1937-.

Aristakes de Lastivert. *Récit des malheurs de la nation arménienne*, edited and translated by Marius Canard and Haïg Berbérien. Brussels: Éditions de Byzantion, 1973.

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by C. Rowe, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

_____. *De generatione animalium*, edited by H.J. Drossaart Lulofs, *Aristotelis de generatione animalium*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.

Attaleiates, Michael. *History*. Edited by W. Brunet de Presle, *Michaelis Attaliotae Historia*. Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae 50. Series editor Immanuel Bekker. Bonn: Weber, 1853.

_____. *History*. Edited and translated by Anthony Kaldellis and Dimitris Krallis, *Michael Attaleiates: The History*. Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 16. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2012.

_____. *Diataxis*. Edited by Paul Gautier, "La diataxis de Michel Attaliate." *REB* 39 (1981): 5-143.

Baldi, Davide, ed. *Etymologicum Symeonis*. Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca 79. Turnhout: Brepols, 2013.

Basil of Caesarea. *Letters*. Edited by Y. Courtonne, *Saint Basile: Lettres*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1957.

Blemmydes, Nikephoros. *Epitome Logica*. PG 142.

Brand, Charles M. "Two Byzantine Treatises on Taxation." *Traditio* 25 (1969): 35-60.

Bryennios, Nikephoros. *Material for History*, ed. P. Gautier, *Nicephori Bryennii Historiarum libri quattuor*. Brussels : Byzantion, 1975.

_____. Material for History. Edited and translated by M. Salud Baldrich López, *Nicéforo Brienio, Materio de Historia*. Granada: Centro de Estudios Bizantinos, Neogriegos y Chipriotas, 2012.

Cammelli, G., ed. *Démétrius Cydonès: Correspondance*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1930.

Choniates, Michael. *Opera*. Edited by S.P. Lampros, Μιχαὴλ Ἀκομινάτου τοῦ χωνιάτου τὰ σωζόμενα. Athens : Parnassos, 1879-1880.

Choniates, Niketas. *History*. Edited by J.A. Van Dieten, Nicetae Choniatae Historia. 2 vols. Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1975.

_____. *History*. Translated by H.J. Magoulias, *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984.

_____. *Orations*, ed. Van Dieten, *Nicetae Choniatae Orationes et Epistulae*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1972.

Christophoros Mytilenaios. *Poems*. Edited by E. Kurtz, *Die Gedichte des Christophoros Mitylenaios*. Leipzig: August Neumanns Verlag, 1903.

Ceremony Book. Edited by J.J. Reiske, *De ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus*. CSHB 9-11. Series editor B.G. Niebuhr. Bonn: Impensis E. Weberis, 1829.

Confraternity of Thebes. John W. Nesbitt and J. Witta, "A confraternity of the Comnenian era." *BZ* 68 (1975): 360-84.

Connor, Carolyn and W. Robert Connor, eds. *Life and Miracles of Saint Luke of Steiris*. Brookline, MA: Hellenic College Press, 1994.

Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (emperor). *De Thematibus*. Edited by A. Pertusi, *De thematibus: Introduzione, testo critico, comment*. Modena: Foto Lito Dini, 1952.

Dagron, Gilbert and Haralambie Mihaescu, eds. *Le Traité sur la guérilla (De velitatione) de l'empereur Nicéphore Phocas (963-69)*. Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1986.

Darrouzès, Jean. *Documents inédits d'ecclésiologie byzantines*. Paris: Institut Français d'études byzantines, 1966.

_____. *Épistoliers byzantins du Xe siècle*. Archives de l'Orient Chrétien 6. Paris: Institut français d'études byzantine, 1960.

_____. *Georges et Dèmètrios Tornikès: Lettres et discours*. Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1970.

_____. "Les discours d'Euthyme Tornikès (1200-1205)." *REB* 26 (1968): 49-121.

De administrando imperio. Edited by Gyula Moravcsik, translated by Romilly Jenkins, *De administrando imperio. Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus*. New revised edition. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967.

Dennis, George T., ed. and trans. *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1985.

Détorakis and Mossay, eds. "Un office byzantine inédit pour ceux qui sont morts à la guerre, dans le Cod. Sin. Gr. 734-735." *Le Muséon* 101 (1988): 183-211.

Digenes Akrites. Edited and translated by Elizabeth Jeffreys, *Digenis Akritis: The Grottaferrata and Escorial Versions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Dölger, Franz. *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565-1453*. 3 vols. Munich: C.H. Beck, 1977-2009.

Efthymiadis, Stephanos and J.M. Featherstone, "Establishing a Holy Lineage: Theodore the Stoudite's Funerary Catechism for His Mother (BHG 2422)." In *Theatron: Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter*, edited by M. Grünbart, 13-51. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007.

Ekloga. Edited and translated by Edwin H. Freshfield, *A Manual of Roman Law: The Ecloga*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926.

_____. Edited by Ludwig Burgmann, *Ecloga: Das Gesetzbuch Leons III und Konstantinos V*. Forschungen zur Byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte 10. Frankfurt am Main: Löwenklau Gesellschaft, 1983.

Eustathios of Thessaloniki. *Letters*. Edited by F. Kolovou, *Die Briefe des Eustathios von Thessalonike*. Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 239. Munich-Leipzig: K.G. Saur, 2006.

Eustathios Rhomaios. *Peira*, ed. J. Zepos and P. Zepos, *Jus graecoromanum*, vol. 4. Athens: Phēxēs, 1931.

Ferrari, Gianno. *I documenti Greci medioevali di diritto private dell'Italia meridionale.* Byzantinische Archiv 4. Leipzig: Teubner, 1910.

Fögen, Marie Theres. *Das Lexikon zur Hexabiblos aucta*. Forschungen zur Byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte, Band 17. Frankfurt am Main: Löwenklau Gesellschaft, 1990.

Galen. De usu partium. Translated by Margaret Tallmadge May, *Galen: On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body. Περὶ χρείας μορίων/De usu partium*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968.

_____. *On the Formation of the Fetus*. Edited by Diethard Nickel, Galen: Über die Ausformung der Keimlinge. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001.

Gautier, Paul. "La curieuse ascendance de Jean Tzetzès," *REB* 28 (1970): 207-20.

_____. "Le typikon de la Théotokos Evergétis." *REB* 40 (1982): 5-101.

_____. "Le typikon de la Théotokos Kécharitôménè." *REB* 43 (1985): 5-165.

_____. "Le typikon de sébaste Grégoire Pakourianos." *REB* 42 (1984): 5-145.

Genesios, Joseph. History. Edited by J. Lesmüller-Werner and J. Thurn, eds. *Iosephi Genesii libri quattuor*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1978.

Geoponika. Edited and translated by Andrew Dalby, *Geoponika: Farm Work*. Gutenberg Press, Malta: Prospect Books, 2011.

Grdzelisdze, Tamara, trans. *Georgian Monks on Mount Athos: Two Eleventh-Century Lives of the Hegoumenoi of Iviron*. London: Bennett and Bloom, 2009.

Grumel, V. and J. Darrouzès, eds. *Les Regestes des actes du patriarcat du Constantinople*. 7 vols. Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1971-1991.

Guillou, André, ed. *Les Actes grecs de S. Maria di Messina: enquête sur les populations grecques d'Italie du sud et de Sicile (XIe-XIIVe s.)*. Palermo: Istituto siciliano di studi bizantini neoellenici, 1963.

_____. *Les Archives de Saint-Jean-Prodrome sur le Mont Ménécée*. Bibliothèque Byzantine, Documents 3. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1955.

Haldon, J.F., ed. and trans. *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions CFHB* 28. Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1990.

Italikos, Michael. Letters and Orations. Edited and translated by P. Gautier, *Michel Italikos: Lettres et discours*. Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1972.

Kaldellis, Anthony, ed. and trans. *Mothers and Sons, Fathers and Daughters: The Byzantine Family of Michael Psellos*. South Bend, IA: University of Notre Dame, 2006.

Kekaumenos. *Strategikon*. Edited and translated by D. Tsougkarakis. Athens: Agrostis, 1993.

_____. Edited by M.D. Spadaro, Raccomandazioni e consigli di un galantuomo. Alessandria, Italy: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998.

Kinnamos, John. *History of the Deeds of John and Manuel Komnenos*. Edited by A. Meineke, *Ioannis Cinnami epitome rerum ab Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis gestarum.* Bonn: Weber, 1836.

Komnene, Anna. *Alexiad*, ed. D.R. Reinsch and A. Kambylis, *Annae Comnenae Alexias*. CFHB 40. Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 2001.

_____. *Alexiad*. Translated by E.R.A. Sewter, *Anna Comnena: The Alexiad*. London: Penguin, 1969.

_____. *Preface to the Diataxis*. Edited and translated by Stratis Papaioannou, "Anna Komnene's Will." In *Byzantine Religious Culture: Studies in Honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*, eds. Sullivan, Fisher, and Papaioannou, 99-121. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

Komnenos, Alexios I. *Mousai*. Ed. P. Maas, "Die Musen des Kaisers Alexios I." *BZ* 22 (1913): 348-69.

Kurtz, E., ed. "Unedierte Texte aus der Zeit des Kaisers Johannes Komnenos," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 16 (1907): 69-119.

Lampsidis, Odysseus. "Ho ek Pontou hosios Nikon ho Metanoeite." *Archeion Pontou Supplement* 13 (1982): 252-56.

Laurent, V., ed. *Documents de sigillographhie byzantine: La collection C. Orghidan*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1952.

_____. *Les sceaux byzantins du médailler Vatican*. Medagliere della Biblioteca Vaticana I. Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1962.

Leo VI (emperor). *Homilies*, ed. Theodora Antonopoulou, *Leonis VI Sapientis Imperatoris Byzantini Homiliae*. Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca 63. Turnhout: Brepols, 2008.

_____. *Novellae*. Edited and translated by P. Noailles and A. Dain, *Les novelles de Léon VI le sage*. Paris: Société d'édition 'Les belles lettres,' 1944.

_____. *Tactica*. Edited and translated by George Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI*. Revised edition. Dumbarton Oaks Texts 12. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2014.

Leo the Deacon. *History*. Translated by Alice-Mary Talbot and Denis F. Sullivan, *The History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2005.

_____. Edited by C.B. Hase, *Leonis diaconi Caloënsis Historiae libri decem*. Berlin: Weber, 1828.

Life of Basil the Younger. Edited and translated by Denis F. Sullivan, Alice-Mary Talbot, and Stamatina McGrath, *The Life of Saint Basil the Younger: Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Moscow Version*. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2014.

Life of Euthymios Patriarch of Constantinople. Edited and translated by Patricia Karlin-Hayter, *Vita Euthymii Patriarchae CP*. Brussels: Éditions de *Byzantion*, 1970.

Life of St. Michael Maleïnos. Edited and translated by L. Petit, *Vie et office de Michel Maléinos*. Paris: Picard et fils, 1903.

Life of St. Philaretos. Edited and translated by M.-H. Fourney and M. Leroy, "La vie de S. Philarète," *Byzantion 9* (1934): 85-170.

Liudprand of Cremona. *Antapodosis* and *Relatio de Legatione Constantinopolitana*. Edited by Paolo Chiesa, *Liudprandi Cremonensis: Antapodosis; Homelia paschalis; Historia Ottonis; Relatio de Legatione Constantinopolitana*. Corpus Christianorum 156. Turnhout: Brepols, 1998.

McGeer, Eric. *The Land Legislation of the Macedonian Emperors.* Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2000.

McGeer, E., J. Nesbitt, and N. Oikonomides, eds. *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and the Fogg Museum of Art*. 6 vols. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2005.

Macrides, Ruth, trans. *George Akropolites. The History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Manasses, Konstantinos. Ekphrasis *of the Earth in the form of a woman*. Edited by O. Lampsidis, "Der vollständige Text der ΕΚΦΡΑΣΙΣ ΓΗΣ des Konstantinos Manasses." *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 41 (1991): 189-205.

Martin-Hisard, B. "La vie de Jean et Euthyme: le statut du monastère des Ibères sur l'Athos." *REB* 49 (1991): 67-142.

Mavropous, John. *Letters.* Edited and translated by A. Karpozilos, *The Letters of John Mauropous, Metropolitan of Euchaita*. *CFHB* 34. Thessaloniki: Association for Byzantine Research, 1990.

Mavroudi, Maria V. *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation: The Oneirocriticon of Achmet and its Arabic Sources.* Leiden: Brill, 2002.

Menander Rhetor. Edited with translation and commentary by D.A. Russell and N.G. Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.

Mesarites, Nikolaos. *Funeral Oration for his Brother Ioannes*. Edited by A. Heisenberg, "Neue Quellen zur Geschichte des lateinischen Kaisertums und der Kirchenunion." *Sitzungsberichte der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Philosophisch-philologische und historische Klasse* 5 (1922): 25-75.

Migne, J.P., ed. *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Graeca*. 161 vols. Paris: J.P. Migne, 1857-89.

Miklosich, Franciscus and Joseph Müller, eds. *Acta et diplomata Graeca medii aevi sacra et profana.* 8 vols. Vienna: C. Gerold, 1860-90.

Nikolaos Mystikos. *Letters*, ed. and trans. R.J.H. Jenkins and L.G. Westerink, *Nikolaos I, Mystikos, Saint, Patriarch of Constantinople, 852-925*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1973.

Oikonomidès Nicolas, and John Nesbitt, eds. *Catalogue of Byzantine Seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art*. Vol. III: *West, Northwest and Central Asia Minor and the Orient*. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1996.

Papadopoulos-Kerameus, A., ed. *Varia græca sacra. Sbornik grecheskikh neizdannykh bogoslovskikh tekstov IV-XV viekov.* St. Petersburg, 1909.

Pertusi, A., ed. "Una acolouthia militare inedita del X secolo," *Aevum* 22 (1948): 145-68.

Petit, L., ed. "Office inédit en l'honeur de Nicéphore Phocas" *BZ* 13 (1904): 398-420.

_____. "Vie de St. Michel Maléinos." *Revue de l'Orient chrétien* 7 (1902): 543-94.

Porphyry of Tyre. *Introduction* (*Isagoge*). Translated with commentary by Jonathan Barnes. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003.

Psellos, Michael. *Chronographia*. Edited and translated by B. Karalis, *Michaelis Pselli Chronographia*. 2 vols. Athens: Agrostis, 1992-3.

_____. *Chronographia*. Translated by E.R.A. Sewter. *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*. London: Penguin, 1966.

_____. *De omnifaria doctrina*, ed. L.G. Westerink. *Michael Psellus, De omnifaria doctrina*. Utrecht: J.L. Beijers, 1948.

_____. *Letters*. Edited by E. Kurtz and F. Drexl, *Michaelis Pselli Scripta Minora*, vol. 2: *Epistulae*. Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1941.

_____. *Orations*. Edited by G. Dennis, *Michaelis Pselli Orationes, Forenses et Acta*. Stuttgart and Leipzig: Teubner, 1994.

_____. *Poems*, ed. L.G. Westerink, *Michaelis Pselli Poemata*. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1992.

Rhalles, G.A. and M. Potles, eds. Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱέρων κανόνων. 6 vols. Athens: G. Chartophylakos, 1852-56.

Rosenqvist J.O., ed. and trans. *The hagiographic Dossier of St. Eugenios of Trepizond in Codex Athous Dionysiou 154*. Acta Universitatis Uppsaliensis. Studia Byzantina Uppsaliensia 5. Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 1996.

Sathas, K., ed. Μεσαιωνικὴ βιβλιοθήκη ἢ Συλλογὴ ἀνεκδότων μνημείων τῆς ἑλληνικὴς ἱστορίας. Venice: Τύποις του φοινικός, 1876.

Schminck, A. "Vier eherechtliche Entscheidungen aus dem 11. Jahrhundert," *Fontes Minores* III (1979): 221-79.

Skylitzes Continuatus. Edited and translated by E.Th. Tsolakis, Ἡ Συνέχεια τῆς Χρονογραφίας τοῦ Ἰωάννου Σκυλίτση. Thessalonike: Etaireia Makedonikon Spoudon, 1968.

Skylitzes, John. *Synopsis of Histories.* Edited by J. Thurn, *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum.* CFHB 5. Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1973.

_____. Synopsis of Histories. Translated by John Wortley, *John Skylitzes: A synopsis of Byzantine history, 811-1057.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Stethatos, Niketas. *The Life of Saint Symeon the New Theologian*. Translated by Richard P.H. Greenfield, *The Life of Saint Symeon the New Theologian*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Straboromanos, Manuel. *Poems and epigrams*. Edited by P. Gautier, "Le dossier d'un haut fonctionnaire d'Alexis Ier Comnène, Manuel Straboromanos." *Revue des études byzantines* 23 (1965): 168-204.

Talbot, Alice-Mary, ed. and trans. *Byzantine Defenders of Images: Eight Saints' Lives in English Translation*. Byzantine Saints' Lives in Translation 2. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1998.

_____. *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation*. Byzantine Saints' Lives in Translation 1. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1996.

Theodosios the Deacon. De Creta capta. Edited by H. Criscuolo, *Theodosii diaconi de Creta capta*. Leipzig: Teubner, 1979.

Theophanes Continuatus. Edited by Immanuel Bekker, *Theophanes continuatus, Ioannes Caminiata, Symeon Magister, Georgius Monachus continuatus*. Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae 33. Bonn: E. Weber, 1838.

Theophilos Antecessor. *Paraphrasis Institutionum*. Edited by J.H.A. Lokin, Roos Meijering, B.H. Stolte, and N. van der Wal, *Theophili Antecessoris Paraphrasis Institutionum*. Groningen: Chimaira, 2010.

Theophylaktos Hephaistos. *Letters*. Edited and tranlated by P. Gautier, *Théophylacte d'Achrida: Lettres*. CFHB 16. Thessalonike: Association de recherches byzantines, 1986.

Thomas, John and Angela Hero. *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*. 5 vols. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000.

Timarion. Edited by R. Romano, *Timarione*. Naples: Unversità di Napoli, 1974.

_____. Translated by B. Baldwin, *Timarion*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984.

Turdeanu, E. *Le Dit de Nicéphore II Phocas et son épouse Théophano. Textes slaves et traduction française.* Thessaloniki: Association hellénique des études slaves, 1976.

Vasiliev, A.A. *Byzance et les Arabes.* 4 vols. Brussels: Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales, 1935-68.

Vryonis, Spyros. "The will of a Byzantine provincial magnate, Eustathios Boilas." *DOP* 11 (1957): 263-77.

Wortley, John, ed. *The Spiritually Beneficial Tales of Paul, Bishop of Monembasia*. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1996.

Yahya of Antioch. History. Edited and translated by Ignace Kratchkovsky, *Histoire de Yahya ibn Sa'id d'Antioch*. Patrologia Orientalis 47.4. Turnhout: Brepols, 1997.

Zepos, Ioannes and Panagiotes Zepos, eds. *Jus graecoromanum*, 8 vols. Aalen: Scientia, 1962.

Zonaras, John. *Epitome of Histories*. Edited by T. Büttner-Wobts, *Ioannis Zonarae epitome historiarum libri XIII usque ad XVIII*. Bonn: Teubner, 1897.

Secondary Sources

Adontz, Nicholas. *Études Arméno-Byzantines.* Lisbonne : Bibliotheque Arménienne de la Fondation Calouste Gulbekian, 1965.

Agapitos, P.A. "Teachers, Pupils, and Imperial Power in Eleventh-Century Byzantium." In *Pedagogy and Power: Rhetorics of Classical Learning*, ed. Y.L. Too and N. Livingstone, 170-91. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Ahrweiler, Helène. "Recherches sur la société byzantine au XIe siècle: nouvelles hiérarchies et nouvelles solidarities," *Travaux et Mémoires* 6 (1976): 99-124.

_____. "Recherches sur l'administration de l'empire byzantine aux IXe-XIe siècles." Bulletin de *Correspondance Hellénique* 84 (1960): I-III. [under name Glykatzi-Ahrweiler].

Alexiou, Margaret. *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition. Second Edition*. Revised by Dimitrios Yatromanolakis and Panagiotis Roilos. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002.

Althoff, Gerd. *Family, Friends, and Followers: political and social bonds in medieval Europe*. Translated by C. Carroll. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Anagnostopoulou, S. "The Terms *millet*, *genos*, *ethnos*, *oikoumenikotita*, *alytrotismos* in Greek Historiography." In *The Passage from the Ottoman Empire to Nation-States: A Long and Difficult Process: The Greek Case*, edited by S. Anagnostopoulou, 37-55. Istanbul: Isis Press, 2004.

Angelidi, Christine. "Family Ties, Bonds of Kinship (9th-11th Centuries)." In Authority in Byzantium, edited by Pamela Armstrong, 155-66. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013.

Angelov, Dimiter G. "Byzantine imperial panegyric as advice literature (1204-c. 1350)." In *Rhetoric in Byantium. Papers from the Thirty-fifth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Exeter College, University of Oxford, March 2001*, edited by Elizabeth Jeffreys, 55-74. Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2003.

Angold, Michael. "Archons and dynasts: local aristocracies and the cities of the later Byzantine Empire." In *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX-XIII Centuries,* edited by Michael Angold, 236-53. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1984.

_____. *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081-1261*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

_____. *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204: A Political History*. Second Edition. London, New York: Longman, 1997.

_____, ed. *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX-XIII Centuries.* BAR International Series, 221. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1984.

_____. "The Latin Empire of Constantinople, 1204-1261: Marriage Strategies." In *Identities and Allegiances in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204*, ed. Judith Herrin and Guillaume Saint-Guillain, 47-68. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011.

Antonopoulou, I.A. "The 'aristocracy' in Byzantium: evidence from the *Tactica* of Leo VI the Wise." *Byzantiaka* 13 (1993): 153-59.

_____. "La question de l'aristocratie byzantine. Remarques sur l'ambivalence du terme 'aristocratie' dans la recherche historique contemporaine." *Symmeikta* 15 (2002): 257-64.

_____. Irene A. Antonopoulou, "The issue of "Aristocracy." In *Byzantium."* In *Antecessor: Festschrift für Spyros N. Troianos zum 80. Geburtstag*, edited by Vassiliki A. Leontaritou, Kalliopi (Kelly) A. Bourdara, and Eleftheria Sp. Papagianni, 67-70. Athens: Ant. N. Sakkoulas Verlag, 2013.

Apostolopoulos, Meletios. Τo δίκαιον του γάμου της ανατολικής ορθοδόξου εκκλησίας. Athens: Typois Auges Athenon, 1913.

Aurell, Martin. "Society." In *The Central Middle Ages*, ed. Daniel Power. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Bartlett, Robert. "Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31 (2001): 39-54.

Bartlett, Robert and Angus MacKay, eds. *Medieval Frontier Societies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Bartusis, Mark. *Land and Privilege in Byzantium: The Institution of Pronoia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Baun, Jane. *Tales from Another Byzantium: Celestial Journey and Local Community in Medieval Greek Apocrypha*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Beaton, Roderick. "Cappadocians at Court: Digenes and Timarion." In *Alexios I Komnenos: Papers of the second Belfast Byzantine International Colloquium, 14-16 April 1989*, edited by M. Mullett and D. Smythe. Vol. I: Papers. Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations 4.1, 329-38. Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 1996.

Beaucamp, Jöelle. "Les filles et la transmission du patrimoine à Byzance: dot et part successorale." In *La Transmission du patrimoine: Byzance et l'aire méditerranéenne*, edited by Joelle Beaucamp and Gilbert Dagron, 11-34. Paris : De Boccard, 1998.

Beaucamp, Jöelle and Gilbert Dagron, eds. *La transmission du patrimoine: Byzance et l'aire méditerranéenne* Paris : De Boccard, 1998.

Beck, Hans-Georg. *Byzantinisches Gefolgschaftswesen*. Munich: Verlag der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1965.

_____. *Das byzantinische Jahrtausend*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 1978.

_____. *Vademecum des byzantinischen Aristokraten: das sogenannte Strategikon des Kekaumenos*. Graz, Vienna, and Cologne: Verlag Styria, 1964.

Benakis, Linos. "Commentaries and Commentators on the Logical Works of Aristotle in Byzantium." In *Gedankenzeichen: Festschrift für Klaus Oehler*, ed. R. Claussen and R. Daube-Schakat, 3-12. Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1988.

Biller, Peter. *The Measure of Multitude: Population in Medieval Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Bisson, Thomas, ed. *Cultures of Power, Lordship, Status, and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995.

Blaum, Paul A. *The Days of the Warlords: A History of the Byzantine Empire, AD969-991*. New York: University Press of America, 1994.

Blayney, Jan. "Theories of Conception in the Ancient Roman World." In *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives*, edited by Beryl Rawson, 230-36. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986.

Bon, Antoine. *Le Péloponnèse byzantine jusqu'en 1204*. Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1951.

Boswell, John. *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe*. New York: Vintage, 1994.

Bouchard, Constance. *Those of My Blood: Creating Noble Families in Medieval Francia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.

Bourriot, F. *Recherches sur la nature du Génos: Étude d'histoire sociale athénienne, périodes archaïque et classique*. 2 vols. Lille: Université Lille III, 1976.

Bourbouhakis, Emmanuel. "Rhetoric and Performance." In *The Byzantine World*, ed. Paul Stephenson. New York: Routledge, 2010: 175-87.

Brain, Peter. *Galen on Bloodletting: A Study of the Origins, Development, and Validity of his Opinions, with a Translation of the Three Works*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Brand, Charles. "Two Byzantine Treatises on Taxation." *Traditio* 25 (1969): 35-60.

Breckenridge. James D. *Likeness: A Conceptual History of Ancient Portraiture*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968.

Brokaar, W.G. "Basil Lecapenus. Byzantium in the tenth century." In *Studia Byzantina et Neoellenica Neerlandica*, edited by W.F. Bakker, A.F. Van Gemert, and W.J. Aerts, 199-234. Leiden: Brill, 1972.

Brousselle, Isabelle. "Les stratégies matrimoniales de l'aristocratie byzantine aux IXe et Xe siècles." In *Femmes et pouvoirs des femmes à Byzance et en occident (VIe-XIe siècles)*, edited by Lebecq et al., 51-64. Villeneuve d'Ascq : Université Charles de Gaulle-Lille, 1999.

_____. *Recherches sur les élites dirigeantes de la société byzantine (IXe-première moitié du Xe siècle)*. Diss. Paris I, 1986.

Brown, Elizabeth A.R. "Introduction: ritual brotherhood in ancient and medieval Europe, a symposium." *Traditio* 52 (1997): 261-84.

Brown, Peter. *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Presss, 1988.

Browning, R. "Homer in Byzantium." *Viator* 6 (1975): 16-33.

Brubaker, Leslie and Shaun Tougher, eds. *Approaches to the Byzantine Family*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013.

Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon. *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca. 680-850): A History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Bryer, Anthony, Dunn, Archibald, and Nesbitt, John W. "Theodore Gabras, Duke of Chaldia († 1098) and the Gabrades: Portraits, Sites and Seals." In *Byzantium - State and Society: In Memory of Nikos Oikonomides*, edited by A. Avramea, A. Laiou, and E. Chrysos, 51-70. Athens: National Hellenic Foundation, Center for Byzantine Studies, 2003.

Buckler, Georgina. "Authorship of the Strategikon of Cecaumenos." *BZ* 36 (1936): 7-26.

_____. "Writings familiar to Cecaumenus." *Byzantion* 15 (1940/41): 133-43.

Burgmann, Ludwig. "Turning Sisinnios against the Sisinnians." In *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, edited by Paul Magdalino, 161-81. Leiden: Brill, 2003.

_____. "Sklaven in der Peira." *Fontes Minores* 9 (1993): 1-33.

Cadden, Joan. *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Carsten, Janet, and Stephen Hugh-Jones, ed. *About the House: Lévi-Strauss and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Caseau, Beatrice. "Saint Mark, A Family Saint? The Iconography of the Xeroi Seals." in *Epeironde: Proceedings of the 10th International Symposium of Byzantine Sigillography (Ioannina, 1.-3. October 2009)*, edited by Christos Stavrakos and Barbara Papadopoulou, 81-109. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011.

Charanis, Peter. *Social, Economic, and Political Life in the Byzantine Empire: Collected Studies*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1973.

_____. "The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire." *Byzantinoslavica* 22 (1961): pp.196-240.

Cheyette, Fredric L., ed. *Lordship and Community in Medieval Europe: Selected Readings*. Toronto: Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1968.

Cheynet, Jean-Claude. "Aristocratie et héritage (XIe-XIIIe siècle)." In *La transmission du patrimoine*, edited by J. Beaucamp and G. Dagron, 53-80. Paris : De Boccard, 1998.

_____. "Basil II and Asia Minor." In *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, edited by Paul Magdalino, 71-108. Leiden: Brill, 2003.

_____. "Bureaucracy and Aristocracies." In *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, edited by E. Jeffreys, J. Haldon, and R. Cormack. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

_____. "Dévaluation des dignités et dévaluation monétaire dans la seconde moitié du XIe siècle." *Byzantion 53* (1983): 453-77.

_____. "Du prénom au patronyme: les étrangers à Byzance (Xe-XIIe siècles)." In *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography I*, edited by Nicolas Oikonomidès, 57-66. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1987.

_____. "Fortune et puissance de l'aristocratie (X-XII siècle)." In *Hommes et richesses dans l'empire byzantine*, edited by Vassiliki Kravari, Jacques Lefort, and Cécile Morrisson, 199-213. Paris : P. Lethielleux, 1991.

_____. "L'anthroponymie aristocratique à Byzance." In *L'anthroponymie. Document de l'histoire sociale des mondes méditerranéens médiévaux*, edited by M. Bourin, J.-M. Martin, and F. Menant, 267-94. Rome: École française de Rome, 1996.

_____. "La politique militaire byzantine de Basile II à Alexis Comnene." *Zbornik Radova Vizantolosko Instituta* 30 (1991): 61-73.

_____. "L'aristocratie byzantine (VIIIe-XIIIe siècle)." *Journal des Savants* (July-December 2000): 281-322.

_____. "L'aristocrazia byzantine nei secoli X-XII: a proposito del libro di A. Kazhdan e S. Ronchey," *Rivista Storica Italiana* CXIII, fasc. 2. (2011): 413-440.

_____. "L'Asie Mineure d'après la correspondance de Psellos." *Byzantinische Forschungen* 25 (1999): 233-41.

_____. "Le rôle de l'aristocratie locale dans l'état." *Byzantinische Forschungen* 19 (1993): 105-12**.**

_____. "Les Phocas." In *Le traité sur la guérilla de l'empereur Nicéphore Phocas,* edited and translated by G. Dagron and H. Mihaescu, 289-315. Paris: Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1986.

_____. "Official power and non-official power." In Fifty Years of Prosopography: The Later Roman Empire, Byzantium and Beyond (=Proceedings of the British Academy 118), edited by A. Cameron, 137-50. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

_____. *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963-1210).* Paris: Centre de recherche d'histoire et civilisation byzantines, 1990.

Cheynet, Jean-Claude and Cécille Morrisson. "Lieux de trouvaille et circulation des sceaux." In *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography 2*, edited by N. Oikonomidès, 105-36. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990.

Crouch, David. *The Birth of Nobility: Constructing Aristocracy in England and France, 900-1300*. London: Pearson Longman, 2005.

Curta, Florin. *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006*.*

Dagron, Gilbert. "Le christianisme dans la ville byzantine." *DOP* 31 (1977): 1-25.

_____. "Le combattant byzantine à la frontière du Taurus: guérilla et société frontalière." *Actes des congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l'enseignement supérieur public* 18 (1987) : 37-43.

_____. *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

_____. "Guérilla, places fortes et villages ouverts à la frontière orientale de Byzance vers 950." In *Castrum 3: guerre, fortification et habitat dans le monde méditerranéen au moyen âge*, edited by André Bazzana, 43-48. Rome/Madrid: Collection de l'École française de Rome, 1988.

_____. "Lawful society and legitimate power: *Ennomos politeia, ennomos arche*." In *Law and Society in Byzantium, Ninth-Twelfth Centuries,* edited by Angeliki Laiou and Dieter Simon, 27-51. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994.

_____. "L'ombre d'un doute: l'hagiographie en question, VIe-XIe siècle." *DOP* 46 (1992): 59-68.

Davies, Wendy and Paul Fouracre, eds. *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Dawson, Timothy. "Propriety, Practicality and Pleasure: The Parameters of Women's Dress in Byzantium, A.D. 1000–1200." In Byzantine Women: Varieties of Experience 800-1200, edited by Lynda Garland, 41-64. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006.

DelCogliano, Mark. *Basil of Caesarea's anti-Eunomian Theory of Names: Christian Theology and Late Antique Philosophy in the Fourth Century Trinitarian Controversy*. Boston, Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Der Nersessian, Sirarpie. "Armenia in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries." In *Proceedings of the XIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies: Oxford 5-10 Sept. 1966*, edited by J.-M. Hussey, D. Obolensky, and S. Runciman, 427-31. London, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Dölger, Franz. *Beiträge zur Geschichte der byzantinischen Finanzverwaltung, besonders des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts.* Byzantinisches Archiv 9. Leipzig: Teubner, 1927.

Donlan, Walter. "The Social Groups of Dark Age Greece." *Classical Philology* 80, No. 4 (1985): 293-308.

Drell, Joanna. *Kinship and Conquest: Family Strategies in the Principality of Salerno during the Norman Period, 1077-1194.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002.

Duby, Georges. *La société aux XIe et XIIe siècles dans la région mâconnaise*. Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1954.

Georges Duby and Jacque LeGoff, eds., *Famille et parenté dans l'Occident médiévale*. Collection de l'École française de Rome 30. Rome: École française de Rome, 1977.

Eastmond, Anthony, ed. *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium.* Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies Publications 9. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001.

Engels, F. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State.* Chicago: C.H. Kerr and Co., 1902.

Epstein, Steven A. *The Medieval Discovery of Nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Falkenhausen, Vera von. *Untersuchungen über die byzantinische Herrschaft in Süditalien vom 9. bis ins 11. Jahrhundert.* Wiesbaden : Otto Harrassowitz, 1967.

Feissel, Denis, and Anne Philippides-Braat. "Inventaires en vue d'un recueil des inscriptions historiques de Byzance: inscriptions du Péloponnèse." *Travaux et Mémoires* 9 (1985): 300-3.

Fenster, Thelma and Daniel Lord Small, eds. *Fama: The Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003.

Flemming, Rebecca. *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women: Gender, Nature and Authority from Celsus to Galen*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Fögen, Marie Theres. "Legislation in Byzantium: A Political and a Bureaucratic Technique." In *Law and Society in Byzantium, Ninth-Twelfth Centuries*, edited by Angeliki Laiou and Dieter Simon, 53-70. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994.

_____. "Muttergut und Kindesvermögen bei Konstantin d. Gr., Justinian und Eustathios Rhomaios." In *Eherecht und Familiengut in Antike und Mittelalter*, edited by Dieter Simon, 15-27. Munich: Oldenbourg, 1992.

Fortes, M. *Kinship and the Social Order: The Legacy of Lewis Henry Morgan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969.

Foss, Clive. "Archaeology and the 'twenty cities' of Byzantine Asia." *American Journal of Archaeology* 81 (1977): 469-86.

_____. *History and Archaeology of Byzantine Asia Minor*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1990.

Foss, Clive and Robin Fursdon. *Survey of Medieval Castles of Anatolia.* BAR International Series 261. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Foss, Clive and David Winfield. *Byzantine Fortifications: An Introduction*. Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1986.

Frankopan, Peter. "Challenges to imperial authority in Byzantium: revolts on Crete and Cyprus at the end of the 11th century." *Byzantion* 74 (2004): 382-402.

_____. "The fall of Nicaea and the towns of Asia Minor to the Turks in the late 11th century: the curious case of Nikephoros Melissenos." *Byzantion* 76 (2006): 153-84.

_____. "Kinship and the distribution of power in Komnenian Byzantium." *English Historical Review* 122 (2007): 1-34.

_____. "Land and Power in the Middle and Later Period." In *A Social History of Byzantium*, edited by J. Haldon, 112-42. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009.

Galatariotou, Catia. *The Making of a Saint: The Life, Times, and Sanctification of Neophytos the Recluse.* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

_____. "Open space/closed space: the perceived worlds of Kekaumenos and Digenes Akrites." In *Alexios I Komnenos*, edited by Margaret Mullett and Dion Smythe, 302-28. Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, School of Greek and Latin, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1996.

Garsoïan, Nina. *The Paulician Heresy.* The Hague: Mouton, 1967.

Gellner, E. *The Concept of Kinship and Other Essays.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Giovannelli, Leland. "Aristotle's Theory of Sexual Reproduction as it Emerges in On the Generation of Animals." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1999.

Goody, Jack. *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Gounaridis, Paris. "Constitution d'une généalogie à Byzance," in *Parenté et société dans le monde grec de l'Antiquité à l'âge moderne. Colloque international, Volos (Grèce), 19-20-21 Juin 2003*, 271-80. Pessac : Ausonius, 2006.

Grünbart, M. "Die Anrede im byzantinischen Brief von Prokopios von Gaza bis Michael Choniates." Ph.D. diss., University of Vienna, 2000.

_____. *Formen der Anrede in byzantinischen Briefe vom 6. bis zum 12. Jahrhundert*. Vienna: VÖAW, 2005.

_____. *Inszenierung und Repräsention der byzantinischen Aristokratie vom 10. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert.* Munster: Wilhelm Fink, 2015.

Guilland, Rodolphe. "La noblesse de race à Byzance." *Byzantinoslavica* 9 (1948): 307-14.

_____. "La noblesse byzantine à la haute époque." In *Prosphora eis Stilpōna P. Kyriakidēn epi tē eikosipentaetēridi tēs kathēgesias autou (1926-1951)*, edited by Ioannes Kyriakides, 255-66. Thessaloniki: Hetaireia Makedonikon Spoudon, 1953.

_____. *Titres et fonctions de l'empire byzantin.* London : Variorum Reprints, 1976.

Haldon, John. "The fate of the late Roman elite: extinction or assimilation?" In *Elites Old and New in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, edited by L. Conrad and J.F. Haldon, 178-232. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

_____., ed. *A Social History of Byzantium.* Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2009.

_____. "Social Élites, Wealth, and Power." In *A Social History of Byzantium*, edited by J. Haldon, 168-211. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009.

_____. *The State and the Tributary Mode of Production.* London: Verso, 1993.

_____. *Warfare, State, and Society in the Byzantine World.* London: UCL Press, 1999.

Haldon, John and Hugh Kennedy, "Regional Identities and Military Power: Byzantium and Islam ca.600-750." In *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World: The West, Byzantium and the Islamic World, 300-1100*, edited by Walter Pohl, Clemens Gantner, and Richard Payne, 317-56. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012.

Harlow, Mary Harlow and Tim Parkin, "Looking for the Family: The Greek and Roman Background," in *Approaches to the Byzantine Family*, edited by L. Brubaker and S. Tougher, 1-19. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013.

Harvey, Alan. "Financial crisis and the rural economy." In *Alexios I Komnenos*, edited by Margaret Mullett and Dion Smythe, 167-84. Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, School of Greek and Latin, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1996.

_____. "The land and taxation in the reign of Alexios I Komnenos: the evidence of Theophylakt of Ochrid." *REB* 51 (1993): 139-53.

_____. "Land, taxation and trade in the eleventh century monastic economy: the case of Evergetis." In *The Theotokos Evergetis and Eleventh Century Monasticism*, edited by Margaret Mullett and Anthony Kirby, 124-36. Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, School of Greek and Latin, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1994.

_____. "Peasant categories in the tenth and eleventh centuries." *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 14 (1990): 250-56.

Heers, Jacques. *Family Clans in the Middle Ages*. Translated by Barry Herbert. Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1977.

Herlong, Mark Walter. "Kinship and Social Mobility in Byzantium, 717-959. Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1986.

Herman, Gabriel. *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Herrin, Judith. *Unrivalled Influence: Women and Empire in Byzantium*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

Hill, Barbara. "Imperial Women and the Ideology of Womanhood in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," in *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*, edited by Liz James, 76-99. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.

_____. *Imperial Women in Byzantium 1025-1204: Power, Patronage and Ideology*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 1999.

Høgel, Christian. "The redaction of Symeon Metaphrastes: literary aspects of the Metaphrastic martyria." In *Metaphrasis Redactions and Audiences in Middle Byzantine Hagiography*, edited by Christian Høgel, 7-21. Bergen: Research Council of Norway, 1996.

Hohlweg, Armin. *Beiträge zur Verwaltungsgeschichte des oströmischen Reiches unter den Komnenen*. Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia I. Series ed. Hans Georg Beck. Munich: Institut für Byzantinistik, 1965.

Holmes, Catherine. "At the Frontiers of the Byzantine Family in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries." In *Proceedings of the 22nd International Congress of Byzantine Studies: Sofia, 22-27 August 2011,* Vol II*: Abstracts of Round Table Communications*, 260-61.

_____. *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976-1025).* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

_____. "Byzantium's eastern frontier in the tenth and eleventh centuries." In *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, edited by David Abulafia and Nora Berend, 83-104. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002.

_____. "'How the east was won' in the reign of Basil II." In *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium*, edited by Anthony Eastmond, 41-56. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001.

_____. "Political elites in the reign of Basil II." In *Byzantium in the Year 1000*, edited by Paul Magdalino, 35-69. Leiden: Brill, 2003.

_____. "Political Literacy," in *The Byzantine World,* edited by Paul Stephenson, 137-48. London: Routledge, 2010.

Hondridou, S.D. *Ο Κωνσταντίνος Θ' Μονομάχος και η εποχή του (ενδέκατος αιώνας μ.Χ.)* [Constantine IX Monomachos and his epoch (eleventh century AD)]. Thessalonike: Herodotos, 2002.

Howard-Johnston, James. "Crown lands and the defense of imperial authority in the tenth and eleventh centuries." *Byzantinische Forschungen* 21 (1995): 75-100.

Humphreys, S.C. *The Family, Women, and Death: Comparative Studies*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Hunger, Herbert. *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner.* Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 12. Byzantinisches Handbuch 5. Munich: C.H. Beck, 1978.

Inoue, Koichi "A Provincial Aristocratic 'Oikos' in Eleventh-Century Byzantium," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 30 (1989): 545-69.

Ivison, Eric. "Urban renewal and imperial revival 730—1025." *Byzantinische Forschungen* 26 (2000): 1-46.

James, Liz. *Women, Men, and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium.* London: Routledge, 1997.

Jeffreys, Elizabeth. "Akritis and outsiders." In *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider,* edited by Dion Smythe, 189-202. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000.

_____, ed. *Rhetoric in Byzantium.* Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003.

Jenkins, Romilly. *Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries, AD 610-1071.* London: Routledge, 1966.

Jones, Christopher P. *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Just, Roger. *Women in Athenian Law and Life*. London: Routledge, 1990.

Kaegi, Walter. "The Controversy about Bureaucratic and Military Factions." *Byzantinische Forschungen* 19 (1993): 25-34.

Kalavrezou, I., ed. *Byzantine Women and their World.* Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003.

Kaldellis, Anthony. *Ethnography after Antiquity: Foreign Lands and Peoples in Byzantine Literature*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

_____. *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

_____. "How to usurp the throne in Byzantium: The role of public opinion in sedition and rebellion." In *Power and Subversion in Byzantium*, edited by Dimiter Angelov and Michael Saxby, 43-56. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013.

_____. *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015.

_____. "Thoughts on the Future of Psellos-Studies, with Attention to his Mother's *Encomium*." In *Reading Michael Psellos*, edited by C. Barber and D. Jenkins, 229-45. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

_____. "The Study of Women and Children: Methodological Challenges and New Directions." In *The Byzantine World*, ed. Paul Stephenson, 61-71. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Kamer, Stephen Arnold. "Emperors and aristocrats in Byzantium 976-1081." Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1983.

Kampen, Natalie Boymel. *Family Fictions in Roman Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Kaplan, Michel. *Byzance, villes et campagnes*. Paris: Picard, 2006.

_____. "L'église byzantine des VIe-XIe siècles: terres et paysans." In *Church and People in Byzantium*, edited by Rosemary Morris, 109-23. Birmingham: Center for Byzantine, Ottoman, and Modern Greek Studies, 1990.

_____. *Les hommes et la terre à Byzance du VIe au XIe siècle: propriété et exploitation du sol.* Paris : Publications de la Sorbonne, 1992.

_____. "Maisons impériales et fondations pieuse: réorganisation de la fortune impériale et assistance publique de la fin du VIIIe siècle à la fin du Xe siècle." *Byzantion* 61, no. 2 (1991): 340-65.

Karlin-Hayter, Patricia. "Alexios Komnenos: 'not in the strict sense of the word an emperor." In *Alexios I Komnenos*, edited by M. Mullett and D. Smythe, 133-45. Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, School of Greek and Latin, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1996.

Kazhdan, Alexander. "Aristocracy and the imperial ideal." In *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX-XIII Centuries*, edited by Michael Angold, 43-57. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1984.

_____. "The Armenians in the Byzantine ruling class, predominantly in the ninth through twelfth centuries." In *Medieval Armenian Culture*, edited by T. Samuelian and M. Stone, 439-51. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984.

_____. "The formation of Byzantine family names in the ninth and tenth centuries." *Byzantinoslavica* 58 (1997): 90-109.

_____. "Heremitic, coenobitic and secular ideals in Byzantine hagiography of the ninth through the twelfth centuries." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 30 (1985): 472-85.

_____. *L'aristocrazia bizantina: dal principio dell'XI alla fine del XII secolo*. Translated by Silvia Ronchey. Palermo: Sellerio editore Palermo, 1997.

_____. "Pronoia: the history of a scholarly discussion." *Mediterranean Historical Review* 10 (1995): 133-63.

_____. "Russian pre-Revolutionary studies on eleventh-century Byzantium." In *Byzantine Studies: Essays on the Slavic World and the Eleventh Century*, edited by Spyros Vryonis Jr., 111-24. New Rochelle: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1992.

_____. "State, feudal and private economy in Byzantium." *DOP* 47 (1993): 83-100.

_____. "The Formation of Byzantine Family Names in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries." *Byzantinoslavica* 58 (1997): 90-109.

_____, ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Kazhdan, Alexander and Giles Constable. *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982.

Kazhdan, Alexander and Simon Franklin. *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Kazhdan, Alexander, and Michael McCormick. "Social composition of the Byzantine court." In *Byzantine Court Culture from 829-1204*, edited by Henry McGuire, 169-72. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997.

Kazhdan, Alexander and Ann Wharton Epstein. *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985.

Kiousopoulou, A. *Ο θεσμός της οικογένειας στην Ήπειρο κατά τον 13ο αιώνα.* Athens: A.N. Sakkoulas, 1990.

Kleiner, Diana E.E. *Roman Sculpture*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992.

Kolias, Taxiarchis. Νικηφόρος ΙΙ Φωκάς: Ο στρατηγός αυτοκράτωρ και το μεταρρυθμιστικό του έργο. Athens: Historikes Ekdoseis St. D. Vasilopoulos, 1993.

Köpstein, Helga. *Zur Sklaverei im ausgehenden Byzanz: Philologisch-historische Untersuchung*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1966.

Krallis, D. "Michael Attaleiates: History as Politics in Eleventh-Century Byzantium." Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2006.

_____. *Michael Attaleiates and the Politics of Imperial Decline in Eleventh-Century Byzantium*. Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2012.

Krausmüller Dirk Krausmüller, "Byzantine Monastic Communities: Alternative Families?" In Approaches to the Byzantine Family, edited by Leslie Brubaker and Shaun Tougher, 345-58. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013.

Laiou, Angeliki. "Contribution à l'étude de l'institution familiale en Épire au XIIIe siècle." *Fontes Minores* 6 (1984): 275-323.

_____. "Family Structure and the Transmission of Property." In *A Social History of Byzantium*, edited by J. Haldon, 51-75. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

_____. *Gender, Society and Economic Life in Byzantium*. Variorum Reprints, Collected Studies 370. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1992.

_____. "Imperial Marriages and Their Critics in the Eleventh Century: The Case of Skylitzes." *DOP* 46 (1992): 165-75.

_____. "La famille à Byzance." Special Issue, *Europe* 822 (Oct. 1997): 12-19.

_____. *Mariage, amour et parenté à Byzance aux XIe-XIIIe siècles*. Paris: de Boccard, 1992.

_____. "Marriage prohibitions, marriage strategies, and the dowry in thirteenth-century Byzantium." In *La transmission du patrimoine: Byzance et l'aire méditerranéenne,* edited by Jöelle Beaucamp and Gilbert Dagron, 129-60. Paris: De Boccard, 1998.

_____. "The Byzantine Aristocracy in the Palaeologan Period: A Story of Arrested Development," *Viator* 4 (1973): pp.131-51.

_____. "The Evolution of the Status of Women in Marriage and Family Law." In *Mother, Nun, Deaconess: Images of Women According to Eastern Canon Law*, edited by E. Synek, 71-86. Kanon 16. Egling: Carl Gerold Fürst, 2000.

_____. "The General and the Saint: Michael Maleinos and Nikephoros Phokas." In *ΕΥΨΥΧΙΑ: Mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler*. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1998, pp.399-412.

Laiou, Angeliki et al., eds. *The Economic History of Byzantium from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*. Washington, D.C., 2002.

Laiou, Angeliki and Cécile Morrisson. *The Byzantine Economy*. Cambridge, 2007.

Laiou, Angeliki and Dieter Simon, eds. *Law and Society in Byzantium, Ninth-Twelfth Centuries*. Washington, D.C., 1994.

Lambert, S.D. "The Attic *genos*." *The Classical Quarterly* 49 (1999): 484-9.

Laurent, Joseph. *L'Arménie entre Byzance et l'Islam depuis la conquête arabe jusqu'en 886*. Lisbonne: Librairie Bertrand, 1980.

Laurent, V. *Les bulles métriques dans la sigillographie byzantine*. Athens: Estia, 1932.

Lauxtermann, Marc D., ed. Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres: Texts and Contexts. Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2003.

Lefort, Jacques. "Le cadastre de Radolibos (1103), les géomètres et leurs mathématiques." *Travaux et Mémoires* 8 (1981): 269-313.

_____. "Rural economy and social relations in the countryside." *DOP* 47 (1993): 101-13.

Leib, B. "Jean Doukas, César et moine: son jeu politique à Byzance de 1067 à 1081." *Analecta Bollandiana* 68 (1950): 163-80.

Lemerle, Paul. *The Agrarian History of Byzantium: From the Origins to the Twelfth Century*. Translated by Gearóid Mac Niocaill. Galway: Galway University Press, 1979.

_____. *Cinq études sur le XIe siècle byzantin.* Paris : Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1977.

_____. *Prolégomènes à une edition critique et commentée des "Conseils et récits" de Kékaumenos.* Brussels: Academie royale de Belgique, 1960.

Lightfoot, Christopher. "Amorium 2001." *Anatolian Archaeology: British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara* 7 (2001): 9-10.

_____. "The survival of cities in Byzantine Anatolia: the case of Amorium." *Byzantion* 68, no.1 (1998): 56-71.

Lilie, Ralph-Johannes. "Des Kaisers Macht und Ohnmacht." *Poikila Byzantina* 4 (1984): 9-120.

Litavrin, Gennadij G. "Family relations and family law in the Byzantine countryside of the eleventh century: an analysis of the Praktikon of 1073." *DOP* 44 (1990): 187-94.

Littlewood, A.R. "The Byzantine Letter of Consolation in the Macedonian and Komnenian Periods." *DOP* 53 (1999): 19-41.

Livingstone, Amy. *Out of Love for My Kin: Aristocratic Family Life in the Lands of the Loire, 1000-1200.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010.

Ljubarskij, J.N., et al. "Nikephoros Phokas in Byzantine Historical Writings." *Byzantinoslavica* 54 (1993): 245-53.

_____. "Quellenforschung and/or Literary Criticism: Narrative Structures in Byzantine Historical Writings." *Symbolae Osloenses* 73 (1998): 5-73.

Lubich, Gerhard. *Verwandtsein: Lesarten einer politisch-sozialen Beziehung im Frümittelalter (6.-11. Jahrhundert)*. Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2008.

Claudia Ludwig, "Social Mobility in Byzantium? Family Ties in the Middle Byzantine Period." In *Approaches to the Byzantine Family*, edited by L. Brubaker and S. Tougher, 233-46. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013.

McCormick, M. "Analysing imperial ceremonies." *JÖB* 35 (1985): 1-20.

_____. *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

McGeer, Eric. *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1995.

McGrath, Stamatina Fatalas-Papadopoulos. "A Study of the Social Structure of Byzantine Aristocracy as seen through Ioannes Skylitzes' *Synopsis Historiarum*." Ph.D. Dissertation, History, The Catholic University of America, 1996.

_____. "Women in Byzantine History in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries: Some Theoretical Considerations." In *Byzantine Religious Culture: Studies in Honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*, edited by D. Sullivan, E. Fisher, and S. Papaioannou, 85-98. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

Macrides, Ruth. "Dynastic marriages and political kinship." In *Byzantine Diplomacy*, edited by Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin, 263-80. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1992.

_____. "Families and Kinship." In *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, edited by E. Jeffreys, J. Haldon, and R. Cormack, 652-60. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

_____. *Kinship and Justice in Byzantium, 11th-15th Centuries.* Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.

_____. "Kinship by Arrangement: The case of adoption." *DOP* 44 (1990): 109-18.

_____. "Nomos and kanon, in paper and in court." In *Church and People in Byzantium*, edited by Rosemary Morris, 61-85. Birmingham: Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman, and Modern Greek Studies, University of Birmingham, 1990.

_____. "The Byzantine godfather." *BMGS* 11 (1987): 139-62.

_____. "Substitute Parents and their Children in Byzantium." In *Adoption et fosterage*, edited by M. Corbier, 307-19. Paris: De Boccard, 2000.

_____. "What's in the name 'Megas Komnenos,'" Αρχεῖον Πόντου 35 (1979), pp.238-45.

Magdalino, Paul. "The Byzantine Aristocratic Oikos." In *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII Centuries*, edited by Michael Angold, 92-111. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1984.

_____. "Byzantine snobbery." In *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII Centuries,* edited by Michael Angold, 58-78. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1984.

_____, ed. *Byzantium in the Year 1000*. Leiden: Brill, 2003.

_____. "Court Society and Aristocracy." In *A Social History of Byzantium*, edited by J. Haldon, 212-32. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009.

_____. "Cultural Change? The Context of Byzantine Poetry from Geometres to Prodromos." In *Poetry and its Contexts in Eleventh-century Byzantium*, edited by Floris Bernard and Kristoffel Demoen, 19-36. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012.

_____. *The Empire of Manuel Komnenos, 1143-1180*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

_____. "Honour among the Romaioi: the framework of social values in the world of Digenes Akrites and Kekaumenos." *BMGS* 13 (1989): 183-218.

_____. "Innovations in government." In *Alexios I Komnenos*, edited by Margaret Mullett and Dion Smythe, 146-66. Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, School of Greek and Latin, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1996.

_____. "Justice and Finance in the Byzantine State." In Angeliki Laiou and Dieter Simon, eds. *Law and Society in Byzantium, Ninth-Twelfth Centuries*, 93-116. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994.

_____. "Paphlagonians in Byzantine High Society." In *Byzantine Asia Minor (6th-12th cent*.),edited by Stelios Lampakis, 141-50. Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation Institute for Byzantine Research, 1998.

Maguire, H., ed. *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*. Washinton, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997.

Malamut, Elisabeth. *Les Iles de l'empire byzantin: VIIIe-XIIe siècles*. Série Byzantina Sorbonensia 8. Paris : Publications de la Sorbonne, 1988.

Margarou, H.L. Τίτλοι και επαγγελματικά ονόματα γυναικών στο Βυζάντιο: Συμβολή στη μελέτη για τη θέση της γυναίκας στη βυζαντινή κοινωνία. Thessaloniki: Centre for Byzantine Studies, 2000.

Markopoulos, Athanasios. "The Portrayal of the Male Figure in Michael Attaleiates." In Η αυτοκρατορία σε κρίση(;) Το βυζάντιο τον 11ο αίωνα (1025-1081), edited by Vassiliki N. Vlyssidou, 215-30. Ethniko Idryma Ereunon, Institouto Byzantinon Ereunon, 2003.

Martin-Hisard, Bernadette. "Constantinople et les archontes caucasiens dans le *Livre des cérémonies*, II, 48." *Travaux et Mémoires* 13 (2000): 359-530.

Mathews, Thomas. "'Private' liturgy in Byzantine architecture: toward a re-appraisal." *Cahiers Archéologiques* 30 (1982): 125-38.

Melisseides, Ioannes. Νικηφόρος Φωκάς (Ελ) Νικφούρ: Εκ των Λέοντος του Διακόνου, Κεδρηνού, Abou'l Mahacen, Ζωναρά, Ibn El Athir, Γλυκά, Aboulfeda κ.ά.: Ιστορική μελέτη. Athens: Ekdoseis Vergina, 2001.

Ménager, L.R. "Systèmes onomastiques, structures familiales et classes sociales dans le monde gréco-romain." *SDHI* 46 (1980): 147-235.

Moravcsik, Gyula. "Sagen und Legenden über Kaiser Basileios," *DOP* 15 (1961): 59-129.

Morgan, L.H. *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1871.

Morris, Rosemary. "Dispute settlement in the Byzantine provinces in the tenth century." In *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe*, edited by Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre, 125-47. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

_____. "Monastic exemptions in tenth- and eleventh-century Byzantium." In *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages*, edited by Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre, 200-20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

_____. *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium, 843-1118*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

_____. "The political saint of the eleventh century." In *The Byzantine Saint*, edited by Sergei Hackel, 43-50. London: Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, 1981.

_____. "The powerful and poor in tenth-century Byzantium: law and reality." *Past and Present* 73 (1976): 3-27.

Morrisson, Cécile. "Numismatique et sigillographie: parentes et méthode." In *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography I*, edited by Nicolas Oikonomidès, 12-26. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1987.

Mullett, Margaret. "Byzantium: a friendly society?" *Past and Present* 118 (1988): 2-24.

_____. "Patronage in action: the problems of an eleventh-century archbishop." In *Church and People in Byzantium*, edited by Rosemary Morris, 125-47. Birmingham: Center for Byzantine, Ottoman, and Modern Greek Studies, 1990.

_____. "The 'Disgrace' of the Ex-Basilissa Maria," Byzantinoslavica 45 (1984):202-11.

_____. *Theophylact of Ochrid: Reading the Letters of a Byzantine Archbishop*. Aldershot, 1997.

Mullett, Margaret and Dion Smythe, eds. *Alexios I Komnenos*. Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, School of Greek and Latin, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1996.

Nathan, G.S. *The Family in Late Antiquity: The Rise of Christianity and the Endurance of Tradition*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.

Neville, Leonora. "A history of the caesar John Doukas in Nikephoros Bryennios' Material for History?" *BMGS* 32 (2008): 168-88.

_____. *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950-1100*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

_____. *Heroes and Romans in Twelfth-Century Byzantium: The Material for History of Nikephoros Bryennios*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

_____. "Information, ceremony and power in Byzantine fiscal registers: varieties of function in the Cadaster of Thebes." *BMGS* 25 (2001): 20-43.

_____. "Local provincial elites in eleventh-century Hellas and Peloponnese." Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1998.

_____. "Strong Women and their Husbands in Byzantine Historiography." In *The Byzantine World,* ed. Paul Stephenson, 72-82. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Nichanian, M. *Aristocratie et pouvoir impérial à Byzance VIIe-IXe siècle.* Ph.D. dissertation. Paris IV, 2004.

Oikonomidès, Nicolas. *Byzantium from the Ninth Century to the Fourth Crusade*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1992.

_____. *A Collection of Dated Byzantine Lead Seals*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1986.

_____. "The contents of the Byzantine house from the eleventh to the fifteenth century." *DOP* 44 (1990): 205-14.

_____. "The donation of castles in the last quarter of the 11th century." In *Polychronion: Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag*, edited by Peter Wirth, 413-17. Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1966.

_____. "Le serment de l'imperatrice Eudocie (1067): un épisode de l'histoire dynastique de Byzance." *REB* 21 (1963): 101-28.

_____. "L'évolution de l'organisation administrative de l'empire byzantin au XIe siècle." *Travaux et Mémoires* 6 (1976): 125-52.

_____. *Fiscalité et exemption fiscale à Byzance (IXe-XIe s.).* Institut de Recherches Byzantines Monographies 2. Athens: Fondation nationale de la recherche scientifique, Institut de recherches byzantine, 1996.

_____. *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles.* Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1972.

_____. "Middle Byzantine provincial recruits: salary and armament." In *Gonimos: Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies Presented to Leendert G. Westerink at 75*, edited by John Duffy and J. Peradoto, 121-36. Buffalo: Arethusa, 1988.

_____. "L'organisation de la frontière orientale de Byzance aux Xe-XIe siècle et le taktikon de l'Escorial." In *Actes du XIVe Congrès international des études byzantines I*, edited by Mihai Berza and Eugen Stănescu, 285-302. Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1974.

_____. "On sigillographic epigraphy." In *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography 6*, edited by Nicolas Oikonomides, 37-42. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1999.

_____. "The 'Peira' of Eustathios Romaios: an abortive attempt to innovate in Byzantine law." *Fontes Minores* 7 (1986): 169-92.

_____. "Pictorial propaganda in XIIth c. Constantinople." *Glas 390 de l'Académie serbe des sciences et des arts. Class des sciences historiques* 11 (Belgrade, 2001): 93-102.

_____. "The social structure of the Byzantine countryside in the first half of the Xth century." *Symmeikta* 10 (1996): 105-25.

_____. "Terres du fisc et revenu de la terre." In *Hommes et richesses dans l'empire byzantin II: VIIIe-XVe siècle*, ed. Vassiliki Kravari, Jacques Lefort, and Cécile Morrisson, 321-37. Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1989.

_____. "Title and income at the Byzantine court." In *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, edited by Henry Maguire, 199-215. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1997.

_____. "The usual lead seal." *DOP* 37 (1983): 147-58.

Ostrogorsky, George. "La commune rurale byzantine." *Byzantion* 32 (1962): 139-66.

_____. *Pour l'histoire de la féodalité byzantine*. Translated by Henri Grégoire. Brussels: Éditions de l'Institut de Philologie de l'Histoire Orientales et Slaves, 1954.

_____. *History of the Byzantine State*. Revised edition. New Brunswick, NJ : Rutgers University Press, 1969.

_____. "Die ländische Steuergemeinde des byzantinischen Reiches im x. Jahrhundert." *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 20 (1927): 32-5.

Page, Gill. *Being Byzantine: Greek Identity before the Ottomans*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Papadatou, Daphne. "Divorce by mutual consent and its customary application in Byzantium." *BS* 58 (1997): 269-73.

Papagianni, Eleutheria. "Byzantine legislation on economic activity relative to social class." In *The Economic History of Byzantium from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century,* edited by Angeliki Laiou, 1083-93. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002.

_____. "*Protimesis* (preemption) in Byzantium." In *The Economic History of Byzantium from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century,* edited by Angeliki Laiou, 1071-82. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002.

Papaioannou, Stratis. "Anna Komnene's Will." In *Byzantine Religious Culture: Studies in Honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*, edited by D. Sullivan, E. Fisher, and S. Papaioannou, 99-121. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

_____. "Letter-writing." In *The Byzantine World*, edited by Paul Stephenson. New York: Routledge, 2010, 188-99.

_____. *Michael Psellos: Rhetoric and Authorship in Byzantium.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Patlagean, Évelyne. "Byzantium in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries." In *A History of Private Life,* vol. I: *From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, edited by P. Veyne, trans. A. Goldhammer, 550-642. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987.

_____. "Christianisation et parentes rituelles: le domaine de Byzance." *Annales Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 3 (1978): 625-36.

_____. "Les débuts d'une aristocratie byzantine et le témoinage de l'historiographie: système des noms et liens de parenté aux IX-X siècle." In *The Byzantine Aristocracy*, edited by Michael Angold, 23-42. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1984.

_____. "Families and Kinships in Byzantium." In *A History of the Family*, vol. 1: *Distant Worlds, Ancient Worlds*, edited by Burguière, Klapisch-Zuber, Segalen, and Zonabend, 467-88. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard U Press, 1996.

_____. "Familles et parentèles à Byzance." In *Histoire de la famille*, vol. I, edited by André Burguière, 421-41. Paris: Armand Colin, 1986.

_____. *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance, 4e-7e siècles.* Paris: Mouton, 1977.

_____. "Sainteté et pouvoir." In *The Byzantine Saint*, ed. Sergei Hackel, 88-105. London: Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, 1981.

_____. *Structure sociale, famille, chrétienté à Byzance, 4e-7e siècles*. London : Variorum Reprints, 1981.

_____. *Un Moyen Âge grec. Byzance IXe-XVe siècle.* Paris: Albin Michel, 2007.

Patterson, C. *The Family in Greek History.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Pavlikianov, Cyril. *The Medieval Aristocracy on Mt. Athos: the philological and documentary evidence for the activity of Byzantine, Georgian, and Slav aristocrats and eminent churchmen in the monasteries of Mt. Athos from the 10th to the 15th century.* Sofia : Sofia University Press, 2001.

Personnaz, Charles. *L'empereur Nicéphore Phocas: Byzance face à l'Islam, 912-969*. Paris: Belin, 2013.

Pitsakes, Konstantinos G. « Parenté en dehors de la parenté : formes de parenté d'origine extra-législative en droit byzantin et post-byzantin.» In *Parenté et société dans le monde grec de l'Antiquité à l'âge moderne. Colloque international, Volos (Grèce), 19-20-21 Juin 2003*, edited by Alain Bresson, Marie-Paule Masson, Stavros Perentidis, and Jérôme Wilgaux, 297-325. Bordeaux : Diffusion de Boccard, 2006.

_____. Το κώλυμα γάμου λόγω συγγενείας εβδόμου βαθμού εξ αίματος στο βυζαντινό δίκαιο. Athens: Nomikes Ekdoseis-Ant. N. Sakkoula, 1985.

Pohl, Walter. "Gender and Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages." In Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900, edited by L. Brubaker and J.M.H. Smith, 23-43. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Polemis, Demetrios I. *The Doukai: A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography*. University of London: The Athlone Press, 1968.

Pomeroy, Sarah B. "Women's Identity and the Family in the Classical Polis." In *Women in Antiquity: New Assessments*, edited by Richard Hawley and Barbara Levick, 111-21. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Power, Daniel, ed. *The Central Middle Ages: Europe 950-1320*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Preiser-Kapeller, Johannes. "Erdumn, uxt, carayat'iwn: Armenian Aristocrats as Diplomatic Partners of Eastern Roman Emperors, 387-884/5 AD." *Armenian Review* 52 (2010): 139-216.

Puech, Vincent. "The Aristocracy and the Empire of Nicaea." In *Identities and Allegiances in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204*, edited by Judith Herrin and Guillaume Saint-Guillain, 69-79. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011.

Radin, M. "Gens, familia, stirps." *Classical Philology* 9 (1914): 235-47.

Rapp, Claudia. "Ritual brotherhood in Byzantium." *Traditio* 52 (1997): 285-326.

Reuter, Timothy, ed., *The Medieval Nobility: Studies on the Ruling Classes of France and Germany from the Sixth to Twelfth Century*. Oxford: North-Holldand, 1978.

Reynolds, Susan. *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Ringrose, Kathryn M. "Living in the shadows: eunuchs and gender in Byzantium." In *Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History*, edited by Gilbert Herdt, 85-109. New York: Zone Books, 1994.

_____. *The Perfect Servant: Eunuchs and the Social Construction of Gender in Byzantium*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Rodley, Lyn. "Patron imagery from the fringes of the empire." In *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider*, edited by Dion Smythe, 163-78. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000.

Rosenqvist, Jan Olof. "The text of the life of St. Nikon 'Metanoeite' reconsidered." In *Leimon: Studies Presented to Lennart Rydén on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, edited by Jan Olof Rosenquist, 93-111. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1996.

Rotman, Youval. *Byzantine Slavery and the Mediterranean World*. Translated by Jane Marie Todd. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Roueché, Charlotte. "Defining the foreign in Kekaumenos." In *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider*, ed. Dion Smythe. Aldershot, 2000: 203-14.

_____. "The Literary Background of Kekaumenos." In *Literarcy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond*, edited by Catherine Holmes and Judith Waring, 111-38. Leiden: Brill, 2002.

Sahlins, Marshall. *What Kinship Is—And Is Not*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Saller, R.P. *Patriarchy, Property, and Death in the Roman Family*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

_____. "Roman kinship: Structure and sentiment." In *The Roman Family in Italy: Status, Sentiment, Space*, edited by B. Rawson and P. Weaver, 7-34. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Salway, B. "What's in a name? A survey of Roman onomastic practice from c.700 BC to 700 AD." *Journal of Roman Studies* 84 (1994): 124-45.

Saradi, Helen. "A contribution to the study of the Byzantine notarial formulas: the infirmitas sexus of women and the sc. Velleianum." *BZ* 83 (1990): 72-90.

_____. "On the *'archontike'* and *'ekklesiastike dynastei'* and *'prostasia'* in Byzantium with particular attention to the legal sources: a study in social history of Byzantium." *Byzantion* 64 (1994): 69-117, 314-51.

Savvides, A. "The Byzantine family of Kekaumenos." *Diptycha* 4 (1986): 12-27.

Schlumberger, Gustave. *L'épopée byzantine à la fin de la dixième siècle*. 3 vols. Paris: Hachette, 1896-1905.

_____. *Un empereur byzantin au dixième siècle, Nicéphore Phocas*. Paris: Firmin Didot, 1890.

Schmid, Karl. "Zur Problematik von Familie, Sippe und Geschlecht, Haus und Dynastie beim mittelalterlichen Adel: Vorgragen zum Thema, 'Adel und Herrschaft im Mittelalter.'" *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 105 (1957): 1-62.

Schminck, Andreas. "Kritik am Tomos des Sisinnios." *Fontes Minores* II (1977), pp.215-54.

Seibt, Werner. "Beinamen, 'Spitznamen,' Herkunftsnamen, Familiennamen bis ins 10. Jahrhundert: Der Beitrag der Sigillographie zu einem prosopographischen Problem." In *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography 7*, edited by Werner Seibt, 119-36. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002.

_____. *Die Skleroi: eine prosopographisch-sigillographische Studie*. Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1976.

Christian Settipani, "Les réseaux familiaux dans l'aristocratie byzantine: quelque exemples du VIe au XIe siècle," in *Les réseaux familiaux, Antiquité tardive et Moyen Âge*, edited by Béatrice Caseau, 287-306. Paris: ACHCByz, 2012.

Ševčenko, Ihor. "Constantinople viewed from the Eastern provinces in the middle Byzantine period." In *Eucharisterion: Essays Presented to Omeljan Pritsak*, 712-47. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.

_____. "Re-reading Constantine Porphyrogenitus." In *Byzantine Diplomacy*, edited by Jonathan Shepard and Simon Franklin, 167-95. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1990.

_____. "Was there totalitarianism in Byzantium? Constantinople's control over its Asiatic hinterland in the early ninth century." In *Constantinople and its Hinterland*, edited by Cyril Mango and Gilbert Dagron, 91-108. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995.

Shaw, Brent. "Ritual brotherhood in Roman and post-Roman societies." *Traditio* 52 (1997): 327-56.

Shawcross, Teresa. "The Lost Generation (c.1204-c.1222): Political Allegiance and Local Interests under the Impact of the Fourth Crusade." In *Identities and Allegiances in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204*, edited by Judith Herrin and Guillaume Saint-Guillain, 9-46. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011.

Shepard, Jonathan. "Byzantium expanding, 944-1025." In *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. III: *c.900-c.1024*, edited by Timothy Reuter, 586-604. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

_____. "Byzantium's last Sicilian expedition: Scylitzes' testimony." *Rivista di studi bisantini e neoellenici* 14-16 (1977-79): 145-59.

Sideras, A. *Die byzantinischen Grabreden: Prosopographie, Datierung, Überlieferung 142 Epitaphien und Monodien as dem byzantinischen Jahrtausend*. Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1994.

Simon, Dieter. "Byzantinische Provinzialjustiz." *BZ* 79 (1986): 310-43.

Skinner, Patricia. *Family Power in Southern Italy: The Duchy of Gaeta and Its Neighbours, 850-1139*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Smith, C.J. *The Roman Clan: The Gens from Ancient Ideology to Modern Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Smith, R.C. "The clans of Athens and the historiography of the archaic period." *Echoes du Monde Classique* 29 (1985): 51-61.

Smythe, Dion. "Middle Byzantine Family Values and Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*." In *Byzantine Women: Varieties of Experience 800-1200*, edited by Lynda Garland, 125-40. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006.

_____, ed. *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider*. Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies 8. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000.

_____. "Women as Other." In *Men, Women and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*, edited by Liz James, 149-67. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.

Sophocles, E.A. *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914.

Sorlin, Irene. "Publications soviétiques sur le XIe siècle." *Travaux et Mémoires* 6 (1976): 367-98.

Stavrakas, Spyros. "The Byzantine Provincial Elite: A Study in Social Relationships during the Ninth and Tenth Centuries." Ph.D. dissertation (History). University of Chicago, 1978.

Stephenson, Paul, ed. *The Byzantine World.* New York: Routledge, 2010.

_____. "Conceptions of otherness after 1018." In *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider*, edited by D. Smythe, 245-57. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000.

_____. "A development in nomenclature on the seals of the Byzantine provincial aristocracy in the late 10th century." *REB* 52 (1994): 187-211.

_____. "The Rise of the Middle Byzantine Aristocracy and the Decline of the Imperial State." In *The Byzantine World*, edited by Paul Stephenson, 22-33. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Stiernon, Lucien. "Notes de titulature et de prosopographie byzantine. Sébaste et Gambros," *REB* 23 (1965): 222-43.

Stone, L. *Kinship and Gender: An Introduction*. Second Edition. Colorado: Westview Press, 2000.

_____. "Introduction: Theoretical implications of new directions in anthropological kinship." In *New Directions in Anthropological Kinship*, edited by L. Stone, 1-20. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001.

Stouraitis, Ioannis. "Roman Identity in Byzantium: A Critical Approach." *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 107 (2014): 175-220.

Sullivan, D., E. Fisher, and S. Papaioannou, eds. *Byzantine Religious Culture: Studies in Honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

Svoronos, Nicolas. "L'épibolè à l'époque des Comnènes." *Travaux et Mémoires* 3 (1968): 375-95.

_____. "Recherches sur le cadastre byzantin et la fiscalité aux XIe e XIIe siècles." *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 83 (1959): 1-166.

Talbot, Alice-Mary. "The Byzantine family and the monastery." *DOP* 44 (1990): 119-29.

_____. "An introduction to Byzantine monasticism." *Illinois Classical Studies* 12 (1987): 229-41.

_____. "Family Cults in Byzantium: The Case of St. Theodora of Thessalonike," in *ΛΕΙΜΩΝ: Studies Presented to Lennart Rydén on his Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. Jan Olof Rosenquist, 49-69. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1996.

Tatakis, Basil. *Byzantine Philosophy*. Translated by Nicholas Moutafakis. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., 2003.

Temkin, Owsei. "Byzantine Medicine: Tradition and Empiricism," *DOP* 16 (1962): 97-115.

Thomas, John Philip. *Private Religious Foundations in the Byzantine Empire*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1987.

Thomson, R.W. "Influence of their Environment of Armenians in Exile in the Eleventh Century." In *Proceedings of the XIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, edited by J.M. Hussey, D. Obolensky, and S. Runciman, 432-38. London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Tougher, Shaun. "Imperial Families: The Case of the Macedonians (867-1056)." In *Approaches to the Byzantine Family*, edited by L. Brubaker and S. Tougher, 303-26. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013.

Trapp, Erich "The role of vocabulary in Byzantine rhetoric as a stylistic device." In *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, edited by Elizabeth Jeffreys, 137-49. Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003.

_____. "Learned and Vernacular Literature in Byzantium: Dichotomy or Symbiosis?" *DOP* 47 (1993): pp.115-29.

Treadgold, Warren. *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997.

_____. *The Middle Byzantine Historians*. London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2013.

Trombley, Frank R. "War, Society, and Popular Religion in Byzantine Anatolia (6th-13th Centuries)." In Η Βυζαντινή Μικρά Ασία (6ος-12ος αι.), edited by N. Oikonomidès and S. Vryonis, 97-139. Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 1998.

Troianos, Spyros. Η θέση του νομικού/δισαστή στη βυζαντινή κοινωνία. Athens: Idryma Goulandre-Khorn, 1993.

_____. «Γιατρική επιστήμη και γιατροί στο ερμηνευτικό έργο των κανονολόγων του 12ου αιώνα.» In Byzantium in the 12th Century: Canon Law, State and Society/Το Βυζάντιο κατά τον 12ο αιώνα, Κανονικό Δίκαιο, κράτος και κοινωνία, edited by N. Oikonomidès, 465-82. Athens: Society of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies, 1991.

Vannier, Jean-François. *Familles byzantines: Les Argyroi, IXe-XIIe siècles*. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1975.

Varzos, Konstantinos. Η Γενεαλογία των Κωμνηνών. 2 vols. Thessaloniki: Center of Byzantine Studies, 1984.

Vinson, Martha. "Romance and reality in the Byzantine bride shows." In *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900*, edited by Leslie Brubaker and M.H. Smith, 102-20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Viscuso, Patrick. "Marital Relations in the Theology of the Byzantine Canonist Theodore Balsamon." *Ostkirchliche Studien* 39 (1990): 281-88.

_____. "Theodore Balsamon's Canonical Images of Women." *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 45 (2005): 317-26.

Vlysidou, Vasiliki. Αριστοκρατικές οικογένειες καί εξουσία (9ος-10ος αι.): Έρευνες πάνω στα διαδοχικά στάδια αντιμετώπισης της αρμενο-παφλαγονικής και της καππαδοκικής αριστοκρατίας. Thessaloniki: Ekdoseis Vanias, 2001

Vlyssidou, V., ed. *The Empire in Crisis(?). Byzantium in the Eleventh Century (1025-1081)*. Athens: Institute for Byzantine Research, 2003.

Vryonis, Speros, Jr. *Byzantium: Its Internal History and Relations with the Muslim World*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1971.

_____. "Byzantium: The Social Basis of Decline in the Eleventh Century." *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* II, no. 2 (1959): 159-75.

_____. "The *Peira* as a source for the history of Byzantine Aristocratic society in the first half of the Eleventh Century." In *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History Studies in Honor of George C. Miles*, edited by Dickran Kouymjian, 279-84. Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1974.

Wassiliou-Seibt, Alexandra-Kyriaki. "Die Familie Xiphilinos im 11. Jahrhundert: der Beitrag der Siegel." In Les réseaux familiaux, Antiquité tardive et Moyen Âge, edited by Béatrice Caseau, 307-23. Paris: ACHCByz, 2012.

Weber, Max. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. Translated by A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons. New York: The Free Press, 1947.

Weiss, Gunter. "Antike und Byzanz. Die Kontinuität der Gesellschaftstruktur." *Historische Zeitschrift* 224 (1977): 529-56.

_____. *Öströmische Beamte im Spiegel der Schriften des Michael Psellos*. Munich: Institut für Byzantinistik und neugriechische Philologie der Universität München, 1973.

White, Stephen D. "Feuding and peace-making in the Touraine around the year 1100." *Traditio* 42 (1986): 195-263.

_____. "From peace to power: the study of disputes in medieval France." In *Medieval Transformations: Texts, Power, and Gifts in Context*, edited by Esther Cohen and Mayke de Jong, 203-18. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

_____. "Maitland on family and kinship." *ProcBritAc*. 89 (1996): 91-113.

Whittow, Mark. "How the East was Lost: the background to the Komnenian *reconquista*." In Alexios I Komnenos, edited by M. Mullett and D. Smythe, 55-67. Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 1996.

_____. "Rural fortifications in western Europe and Byzantium, tenth to twelfth century." *Byzantinische Forschungen* 21 (1995): 57-74.

_____. *The Making of Byzantium, 600-1025*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996.

Wickham, Chris. *The Inheritance of Rome: Illuminating the Dark Ages, 400-1000*. New York: Viking, 2009.

Wilgaux, Jérôme. "Les évolutions du vocabulaire grec de la parenté." In *Parenté et société dans le monde grec de l'Antiquité à l'âge moderne. Colloque international, Volos (Grèce), 19-20-21 Juin 2003*, edited by Alain Bresson, Marie-Paule Masson, Stavros Perentidis, and Jérôme Wilgaux, 209-34. Bordeaux : Diffusion de Boccard, 2006.

_____. "The other transition: from the ancient world to feudalism." *Past & Present* 103 (1984): 3-36.

Wilson, N.G. *Scholars of Byzantium*. London: Duckworth, 1983.

Winkelmann, F. *Byzantinische Rang- und Ämterstruktur im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985.

Wolska-Conus, Wanda. "Les écoles de Psellos et de Xiphilin sous Constantin IX Monomaque." *Travaux et Mémoires* 13 (2000): 531-94.

Zhishman, J. *Das Eherecht der orientalischen Kirche*. Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1864.